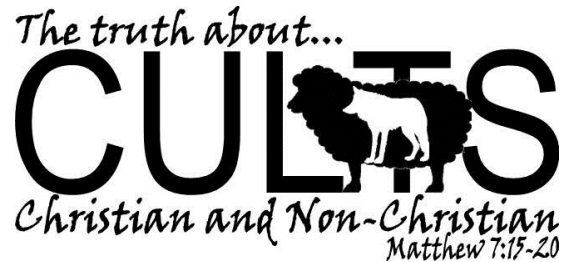


# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 17, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



**THE TRUTH ABOUT CULTS CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN**  
A Look at Jehovah's Witnesses  
*Matthew 7:15-20*

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<sup>15</sup> "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” – Matthew 7:15-20 (NIV)

Dr. Walter Martin, defined a cult as “A group of people polarized around someone’s interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations from orthodox Christianity particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ.” Cults are groups that claim to be in harmony with Christianity but deny foundational Christian doctrines such as the Trinity or the unique deity of Jesus Christ. In our key text for our study, Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus gives us a warning about the coming of the cults. He states, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.” What Jesus was warning was that these may sometimes look, act, and sound like they are Christian. However, that is in external appearance only. Upon closer inspection of “their fruit” something else is revealed. Upon closer examination of their own teaching, beliefs, doctrines and practices it become obvious that they have deviated from orthodox Christianity and it’s teaching.

## **GROUND RULES FOR THE STUDY OF THE CULTS**

We established some ground rules early in our study for Christians studying other religions and cults. These are important so that our intent in studying these groups does not denigrate into our own spiritual arrogance and pride, nor into hateful malice and bigoted hatred toward other peoples and groups. Although some groups, like Jehovah’s Witnesses, have a strong aversion to mainstream Christianity and an open hostile toward Christian ministers, also must affirm religious liberty and the right of the Jehovah Witness to practice and share their faith. So here are our pre-established ground rules for our study:

### **Ground Rules:**

- 1. A study of other faiths is not to be done in a spirit of criticism or ill will** – Please, please, please be aware that we do not conduct a study like this one to be divisive, unmerciful, or from a lack of compassion and love for others. Believer (Christians) must never be bigoted, injurious or prejudicial toward those who differ from us. This only further divides and drives away those for whom Christ died. However...
- 2. A study of other faiths (cults) is bound to bring up differences and disagreements** - To disagree with someone is not necessarily equal to criticizing him or tearing him down. We can disagree in love. ***Sidenote: Remember that others have a right to believe like they want to believe and unless the Holy Spirit quickens the heart of an unbeliever they will not come to the truth, therefore pray, pray, pray.***
- 3. A study of others faiths (cults) may help us to see what you can learn from other faiths** - This study is conducted from an orthodox Christian view and interpretation of Scripture... a Biblical view. This should be kept in mind as we proceed through the study.
- 4. To compare orthodox Christianity with other faiths in order to help Christians better understand their own belief** – A major objective of a study like this one is not to tear down or criticize other beliefs, but to strengthen your own... to drive us to go deeper in our own faith and discover why we believe what we believe.

### **5 Ground Rules for The Study of Cults and Non-Christian Religious Groups:**

1. **Be respectful** – Again, let me remind you that Christians do believe in and affirm religious liberty and the right and freedom of Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and others to practice and share their faith. We must be respectful of them as people that God loves and that Jesus died for, and although we may disagree with them, they are due the respect and dignity as human beings created by God.
2. **Be discerning** – While being respectful, we acquiescence (ascend into agreement) with their error. We must beware of their error and the subtle slide that can be made into error. Remember Scripture itself tells us, *“The heart is deceitful above all thing and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 NIV)* Therefore Jesus, Himself, tells us to *“... be wise as serpents (discerning) and harmless as doves (respectful).” (Matthew 10:16 NKJV)* And the Apostle Paul tells us in *Ephesians 5:15-16*, *“<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”*
3. **Be Scriptural** – We have emphasized over and over throughout the introduction of this study the important of being grounded in God’s Word. The Apostle Paul tells us in *Colossians 2:6-8*, *“<sup>6</sup> So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces<sup>[a]</sup> of this world rather than on Christ.* And Paul instructs Timothy and us in *2 Timothy 3:14-17*, *“<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy (of his faith) you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*
4. **Be truthful** – Listen to *2 Timothy 4:1-5*, *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”* In other words, we must stand for the truth and we must speak the truth in love.
5. **Be burdened** – We are to be burdened for all of those who are lost and separated from Christ for whatever reason. We should have a heartfelt compassion and burden for those who are deceived by false religion and false teaching. If you don’t, ask God to burden your heart for the lost and for those caught up in false teaching.

