

JESUS CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGY OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

His Person, Work, and What That Means for the Salvation of Mankind

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

“*What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he*” (Matthew 22:42)? This work directs that question toward Jehovah’s Witnesses. Its main considerations are:

- 1) Who is Jesus Christ?
- 2) What did Christ do for us during his time on earth?
- 3) What does Christ’s work mean for us and our salvation?

First, Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Christ was Jehovah’s first creation and the instrument through whom he created the rest of existence. As a created being, Christ is not true God; he is merely the Son of God, otherwise known as Michael the Archangel. When Christ came to earth, he became nothing more than a perfect man, the equivalent of Adam before the fall. After his death, Christ once again was raised to heavenly existence as Michael the Archangel, who will reign over all creation as millennial king.

Second, Christ came to earth to demonstrate how to be a faithful Witness of Jehovah, and he died an innocent sacrificial death to cancel out Adam’s sin for humanity.

Third and finally, Christ’s cancelling Adam’s sin means that during his millennial reign the vast majority of humanity will receive one full and fair opportunity to prove to Jehovah their worthiness for everlasting life – the same opportunity Adam had in Eden.

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Annotated Bibliography

It should be said at the outset that all of the following resources were helpful and useful, and I would gladly recommend most of them for further reading. However, there are some that stand out among the rest for their excellence. These are marked *, and those sources which come most highly recommended are marked **.

Especially in this field of research, date of publication (or revision) is very important. Jehovah's Witnesses operate under the principle of progressive revelation (based on the "new light" of Proverbs 4:18) so it is best to work with the most recent materials, otherwise one's research may be out-of-date and thus inaccurate. Although changes in major doctrine are rare, different methods of argumentation and defense are constantly being introduced.

Pertinent and concise resource notes which may be of interest and value are listed below the references.

Bergman, Jerry. "The Adventist and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism." *America's Alternative Religions*. Timothy Miller, ed. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Perhaps more so than any other work on this list, this article examines the close relationship between Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses as far as their history and doctrinal development goes (especially their views of death, the soul, and Christ's invisible return). It also demonstrates the divergent paths both religions have taken since the days of William Miller, Nelson Barbour, and Charles Taze Russell, particularly in the areas of healthcare and education.

Bowman, Robert M. *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989.

This book is an extensive treatment of two main battleground passages between Jehovah's Witnesses and orthodox Christians in the gospel of John: 1:1 and 8:58. The author meticulously analyzes Jehovah's Witness arguments against the traditional understandings of the passages as support for Christ's deity, and points out the illegitimacy of their various views and stances. In a skillful and clear way the author grammatically, hermeneutically, and contextually shows that the traditional interpretations of the passages are not only true and right in themselves, but also harmonize with the rest of Scripture. Especially helpful is the added consideration of what other scholars have written on the issue, especially regarding the application of Colwell's well-known rule about anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominatives to John 1:1.

Bowman, Robert M. *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991.

This book isn't about Jehovah's Witness theology so much as it is about their methodology of hermeneutics. The author begins by laying out proper principles of biblical interpretation, then shows how Jehovah's Witnesses often abuse those principles – whether by intellectual intimidation (e.g., "As any logical person can see..." or "Therefore the only reasonable and honest explanation is..." or "Every true believer will agree that..."), taking passages out of context, setting up straw men for arguments opposing the Watchtower (or under-representing or misrepresenting other positions), or improper application of the analogy of faith. Ultimately the author concludes that Jehovah's Witnesses have such a different way of interpreting the Bible because they put the cart before the horse – they determine their doctrine according to their own reason (see especially p. 91-92), and then search for scriptures that seem to support their teachings.

*Ehlke, Roland Cap. *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2008.

This book is well known among WELS circles, having been produced by Northwestern Publishing House and written by a former WELS pastor. Like any good book about Jehovah's Witnesses, the author covers the history of the organization, basic teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and traditional Christian answers to those teachings, and an appendix of common terms and vocabulary to be familiar with in Jehovah's Witness theology. However, maybe the most satisfying thing about this book is the third main part, "Christian Witness to Witnesses." This section puts the previous doctrinal section into practice, focusing on where the rubber meets the road: sharing the true good news of Jesus with those who really need to hear it. The author offers wise advice not only about how to safeguard our own faith, but about how to approach Jehovah's Witnesses with the gospel and then support those who come out of the organization and yearn for a better relationship with God and their fellow believers.

*Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963.

While only a quarter of this book is dedicated to Jehovah's Witnesses, it was certainly the most helpful in my research for this paper. Generally speaking, Hoekema's intention for this book was very similar to my intention for this paper – to simply present Jehovah's Witness teaching clearly and thoroughly. After first covering the history of the organization and its basis and methodology for interpreting Scripture, Hoekema covers all the important issues relating to the plan of salvation for mankind: God, Man, Christ, Salvation, the Church and Sacraments, and the Last Things. Quoting original sources extensively while giving a systematic presentation of Jehovah's Witness doctrine, the author always keeps a keen eye to the most important issues: how does all this agree with the Bible, and what effect does it have on the eternal welfare of these people?

