

## **Jehovah's Witnesses: Summary**

The entire JW schema revolves around the disgust of one man against an incorrect doctrine of never-ending hell. This doctrine so offended Charles Taze Russell that he left organized religion. When he heard a preacher present an alternative to this error, Russell returned to religion, but brought with him the premise that a loving God would agree with Russell's view of what constituted love. He also felt that all true doctrines would fit Russell's view of logical understanding of scripture. Anything Russell disagreed with had to be explained by translation problems, which has eventually led to the New World Translation. The NWT carefully pays lip service to the original languages, but vigorously avoids allowing the natural sense of the Hebrew and Greek when that would contradict JW presuppositions.

God directs us to use our rational faculties (Q1) to evaluate the truth. He gives us more than enough information to make informed decisions and to build our faith. But He makes it clear that His thoughts are far above ours. Therefore, to impose our limits on God is to deny the very divinity of God. This is anthropomorphism: making God in man's image. As Paul says in 1 Cor 13, the most gifted preachers have only a poor view of God. There is much that we will learn after the second coming. The issue is sufficiency as opposed to exhaustive knowledge. JW's require that God be constrained by man's limitations.

JW's teach, as a result of slavish adherence to man's logic imposed on God, that Jesus is not God. It would be easy to pass them off as merely a harmless oddity. After all, they seem to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin. But when we listen to Jesus speaking to the unbelieving Jews (Q2), we find that belief in his divinity is essential for our salvation. John emphasizes this fact by saying that anyone who does not believe in Christ's divinity is not to be welcomed in your house! We did not revisit the numerous proofs that Jesus is Yahweh, but it is clear that he is. Only the Trinity allows the clear testimony of the NT (even in the NWT!) on this issue to be true.

The reason why Jesus' divinity (Q3) is so important is that each of us is responsible for his own sins (Q4). This stands in stark contrast to the JW idea that the perfect life of one man is needed only to pay for the perfect life of Adam which was lost when he fell. This of course negates the idea of individual responsibility. If atoning for Adam's sin is enough to save humanity, then nothing any of us does or believes has any bearing on salvation. By way of contrast, if our sins are important, then every one of us requires atonement. The only sacrifice possible is one which is greater than all our sin: God himself.

While the questions in the summary session do not cover the Hymn to Christ, we cannot pass this way without commenting on it. In Philippians 2, Paul presents the incredible picture of the immortal, infinite God setting aside all of his power and privilege to become a man, with the plan of living a perfect life with our infirmities. Then, having done what already seems impossible, he dies for us. The immensity of this love is beyond comprehension. We did wrong, and he pays for it, risking everything irrevocably. The possibility of the cross being a one-way street makes Jesus' sacrifice even greater. And he was not alone. As a part of God, the loss of Jesus would be an immense injury to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The tears in heaven during the separation as Jesus hung on the cross must have been beyond belief. But the joy at the resurrection is our joy as well, since because of it, we will be able to sing that new song in heaven.

The JW doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that "it" is an impersonal force which emanates from the Father. As we noted in earlier sessions, the Holy Spirit is clearly a person, endowed with personal characteristics (Q5). He is not merely a person, however. Because it is possible to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is God. Blasphemy can only occur against God.

On other spirit issues, JW's insist that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit (Q6). Since his human life was the payment for our sins, he could not take it up again. As for his body, they say that it was transformed into a gas so that it would not suffer decay, in fulfillment of Psalm 16. They are unwilling to take note of the statements Jesus himself made, which are unaffected in the NWT. The Savior said that he would in fact take up his body after death. Then after the resurrection he explicitly told the disciples that he had flesh and bones, unlike a spirit. For a group of people who give great reverence to the Bible to ignore the direct testimony of the Savior is baffling to me. If he said he had a body, why won't they believe him? And if that is not enough, Paul tells us both that Jesus is God and that he still has a body in Col 2:9. Our mediator is a man. What more is required? If the JW's truly believe in the Bible, then they should be able to accept its teachings.

Another place where the Bible is very clear is in the issue of the saved (Q7). JW's point to Jesus' statement about "other sheep" and declare that there are two groups of saints. Unfortunately, they will not even allow Jesus to finish his sentence. Because he ends that sentence by saying that all his sheep would be "one flock." This denies the idea of separate groups. The 144,000 is the "great crowd" of Rev 7. Only by ignoring the context can one end up calling them separate. John "heard" their number, he turned around and "saw" the actual multitude. And there will not be one group in heaven reigning and another on earth. God will make his home with men on earth. All saints will be on earth with Him.

The return of Christ (Q8) will be the loudest event in history. The scriptures clearly tell us that every living person will see him. The saints, both dead and alive will rise to meet him in the clouds. The living wicked will call for the rocks to fall on them. There is no possibility that anyone will miss it. Yet the JW's insist that it has already happened invisibly. Their prophetic timetable violates Jesus' own statement in Acts 1:7 that we are not to know when he will return. And as we examine history since the alleged return, we can find no evidence whatever to confirm it. All indications are that sin is increasing in an inevitable progression toward the state described in Rev 13 where everyone will either be for or against God. There will be no bystanders.

We have not discussed a number of issues, since they have no substantial bearing on the gospel. It is worth mentioning that the JW church promotes the idea that it is the "true and faithful slave" organization which has absolute ecclesiastical authority on earth. The scriptural basis for this identification is as valid as the other JW doctrines we have studied. It is wrong. But it establishes a cult-style bunker mentality of "us versus them." It is also the functional equivalent of the RCC "infallible teaching office," with all its faults. The Watchtower recognizes its problems, and insists that members only study from approved sources and together with other JW's. They even state that a member who studies independently will leave the church in two years. The truth of this is obvious. The student will see the truth. And if the Bible is the final authority, there should be no excuse for speaking against its study.

This brings us to a key point. Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christians (Q9). As much as they protest their allegiance to Christ, they do not worship the true Christ. And, as Christ said, belief in him as God is essential. For if one believes in a false Christ, that false Christ will not lead to knowledge of the true Father which is essential for eternal life.

We must ponder (Q10) just what the Jehovah's Witnesses have done to the gospel. Words fail me. A few points come to mind. The incredible love of Jesus is pulled down to the level of merely human commerce when Christ is made into a created being doing a job. The sacrifice of deity for us becomes mere payment of a debt. And when we look at levels of reward based on works, we find again a commercial transaction. We can buy our way into higher honor by our own works. This trashes the gospel message that God has done it all for us. It takes a gift of God and turns it into something God owes us. If that is true, then we have the right to command God. While no JW will outright say such a thing, that is the fundamental nature of salvation where works play a part. They have placed man above God.

We cannot allow God to be pulled down to the level of man. God is the creator. We are the creation. He has the right to command us and to destroy us for our sins. But he did not. He came down himself, in the most unimaginable display of love, to pay the debt for us. This gift must never be demeaned. Only by true worship of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who gave up his divine prerogatives, can we ever become the true saints he has redeemed. We have no part in this other than true worship. Jesus is God. He is called God, worshiped, and prayed to. We must show the JW's the true love of God so that they can come to know the true God.