With those ground rules for the study restated, let’s take a look at a brief history of the Jehovah’s Witnesses as we seek to understand this rapidly growing group and why they may be considered a cult and not Christian.

How much do we really know about many of the “cults” that surround us every day and may even show up at our door from time to time? More importantly how do we answer them and their false beliefs up against Biblical Christianity? The cult, known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, have mapped out the entire United States so that every residence will be contacted at least once or twice a year by a team of door-to-door workers. They claimed recently that in one year over 3.6 million members spent over 835 million hours of door-to-door witnessing for the Watchtower! Out of that sheer grueling persistence they have been able to harvest many people who have not been grounded in God’s Word and were easily led astray by this counterfeit religion. They are not going away and many are being led into their delusion without even recognizing what they believe. Together let’s look at this group, known as Jehovah’s Witnesses, as we seek to unmask their false teaching and hopefully provide some helpful tool in reaching this group of lost souls.

## I. HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES?

Test Your Knowledge - Below are several statements concerning the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Read each statement carefully and then place a “T” in the blank if the statement is true, and a “F” in the blank if the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ **1. Jehovah’s Witnesses claim to be Christian.** (*TRUE – Jehovah’s Witnesses do claim to be the real or the true Christians*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2. Jehovah’s Witnesses make no distinction between Christian denominations and groups. Catholics, Baptist, Methodists, Church of Christ, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, etc., are all lumped together.** (*TRUE – For Jehovah’s Witnesses, both Catholics and Protestants are lumped together historically under the derogatory term “Christendom” and “Religionists.”*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **3. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not see Christians as evil, just misguided and deceived.** (*FALSE – Jehovah’s Witnesses aim broad-based attacks against mainstream Christianity as satanic, pagan, evil and under the judgment of God.*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **4. Jehovah’s Witnesses have great respect for Christian ministers and pastors because of their correct knowledge of Scripture.** (*FALSE – Jehovah’s Witnesses apply fervent denunciations in the Old Testament against false prophets to Christian pastors and clergy*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **5. Jehovah’s Witnesses see Christians as actually fighting against God.** (*TRUE – Jehovah’s Witnesses see mainstream Christianity as militantly engaged in a life or death battle against Jehovah God and against God’s true people... Jehovah’s Witnesses*)

## II. WHO ARE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

**A DEFINITION OF JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES** - Jehovah's Witnesses is a millenarian (*relating to or believing in doctrines such as Jesus Christ's Second Coming, a final conflict between good and evil, or the end of the world, especially those based on the book of Revelation, relating to or believing in the coming of some future utopian age, relating to or suggesting the end of the world*) restorationist (*belief in a restoration to what something was meant to be or a more accurate and purer form of itself*) pseudo-Christian denomination with nontrinitarian (*non-belief in the orthodox*)

*Christian doctrine of the trinity or triune nature of God* beliefs distinct from mainstream Christianity.<sup>[3]</sup>

**GROWTH AND STATISTICS FOR JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES** – According to August 2013 organizational statistics published in the 2014 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses.