Refer below to "Other Recommended Reading" for the revised and updated version of this work.

Kern, Herbert. *How To Respond – Jehovah's Witnesses*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1995.

A very popular, rather short Lutheran treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses by a Missouri Synod pastor. Kern covers all of the main teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses in a very basic way that is good for beginners and people looking for a springboard into deeper research and witnessing opportunities. This little book is very helpful and useful as a starting point into Jehovah's Witness theology. Kern has a pastor's heart and offers good advice for reaching out to Jehovah's Witnesses with the gospel. Of special note, pages 16-21 offer helpful charts explaining the differences between Christ's states of humiliation and exaltation as well as equating Jesus with Jehovah.

Martin, Walter Ralston. *Jehovah of the Watchtower: A Thorough Exposé of the Important Anti-Biblical Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1974.

Walter Martin is a man who has done extensive research into Jehovah's Witnesses and their theology, a fact which this book makes clear. While the format of this book is generally very similar to other books of the same type and purpose, what really sets this book apart is chapter 2. Three aspects of this chapter are especially helpful and insightful: 1) a twelve-point Watchtower-approved basic statement of faith, the first of its kind; 2) seven sets of definitions of and arguments against what Jehovah's Witnesses think "religionists" (traditional Christians) teach, one per major doctrinal point; and 3) a chart which shows the striking similarities between the main teachings of Charles Taze Russell and those of modern Jehovah's Witnesses, even as Jehovah's Witnesses try to distance and emancipate themselves from Russell publicly.

**McKinney, George D. *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962.

Along with Hoekema's *The Four Major Cults*, this work was one of my two main non-Witness sources. Though somewhat dated, McKinney's work was still largely useful and helpful. His research was thorough and well-documented. What perhaps sets this work apart from the rest, though, is that at the end of each section of Jehovah's Witness doctrine, the author tried to give simple summary statements of the material just covered. This was very appreciated, especially since in Jehovah's Witness theology it is easy to get lost in the muddle of unfamiliar teachings and so to miss the forest for the trees. The book was satisfactorily in-depth where it needed to be, and the summary statements helped the reader stay engaged and not lose touch with the bigger picture and how the various Watchtower doctrines fit together.

Morey, Robert A. *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness: How to Successfully Take the Initiative When They Come to Your Door*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1980.

Morey's basic premise in this book is that no effective witnessing can be done to Jehovah's Witnesses until they are broken free from the Watchtower's influence. Otherwise there are just too many stumbling blocks and barriers in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses, who are thoroughly trained not to trust anything non-Jehovah's Witnesses have to say about God's Word. Therefore Morey seeks to break down the idea that the Watchtower is reliable and can be trusted. Since the Watchtower has proclaimed itself God's only true prophet in these last days, all the false prophecies in its past declare the Watchtower to be a false prophet which should be neither respected nor feared. The vast majority of this book contains photocopies of primary Watchtower source materials which make false prophecies that have gone unfulfilled in time. The intention of the book, the author says, is to open the eyes of Jehovah's Witnesses and let them come to their own conclusions about the reliability of the Watchtower from the evidence before them and by answering the simple questions the author raises based on the sources themselves. The treasures of this book are the last two parts: part three, which follows on the heels of the inevitable conclusion that the Watchtower is a false prophet, is an extensive list of passages and questions that equate Christ with the true God, Jehovah, Yahweh; and finally the summary diagram near the end of the book is a very helpful and clear way to show that Christ and God are one and the same.

Schulz, Reuel J. "Jehovah's Witnesses." *Our Great Heritage*. Vol. 2. Lyle W. Lange, ed. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991.

A very simply, short presentation of Jehovah's Witness history and basic teachings. This article, written by a WELS pastor, originally appeared in *The Northwestern Lutheran* in 1971.

Thomas, F. W. *Masters of Deception: An Exposé of the Jehovah's Witnesses, with Clear-Cut Suggestions for Refuting their Teachings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972.

There is much to commend this book in the way of content; it is undoubtedly one of the more insightful and clear books I read in addressing the important issues in the theological system of Jehovah's Witnesses. However, Thomas, a former military man, often falls short in the encouragements of Paul and Peter to speak the truth in love and do so with gentleness and respect. Although I really appreciated the format of this book – each chapter dealt with a certain doctrinal issue, and the author addressed those issues pertinent passage by pertinent passage – the author does not show much tact or tenderness in the way he goes about addressing error. His indignation at the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses is understandable, but he doesn't always properly distinguish between the teachings and those taught. However, if one can get by the sometimes rough method of presentation, there is much in this book that is very beneficial for not only understanding Jehovah's Witness doctrine, but also for understanding where they go wrong scripturally.

Jehovah's Witness Sources

“Do All Good People Go to Heaven?” *The Watchtower*, Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, February 1, 2010.

This *Watchtower* issue covers the subject of heaven: who will go there, what it will be like, and what kind of bodies people will have there. It also directs readers to the earthly hope that the vast majority of humanity has for eternity.