### **3 Important Numbers Indicating Statistical Growth of Jehovah’s Witnesses:**

1. **7.9 million** - Worldwide membership exceeds 7.9 million adherents involved in evangelism. This by no means is the total number of those attending Jehovah’s Witness gathers and events, nor how many are actually seeking membership with the organization, merely how many are considered actual member. Membership must be earned and doesn’t come easily.
2. **14 million** - Year convention attendance exceeds 14 million. This number includes members as well as those in pursuit of membership.
3. **19.2 million** - Annual “Memorial” attendance exceeded 19.2 million. “Memorial” is when Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate Christ's death as a ransom or "propitiatory sacrifice" by observing the Lord's Evening Meal, or Memorial. They celebrate it once per year, noting that it was instituted on the Passover, an annual festival. They observe it on Nisan 14 according to the ancient Jewish luni-solar calendar. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that this is the only celebration the Bible commands Christians to observe. Of those who attend the Memorial, a small minority worldwide partake of the unleavened bread and wine. This is because Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the majority of the faithful have an earthly hope. Only those who believe they have a heavenly hope, the "remnant" (those still living) of the 144,000 "anointed", partake of the bread and wine. In 2011, the number of persons who partook worldwide was 11,824, whereas the number who attended was 19,374,737

**GOVERNANCE FOR JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES** – What are the sources of authority and governance for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society or Jehovah’s Witnesses?

### **5 Keys to Understanding Jehovah’s Witnesses Governance:**

1. **It is hierarchical in structure** - Jehovah's Witnesses are organized hierarchically, which they call a "theocracy" reflecting their belief that it is an earthly expression of God's heavenly organization.
2. **It is headquartered in Brooklyn, New York** – The organization is based in the Watch Tower Society's Brooklyn, New York headquarters.
3. **It is run by a governing body** - The organization is headed by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, with members of the Body and "helpers" organized into six committees responsible for various administrative functions within the global Witness community, including publication, assembly programs and evangelizing activity. At one time Jehovah’s Witnesses were lead and directed by their President and founding leaders. Although they still have a president, Jehovah's Witnesses are directed by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, a group of elders in Brooklyn, New York.
4. **The governing body establishes all doctrines for the church/organization** – Again, Jehovah's Witnesses are directed by the Governing Body of Jehovah's

Witnesses, a group of elders in Brooklyn, New York which establishes all doctrines<sup>[7]</sup> based on its interpretations of the Bible.<sup>[8]</sup>

5. **The governing body uses their own interpretation of the Bible to establish doctrine and teaching for the church/organization** - Although they claim to base their interpretations on the Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses to use their own translation, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.<sup>[9]</sup> They believe that the destruction of the present world system at Armageddon is imminent, and that the establishment of God's kingdom on earth is the only solution for all problems faced by humanity.<sup>[10]</sup>

**BEGINNINGS FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES – We will examine the beginning of this group a little more closely, but for now let's take just a quick synopsis.**

#### **5 Quick Facts About the Founding of Jehovah's Witnesses:**

1. **The group emerged from the early Bible Student movement.**
2. **The group was founded in the late 1870s by Charles Taze Russell**
3. **The group was begun by Russell with the formation of Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society,**
4. **The group saw significant organizational and doctrinal changes under the leadership of Joseph Franklin Rutherford.<sup>[11][12]</sup>**
5. **The groups name *Jehovah's witnesses*, based on Isaiah 43:10–12,<sup>[13]</sup> was adopted in 1931 to distinguish themselves from other Bible Student groups and symbolize a break with the legacy of Russell's traditions.**

**JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES DISTINCTIVES – There are some things that set Jehovah's Witnesses apart and with which they are most readily recognized.**

#### **10 Jehovah's Witnesses Distinctives:**

1. **Door-to-door Evangelism** - Jehovah's Witnesses are best known for their door-to-door preaching, distributing literature such as *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*
2. **Non-military Service** – They are known refusing military service
3. **Refusal of blood transfusions** -
4. **The name Jehovah** - They consider use of the name *Jehovah* vital for proper worship.
5. **No Trinity** - They reject Trinitarianism... the orthodox Christian teaching concerning the Trinity.
6. **No Hell** – They reject the notion of hell and hellfire, which they consider to be unscriptural doctrinally.
7. **No Holidays** - They do not observe Christmas, Easter, birthdays, or other holidays and customs they consider to have pagan origins incompatible with Christianity.<sup>[14]</sup>
8. **Non-patriotism** – As already stated they are conscientious objectors to military service and they refuse to salute the flag or wear patriotic symbols. The religion's position regarding conscientious objection to military service and refusal to salute national flags has brought it into conflict with some governments.
9. **Persecution** - Jehovah's Witnesses have been often heavily persecuted and their activities are banned or restricted in some countries.