“Exposed: Six Myths about Christianity.” *The Watchtower*, Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, November 1, 2009.

This *Watchtower* issue dealt with six “myths,” four of which were at least somewhat pertinent to the topic of this project: the soul is immortal, the wicked suffer in hell, all good people go to heaven, and God is a Trinity. Each myth was given a page or two of space where the Jehovah's Witness position was presented and the Christian position was torn down.

**Insight on the Scriptures*. 2 vols. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988.

A slightly revised and updated replacement for *Aid to Bible Understanding* (1971). This is the most thorough work that Jehovah's Witnesses have produced to present their theology and Biblical interpretations. Essentially a Bible dictionary covering nearly every possible word and topic in Scripture, this work has become as close to an all-inclusive Jehovah's Witness dogmatic textbook as there is in existence. Much like their other writings, *Insight on the Scriptures* tends to shoehorn in at every possible opportunity denials of Christ's deity and ridicule of traditional Christianity.

Jehovah's Witnesses: Who Are They? What Do They Believe? Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2000.

This is a simple but helpful tract that tells all about Jehovah's Witnesses – their name, their growth and development as an organization, their beliefs, their world-wide work, and especially their “good news” that they want you and your community to hear.

The Kingdom is at Hand. Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1944.

This book is a relatively insignificant addition to the *Watchtower* library. It is another basic presentation of *Watchtower* theology with a special focus on the theocratic kingdom of Jehovah; Jehovah's chosen king, Christ; and the good news thereof which Jehovah's Witnesses are charged to share.

Life Everlasting – In Freedom of the Sons of God. Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1966.

This book is intended for more in-depth study by Witnesses themselves, and particularly those approaching Baptism. It is not a beginner's textbook; it is intended to be more meat than milk. This volume takes a much closer look at Baptism and Christ's role as Savior. Teachings of special note which come from this book regard the likelihood of the battle of Armageddon taking place in 1975, and the increasing righteousness of the great crowd after Armageddon which will allow them to gain eternal life on their own merits.

New Heavens and a New Earth. Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1953.

This book seems to be one large commentary on Isaiah 66:22. Its basic tenets are that Christ returned in 1914 to set up his kingdom over all creation (“new heavens”); this will eventually lead to a new human society living on this planet under God's sovereign rule (“new earth”); and one must become a Jehovah's Witness to survive into the new world.

**Reasoning From the Scriptures.* Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989.

This is essentially the training manual which is currently in use for door-to-door outreach work among Jehovah's Witnesses. Going topic by topic, *Reasoning from the Scriptures* presents commonly asked questions and offers passages and standard answers in reply. It presents eye-opening view of the way Jehovah's Witnesses think and function.

Russell, Charles T. *Studies in the Scriptures.* 7 vols. Brooklyn, NY: International Bible Students Association, 1924.

Originally titled *Millennial Dawn* and hailed in its day as the greatest theological work since apostolic times, this is the foundational work of Jehovah's Witnesses and the cornerstone upon which the organization was built. It is interesting, then, that Jehovah's Witnesses are discouraged from reading *Studies in the Scriptures* because it is out of date (both temporally and doctrinally). Originally six volumes, a seventh volume was added (spuriously) after Russell's death and presented as his posthumous work.

Rutherford, J. F. *The Harp of God: A Text-Book for Bible Study Specially Adapted for Use of Beginners; With Numerous Questions and Scripture Citations.* Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society and International Bible Students Association, 1921.

Rutherford uses this book as an opportunity to support essentially the same theology, chronology, and eschatology that Russell taught in his *Studies*. Rutherford uses the picture of a harp to represent the divine plan. The ten strings of a harp correspond to the ten great fundamental truths of Scripture (which also serve as chapter headings): Creation, Justice Manifested, the Abrahamic Promise, The Birth of Jesus, The Ransom, Resurrection, Mystery Revealed, Our Lord's Return, Glorification of the Church, and Restoration. Of special note for this paper is the five-stage systematic progression of salvation presented in the book: Repentance, Conversion, Consecration, Justification, and Sanctification.

Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God? Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989.

This was a very helpful tract which spent the majority of its time and space dealing with the issue of the deity of Christ. While some effort was spent on denying the Trinity and the deity of the Holy Spirit, mostly the focus was to prove that Christ was created and inferior to the Father. In support of this teaching, many passages were listed, expounded, and defended against the traditional Christian understanding. Many of the passages presented in this tract are also presented in the body of this paper.

The Truth Shall Make You Free. Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1943.

An early, basic textbook of Watchtower theology which was accompanied by a 64 page booklet of study questions for use in individual or group Bible study. Best known particularly for its chronological revisions and prediction that man would never be able to leave earth's atmosphere.

***What Does the Bible Really Teach?* Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2005.

This small handbook is currently in use by Jehovah's Witnesses for home Bible study with potential converts. Each chapter covers an important concept in the theology of Jehovah's Witnesses and presents JW theology as the only true religion, whereas traditional Christianity is presented as a religion of Satan that has long been corrupted. Relatively thorough and yet relatively concise, this book is the most "short and sweet" treatment of Jehovah's Witness doctrine available.

At the time of this writing, a free PDF version of this book (along with many other primary resources) can be downloaded from www.jw.org.

What Has Religion Done for Mankind? Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1951.

The stated purpose of this book was “straightening out this matter of religion in the minds of the people.” It is a presentation of the history of true and false religion – that is, Jehovah’s Witnesses and apostate Christendom – from the creation up to the present day. It then declares that Christ returned in 1914, chose Jehovah’s Witnesses as his own, and will soon destroy all other religious groups. The book also briefly addresses Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

“Why Get to Know God?” *The Watchtower*, Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, February 15, 2003.

This *Watchtower* issue contained two informative articles on the Lord’s Evening Meal concerning what the Meal is, when and how it should be celebrated, and who should attend and partake.

Sources by Former Jehovah’s Witnesses

Chretien, Leonard and Marjorie. *Witnesses of Jehovah: A Shocking Expose of What Jehovah’s Witnesses Really Believe*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1988.

Written by a couple who spent 22 years of their adult lives as dedicated Jehovah’s Witnesses, the purpose of this book is to expose the Watchtower as a false prophet that enslaves the consciences of its people. The first half of the book is a history of the organization with special emphasis on false prophecies and doctrinal inconsistencies. The second half focuses more on specific issues and teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses that led the Chretiens to realize the Watchtower’s error and leave the organization.

Crompton, Robert. *Counting the Days to Armageddon: The Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Second Presence of Christ*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1996.

This book is an in-depth survey of Jehovah’s Witness teachings on the end times throughout the history of the organization, and even reaching back into its roots in Adventism. The author traces the changes and influences in end times teaching from the early days of Russell all the way up to the time of publishing. Especially helpful is the “End Time Calendar” on p. 127 which outlines important dates and happenings (especially relating to 1914, 1918, and 1919) in a simple and clear way.

Dencher, Ted. *The Watchtower Heresy Versus the Bible*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1961.

Much like Thomas above, Dencher is not always the gentlest or most respectful or loving writer. As a former Witness, it is clear page in and page out that Dencher carries a very deep-seated bitterness toward the Watchtower Organization for the years he spent deceived inside it. But while that does often have a negative effect on his overall tone, it also many times provides some well-appreciated insights. Nowhere do both those factors show through more clearly than in the crucial chapters on “the Deity of Jesus Christ,” “the Triune Godhead,” and “Working Out Salvation—How Great the Price?”

*Franz, Raymond. *Crisis of Conscience: The Struggle between Loyalty to God and Loyalty to One’s Religion*. Atlanta, GA: Commentary Press, 2002.

While this work does not speak directly to the issue at hand in this paper, this book has become perhaps the most famous publication ever produced by a former Witness. Mr. Franz was for nine years a member of the Jehovah’s Witness Governing Body (the highest ruling body in the organization); never has anyone else as high ranking as he was come out of the organization and written about his experiences. This book is particularly eye-opening because it reveals the inner workings of the Watchtower Organization which are otherwise carefully guarded. The crisis of conscience to which Franz came that finally led him to leave the

Governing Body and write this book centered on the dishonesty, hypocrisy, and lovelessness of Jehovah's Witnesses in expounding and applying Bible truth for their people. A must read for anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of how the organization thinks and works.

Gruss, Edmond C. *Apostles of Denial: An Examination and Expose of the History, Doctrines and Claims of the Jehovah's Witnesses*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1975.

A rather thorough work that covers the history of the Watchtower organization, a summary (and refutation) of Jehovah's Witness beliefs, a survey of translations used by the organization and methods of Biblical interpretations, and personal testimonies of former Witnesses and suggestions for how to deal with current Witnesses. An especially helpful aspect of this book is that the summary of Jehovah's Witness beliefs and the refutation thereof are two separate sections. This makes it much easier to follow the line of thought and argumentation Jehovah's Witnesses use when formulating their doctrine. That kind of presentation also makes it less likely for Christians to present Jehovah's Witness doctrines as straw men that can be easily and quickly knocked down, because they can see how intricate and interconnected some of their doctrines and arguments are.

At the time of this writing, a free PDF version of this book can be downloaded from www.witnessinc.com.

Gruss, Edmond C. *We left Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimonies*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1974.

This work is quite simply what it says: a collection of the personal testimonies of people who had come out of Jehovah's Witnesses. It contains six separate testimonies, along with the author's own. A number of these testimonies are cited in my paper. I found these testimonies particularly helpful and intriguing because, while the various people came from very different backgrounds and circumstances, they all so clearly demonstrate the Watchtower organization's slavery to guilt and legalism and the power of the gospel to free hearts from that slavery and bring people to their Savior Jesus Christ.

**Magnani, Duane. *The Watchtower Files: Dialogue with a Jehovah's Witness*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985.