## 10. Civil Rights and Freedom of Religious Expression - Persistent legal challenges by Jehovah's Witnesses have influenced legislation related to religious civil rights in this country and several other countries

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  - *Millenarian*: [Beckford, James A.](#) (1975). *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. pp. 118–119, 151, 200–201. [ISBN 0-631-16310-7](#).
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4. [Jump up to: <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup>](#) ["Jehovah's Witnesses Official Media Web Site: Our History and Organization: Membership"](#). Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses. "While other religious groups count their membership by occasional or annual attendance, this figure reflects only those who are actively involved in the public Bible educational work [of Jehovah's Witnesses]."
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9. [Jump up](#) ^ Edwards, Linda (2001). *A Brief Guide to Beliefs*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. p. 438. [ISBN 0-664-22259-5](#). "The Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation of Christianity and their rejection of orthodoxy influenced them to produce their own translation of the Bible, *The New World Translation*."
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11. [Jump up](#) ^ Michael Hill, ed. (1972). "The Embryonic State of a Religious Sect's Development: The Jehovah's Witnesses". *Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* (5): 11–12. "Joseph Franklin Rutherford succeeded to Russell's position as President of Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society, but only at the expense of antagonizing a large proportion of the Watch Towers subscribers. Nevertheless, he persisted in moulding the Society to suit his own programme of activist evangelism under systematic central control, and he succeeded in creating the administrative structure of the present-day sect of Jehovah's Witnesses."
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13. [Jump up](#) ^ [Isaiah 43:10–12](#)
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15. [Jump up](#) ^ Singelenberg, Richard (1989). "It Separated the Wheat From the Chaff: The 1975 Prophecy and its Impact Among Dutch Jehovah's Witnesses". *Sociological Analysis* **50** (Spring 1989): 23–40, footnote 8. [doi:10.2307/3710916](#). "The Truth' is Witnesses' jargon, meaning the Society's belief system."
16. [Jump up](#) ^ [Penton, M.J.](#) (1997). *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*. University of Toronto Press. pp. 280–283. [ISBN 0-8020-7973-3](#). "Most Witnesses tend to think of society

outside their own community as decadent and corrupt ... This in turn means to Jehovah's Witnesses that they must keep themselves apart from Satan's "doomed system of things." Thus most tend to socialize largely, although not totally, within the Witness community."

17. [Jump up ^ Chryssides, George D.](#) (1999). *Exploring New Religions*. London: Continuum. p. 5. ISBN 0-8264-5959-5. "The Jehovah's Witnesses are well known for their practice of 'disfellowshipping' wayward members."
18. [Jump up ^ Gary Botting](#), *Fundamental Freedoms and Jehovah's Witnesses* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993), pg 1–13.

### III. SOME “JEHOVAH’S WITNESS” TERMS AND PEOPLE YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Annihilation** – According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, unbelievers will not receive eternal punishment, but rather will be annihilated, or cease to exist.

**Little Flock** – Another designation for the 144,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses who live in heaven after their death. All other Jehovah’s Witnesses are barred from heaven and live instead on Paradise Earth. These are called “other sheep.”

**Michael the Archangel** – According to the Watchtower, Jehovah’s first creation, the archangel who later became Jesus the man.

**New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures** – The official translation of the Bible by Jehovah’s Witnesses, characterized by their own biased interpretations and poor translation of the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts.

**Russell, Charles Taze** – The founder of what is present day Jehovah’s Witnesses (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society). Russell wrote voluminously including the six-volume work, “Studies in the Scripture,” where he expounded his aberrational doctrines.