This book is among the most helpful for honestly learning and understanding the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as learning how to witness to them effectively. The two main parts of the book are sections on major doctrine and minor doctrine. For each doctrine (the resurrection, the Godhead, the deity of Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, etc.), the author presents the Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching on the issue. He then talks through that teaching in dialogue format, presenting the truly Biblical teaching on the matter and showing why the Jehovah's Witness teaching is untenable. But the true treasure of this book is that Magnani doesn't just cite Jehovah's Witness sources; he provides photocopies of the primary sources from which he bases his work. By doing so, everyone who reads his book can see for themselves what Jehovah's Witnesses really believe and teach and how their doctrine has fluctuated over the years.

This work is an abridged version of *Dialogue with Jehovah's Witnesses*, a two volume, 600 page magnum opus hailed on www.witnessinc.com as "one of the most exhaustive works analyzing Jehovah's Witnesses doctrine from the Christian perspective."

Reed, David A. *Jehovah's Witness Literature: A Critical Guide to Watchtower Publications*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.

This book is essentially an annotated bibliography of all the pertinent Jehovah's Witness literature from the time of Russell up to the time of its publication. Since there is so much material that the Watchtower has put out throughout the years, this book is invaluable for seeing and evaluating all the different works that show different influences and understandings of Scripture. A very nice feature of this book is that for each resource listed, distinctive characteristics are given such as (in)famous quotes, new teachings, reversals in doctrine, attempted cover-ups of embarrassing situations, etc.

Reed, David A. *Jehovah's Witnesses Answered: Verse by Verse*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986.

This has been for years one of the most popular Jehovah's Witness apologetics available. While this book contains the author's fascinating personal testimony about getting into and back out of Jehovah's Witnesses (including the origin of his newsletter, *Comments from the Friends*), the vast majority focuses on specific verses that are either abused by Jehovah's Witnesses to support their own doctrines or specific verses that are particularly helpful in leading Jehovah's Witnesses to a right understanding of God and his Word. The book is very helpful for understanding how Jehovah's Witnesses view and use Scripture like a wax nose to fit their preconceived doctrinal notions.

Schnell, William J. *Into the Light of Christianity: The Basic Doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959.

This book is written from the viewpoint of a man who has been out of Jehovah's Witnesses long enough to gain some perspective and understanding of the diametric difference between the Watchtower and traditional Christianity. The author spends fifteen chapters looking at all the major teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses, weighing them against Scripture, and coming to the conclusion that Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be considered Christian and thus do not have real hope for salvation. Two helpful charts concerning the deity of Christ are listed in the appendix to this paper.

Wilson, Diane. *Awakening of a Jehovah's Witness: Escape from the Watchtower Society*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002.

This is a tremendously compelling, shocking, and moving testimony of a woman who was the perfect prey for Jehovah's Witnesses. Physical abuse as a girl left the author particularly vulnerable to the totalitarianism of Jehovah's Witnesses. While she was at first attracted by what seemed like love, kindness, and fellowship, once inside the organization she quickly found out all that was an illusion. Doctrinally, the Watchtower Organization often waffled without apology – even if it cost lives – and blamed its people for presumptuous misunderstandings if they questioned its authority. Wracked with guilt and fear and suffering from psychological suppression and enslavement, this is the story of a woman fighting for freedom from a spider-web system that ensnares its members with intimidation and threats.

Journal Articles

Burrell, Maurice Claude. "Twentieth Century Arianism: An Examination of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ Held by Jehovah's Witnesses." *Churchman* 80, no. 2 (June 1, 1966): 130-139. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

Dividing Christ's existence into three chronological phases (the pre-existent Christ, the human Christ, and the exalted Christ), Burrell traces similarities in the thinking and theology between Arius and Charles Taze Russell, the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses. Addressing and answering many problem passages that Arians emphasize, the author goes so far as to show that Russell's teaching is even more radical than that of Arius and that this is seen as badge of honor for Jehovah's Witnesses who follow after Arius' tradition.

Chrissydes, George D. "Inauthentic Authenticity? Reviving Authentic Christianity in the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." *Scottish Journal Of Religious Studies* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 1999): 5-18. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

Of all the resources in this study, this one was perhaps the least useful from a conservative Christian standpoint. The author seemed to write from an outside perspective, neither supporting mainstream Christianity nor Jehovah's Witnesses nor Mormons, but rather upholding all three as equally legitimate. The only particularly useful part of this article as far as the subject matter of this project goes was an examination of Jehovah's Witness teaching on Baptism and the Lord's Evening Meal.

Dhavamony, Mariasusai. "Salvation Offered by Sects (a Theological Analysis and Evaluation)." *Studia Missionalia* 41, (January 1, 1992): 325-352. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

This article is rather light on information about Jehovah's Witnesses since it covers the concept of salvation in a number of different sects. However, the information it does contain about Jehovah's Witnesses, while brief, is very informative. Covering a surprising amount of main doctrines in a small amount of space (Christ's person and resurrection, the Holy Spirit, hell, the soul, death, the two classes, etc.), the main point is that, "Salvation, for the Witnesses, is the gift of eternal life to an otherwise mortal soul, and is based not on Christ's death but on loyalty to Witness leaders" (328).