**Studies in the Scripture** – Seven volume work, six of which were written by Charles Taze Russell, founder of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Expounds the basic teachings and beliefs of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

**The Awake** – Watchtower periodical designed to evangelize the public.

**The Harp of God** – A book of Judge J.F. Rutherford, second president of Jehovah’s Witnesses, explaining Watchtower theology.

**The Watchtower** – One of the official publications of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

### IV. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

1. The official name of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is “The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.”
2. The founder of the group is Charles Taze Russell, who was born February 16, 1852 near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



3. Charles Taze Russell was raised a Congregationalist by his parents Joseph L. and Anna Eliza Russell.
4. At an early age Charles Taze Russell developed a terrible fear of hell and it was reported that he often went around writing on sidewalks to warn people.
5. By 1870 Russell had organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh, which centered around a denunciation of “organized religion.”
6. In 1879 Russell founded “The Herald of the Morning” which later developed into today’s “The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah’s Kingdom.”
7. In 1884 “Pastor” Russell, as he had then come to be known, incorporated “Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society” in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
8. One of the earliest published works of the new Society was the first in a series of several books by Charles Taze Russell himself called “Studies in the Scripture.”
9. Russell’s life was filled with scandal and legal entanglements, one of which was the “Miracle Wheat Scandal.”
10. Charles Taze Russell died on October 31, 1916 and control of the organization fell into the hand of Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford.
11. It was under the leadership of Rutherford that the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” was adopted.
12. Rutherford is also credited with establishing the headquarters of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York.
13. Judge J.F. Rutherford died on January 8, 1942 of cancer at his mansion called “Beth Sarim” in San Diego, California. He was 72 years old.
14. Upon his death Nathan Knorr became the new leader of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.
15. Under Knorr the cult saw phenomenal growth from 115,000 to over 2 million by the time of his death in 1977.
16. In 1961, while Knorr was in the leadership position, the Jehovah’s Witnesses came up with their own translation of the Bible entitled “The New World Translation.”

## V. LEADERSHIP OF THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

**Charles Taze Russell – 1870 to 1916** - Founder of the cult.

**Joseph Franklin Rutherford – 1916 to 1942** – Under Rutherford the organization took the name Jehovah’s Witnesses, and established headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.

**Nathan Knorr – 1942 to 1977** - Knorr gave the cult their own translations of bible called “New World Translation”, also cult saw its largest growth from 115,000 to 2 million under his presidency.

**Frederick W. Franz – 1977 to 1992** – Franz was baptized a Lutheran, became a Catholic and then a Presbyterian, felt called to the ministry and was in pursuit of becoming a Presbyterian, studied Biblical Greek in college, after reading some of Charles Taze Russell’s literature turned to the Watchtower Bible Tract Society. He became known as the Society’s leading theologian and was a leading figure in the preparation of the Witnesses’ New World Translation of Scripture. He was vice president under Knorr before becoming president.

**Milton G. Henschel – 1992 to 2000** – Henschel was raised a Jehovah Witness from birth. His father, Herman George Henschel, assisted in the establishment of many of the Watch Tower's ministries in the 1920's. Milton G. Henschel was instrumental in the spread of the Jehovah's Witness worldwide negotiating freedom of religion in Liberia (where he was detained for a period of time for his beliefs) and later in Russia where he gained national recognition of Jehovah's Witnesses in March of 1991. Henschel was also a leading voice for the Witnesses often dangerous view on non-medical treatments such as transfusions and other surgical procedures even going so far as to call organ transplants "cannibalism."

**Don A. Adams – 2000 to present** – Adams grew up an Episcopalian, his entire family eventually became Witnesses when one of his brothers could not get exempt from military service, instrumental as he directed world missionary activities for Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. In 2000, the New York Daily News described Adams as "a longtime insider at the world headquarters in Brooklyn Heights." Adams continues to serve as president of the organization even today though with much less power and authority than his predecessors as today Jehovah's Witness are more controlled by a Governing Board called "the anointed" (*an all-male group that varies in size, but since early 2014 has comprised seven members, all of whom profess to be of the "anointed"*).