Gruss, Edmond C., and Jay Hess. "Is it Proper to Worship Jesus? Examining a Jehovah's Witness Doctrine." *Christian Research Journal* 23, no. 4 (January 1, 2001): 22-25. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

This article is a fascinating study of the way Jehovah's Witnesses have historically answered the question in the title. From the beginning of the organization, worship of Christ was regarded as proper and their translations reflected that. The propriety of worshipping Christ was even recorded in the Watchtower's charter. But all that changed in 1954 in another effort to deny the deity of Christ, and the Watchtower has been trying to cover up the embarrassment ever since.

Harding, William N. "An Examination of Passages Cited by the Jehovah's Witnesses to Deny Jesus is God." In *Interpretation and History*, 273-279. Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

This article is a presentation of Jehovah's Witness arguments against the deity of Christ, as well as Christian defenses against each of their arguments. The most common pertinent passages are dealt with: Revelation 3:14, Colossians 1:15, Proverbs 8:22, John 14:28, 1 Corinthians 15:28, and 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Kennedy, Kevin D. "Making Man the Measure of God: Arius and the Jehovah's Witnesses." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 46, no. 2 (March 1, 2004): 17-29. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

Much like Burrell's article, this article traces the similarities between ancient Arianism and the current Jehovah's Witness movement. A strong theme of the paper is that ultimately the fatal flaw of both movements is a need for God to be reasonable and describable on human terms in a way that does not contradict human experience. Thus, ultimately, they reduce God (and the Son of God, especially) to something much less than what he reveals himself to be in his Word.

*Metzger, Bruce Manning. "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal." *Theology Today* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 1953): 65-85. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

This article has become a classic in Jehovah's Witness apologetics. Not only is it relatively clear and concise, but the author, being one of the world's foremost Greek scholars in the 20th century, speaks from a very authoritative and trustworthy position. The author in a span of 21 pages runs down the history of

Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as their basic teachings (and the errors therein) and tendency toward mistranslation of Scripture, especially in their *New World Translation*.

Perry, Victor. "Jehovah's Witnesses and the Deity of Christ." *Evangelical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 1963): 15-22. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2012).

This article covers a dialogue between the author and the Watchtower Organization in question-answer-reply format. Covering five points, the main issue addressed is the deity of Christ, with a special emphasis on the proper translation and interpretation of John 1:1.

Other Recommended Reading

The following are resources which I didn't investigate or address personally, but which were referenced and recommended repeatedly throughout my research. Undoubtedly there is much of value in looking into them.

Comments from the Friends. www.cftf.com/

The internet "ministry of former JW elder David A. Reed." Originally began as a quarterly newsletter in the early 1980s and has grown significantly. Specifically aimed at reaching Jehovah's Witnesses with the gospel. Contains much in the way of resources and related sites.

Franz, Raymond. *In Search of Christian Freedom*. Atlanta, GA: Commentary Press, 1991.

Written by the former Jehovah's Witness Governing Board member, this book explores how Jehovah's Witnesses continually smother Christian freedom and enslave their people's consciences to the Watchtower Organization.

**Hoekema, Anthony. *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974.

Revised, updated, and expanded from *The Four Major Cults*. This is my most highly recommended work.

Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries. www.ronrhodes.addr.com/

The internet ministry of Dr. Ron Rhodes. Not limited to Jehovah's Witnesses, but covers many cults and counter-Christian groups and movements. In his own words: "Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries is a teaching and resource ministry that specializes in defending Christianity against atheists, agnostics, skeptics, the cults, world religions, and any group teaching false doctrine. This ministry produces concise materials that enable Christians to defend their faith."

Reed, David A. *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996.

Reed's newest book is formatted in a very similar way to how Jehovah's Witnesses think and work, especially in their own literature. Jehovah's Witnesses are very topical in their approach, as can be seen in much of their literature. They do not produce many Bible commentaries or address whole portions of Scripture within their original context, but rather they produce works on specific topics. Reed does the same, addressing many of the same popular topics that Jehovah's Witnesses do, while trying to honestly and faithfully present the Scriptures cited.

Rhodes, Ron. *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Jehovah's Witnesses*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009.

Picking up on the popular Jehovah's Witness book entitled *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, Rhodes in this book offers "convenient side-by-side comparisons of the New World Translation and the Bible, along with answers to each doctrinal error espoused by the Witnesses; point-by-point lists of the favorite tactics and arguments used by the Witnesses--along with effective, biblical responses to each; [and] questions you can ask to challenge the Jehovah's Witnesses' confidence in the Watchtower Society" (Book Description, Amazon.com). Revised and updated.

Schnell, William. *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave: The Confessions of a Converted Jehovah's Witness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956.

This book has become one of the most famous testimonies of a former Witness. Schnell recounts his journey into and back out of the totalitarian Watchtower Organization in a riveting and deeply emotional way. *Into the Light of Christianity* was a sequel to this book, and either quoted or referred to it often.

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1982.

The main text Jehovah's Witnesses used to work through doctrine with potential converts in years past. Seems to have been replaced in common usage by *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

Also worth consulting are two previous Jehovah's Witness discipleship books: *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life* (1968; Witnesses claim this little blue book is the second most widely circulated book in history, next to the Bible itself) and *Make Sure of All Things, Hold Fast to What is Fine* (1965).

Witness Inc. www.witnessinc.com/

Duane Magnani started this ministry in 1975, focused specifically on opening the eyes of Jehovah's Witnesses to the history of their organization. The website contains many helpful JW resources, especially historical resources aimed at showing Jehovah's Witnesses that the Watchtower Organization is neither Jehovah's true Prophet nor the rightful mouthpiece of his "faithful and discreet slave" (Matthew 24:45).

Finally, these websites were specially recommended by Marvin Kirchner and Wister Falcon as particularly helpful for resources and information about Jehovah's Witnesses:

www.4jehovah.org

www.4witness.org

www.4truth.net

www.freeminds.org

www.jwfacts.com

www.towerwatch.com

www.watchtowerdocuments.com

- Especially see this link for scans of original Watchtower source materials:
www.watchtowerdocuments.com/documents.html

INTRODUCTION

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ‘*What do you think about the Christ?*’” (Matthew 22:41-42, NIV84). This has been and remains the key question in every Bible-based religion not only since the time of Jesus when it was asked, but even since God first promised a Savior in the garden of Eden. This question is at the very heart of religion and will be for the rest of time because it separates the two religions of the world: the religion of salvation by our own works (which only leads to death), and the religion of salvation by grace through faith in the God-appointed Savior.

For this reason an evaluation of any supposedly Christian denomination needs to start with its view of Jesus Christ and his work – especially one that claims to be the *only* truly Christian group.¹ It is the intention of this study to give an honest presentation of the Jehovah’s Witness concept of Christ, his work, and its meaning for humanity, simply for the sake of academic and spiritual integrity. Well known are the basic tenets of the Jehovah’s Witnesses that run against the grain of traditional Christianity – primarily, denials of the Trinity and the deity of Christ. But too often in the backlash against such teachings and zeal to prove Bible truth unequivocally, an honest presentation of what Jehovah’s Witnesses *do* teach is scarcely to be found.

It is my hope that through a study such as this our zeal for the truth of God’s Word may not diminish, but rather may manifest itself in knowledge – not simply in anger, accusation, and caricature. To that end, this paper will take up the topic of Christ, his work, and its meaning for us in the view of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The purpose of this study is meant to be not so much a critique – there are plenty of good resources available that undertake that task – but more so as a simple presentation of the beliefs of this widely-known and aggressively-growing but little-understood religious group. It is of vital importance for Christians to be familiar with the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses, since perhaps more than anyone else Witnesses are constantly on the hunt for converts to their religion and specialize in feeding off of other Christian denominations. Jehovah’s Witnesses have permeated America as well as nearly every major country around the

¹ Franz, Raymond. *Crisis of Conscience: The Struggle between Loyalty to God and Loyalty to One’s Religion* (Atlanta, GA: Commentary Press, 2002), introduction. See also Reed, David A. *Jehovah’s Witness Literature: A Critical Guide to Watchtower Publications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 27: “Jehovah’s Witnesses have been taught to view their religion as totally separate from all the other churches of Christendom, neither related to them nor derived from them, but rather the product of divine intervention. God stepped in, so the Witnesses believe, to restore the truths of first century Christianity through the Watchtower organization.”

world, so knowing what they believe can only be beneficial for Christians (especially for pastors and future pastors) who want to equip themselves and others to meet this challenge head-on.

Matthew 22:42 goes on, “‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’ ‘The son of David,’ they replied.” This passage presents an alarming parallel between the *modus operandi* of the Pharisees and that of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both groups claim to be the true defenders of the faith; both groups claim to honor Jesus as he rightly should be. But in doing so both groups only give lip service to Jesus, while in fact they blasphemously dishonor him and turn away from him as their only Savior in favor of a religion trusting in their own works. Whereas the Pharisees were willing to admit that Jesus was a great prophet who was sent from God in fulfillment of prophecy to David, they violently protested the idea that he was God himself and that he came to give his life to save a totally depraved world from their sins.

But Jehovah’s Witnesses no doubt would turn up their noses at the Pharisees’ reply and offer the answer that Jesus was looking for (at least in their minds): “Whose son is the Christ? Jesus Christ is the Son of God, of course!” Now, it must be admitted that neither the Pharisees nor the Jehovah’s Witnesses would be incorrect in their answers. Jesus certainly was the Son of David insofar as that was a popular term for the promised Messiah who was to come, and Jesus certainly is the Son of God as the Scriptures proclaim. But where the Pharisees and Jehovah’s Witnesses go wrong is their understanding and presentation of their respective terms for Christ, and this is what makes Jehovah’s Witnesses specifically so dangerous.

So we now turn our attention fully to the Jehovah’s Witness concept of Christ. These are the three main questions that will be discussed in the course of this study: in the view of Jehovah’s Witnesses, 1) Who is Jesus Christ? 2) What did Christ do for us during his time on earth? and 3) What does Christ’s work mean for us and our salvation?

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Whereas in the understanding of traditional Christianity there is obvious continuity between the Son of God's states of being before his incarnation, during his earthly ministry, and after his resurrection, this presentation will show a very definite break between those states in the theology of Jehovah's Witnesses.² Thus this section has been divided under three sub-headings: the pre-human state, the human state, and the post-human state.

The Pre-Human State

Before the heavens and the earth were created, there was only Jehovah God – the eternal, immortal, monolithic God of perfect justice, power, love, and wisdom. He did not become “the Father” until he began his creative work by bringing into being the Son of God.³ There are, in fact, many sons of God, in the sense that they had a special place in his presence and plan – for example, Adam (Luke 3:38), the angels (Job 1:6), governmental rulers (Psalm 82:6), and believers (Galatians 3:26). But only Christ could rightly be called the Son of God in a unique sense because he was the first and only direct creation of Jehovah God.⁴

Such passages as Colossians 1:15, 17; Revelation 3:14; and Proverbs 8:22 are used to support the teaching that Christ was Jehovah's first creation. First and foremost, Colossians 1:15,

² Therefore also because, as will be clearly seen, the Jehovah's Witness view of Christ and his work are very different from that of historic Christianity, they understandably reject all the historic creedal formulations concerning the Christ. See McKinney, George D. *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 65.

³ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2005), 41 n.

⁴ Readers who are familiar with ancient Arianism will quickly and regularly notice close parallels between the theology of Arius and that of Jehovah's Witnesses. This is no accident: “Indeed, from the earliest days of their history, the Jehovah's Witnesses have viewed Arius as one of the great champions of the ‘true’ faith because he rejected the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Charles Taze Russell, taught that the council of Nicaea, which condemned Arius, marked the beginning of the great apostasy about which the Apostle Paul warned in 2 Thessalonians 2. Russell claimed that Nicaea marked the end of the true church, which was not reestablished until Russell himself founded the organization commonly known today as the Jehovah's Witnesses... In the seventh volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*, published shortly after Russell's death and containing his interpretation of the book of Revelation, Arius is given a prominent role. Russell identifies Arius as the angel of the church at Pergamum, the special messenger to the church of the fourth century sent to warn the church of the false teaching of the Trinity. Arius's warnings fell on deaf ears and the church began to fall away from the truth.” Kennedy, Kevin D. “Making man the measure of God: Arius and the Jehovah's Witnesses.” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 46, no. 2 (March 1, 2004): 17-29. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012), 23-24.

Especially with regard to their understanding of the person of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses would fully agree to the infamous statement of Arius that “there was a time when he was not.” For a more thorough consideration of the parallels between Arianism and Jehovah's Witnesses, see the just-cited article by Kevin Kennedy, as well as Burrell, Maurice Claude. “Twentieth century Arianism: an examination of the doctrine of the person of Christ held by Jehovah's Witnesses.” *Churchman* 80, no. 2 (June 1, 1966): 130-139. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012).

17 reads, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation... Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist” (The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ own *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which will from here on out be abbreviated as NWT; brackets theirs). Two key phrases make the point: “the firstborn of all creation,” and “he is before all [other] things.” According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, the fact that he is referred to as the *firstborn* means that he was created and is not eternal;⁵ the fact that he is the *firstborn* before all other things means that he was the very first creation of Jehovah God before everything else was created, and therefore can rightly be called his Son.⁶

Revelation 3:14 reads, “These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God” (NWT). Jehovah’s Witnesses understand “the beginning of the creation by God” to mean that God created Christ as the first in the series of everything that has been created. The operative word in this passage is obviously ἡ ἀρχή, “beginning.” Whereas some claim that here it means “beginner, prime source” or “ruler, preeminent one,” Jehovah’s Witnesses point out that “in his Bible writings, John uses various forms of the Greek word *arkhe*’ more than 20 times, and these always have the common meaning of ‘beginning.’”⁷ “Therefore, they say that the phrase ‘the beginning of the creation of

⁵ Though the intent of this paper is not to be a critique but rather a simple presentation of Jehovah’s Witness beliefs and arguments, this classic comment by Bruce Metzger regarding Colossians 1:15, 17 is just too good to exclude: “Here [the Son of God] is spoken of as ‘the first begotten of all creation,’ which is something quite different from saying that he was made or created. If Paul had wished to express the latter idea, he had available a Greek word to do so, the word *πρωτόκτιστος*, meaning ‘first created.’ Actually, however, Paul uses the word *πρωτότοκος*, meaning ‘first begotten,’ which signifies something quite different, as the following explanation by a modern lay theologian [C.S. Lewis] makes clear... ‘To beget is to become the father of: to create is to make. And the difference is just this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set. . . Now that’s the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man.’” Metzger, Bruce Manning. “The Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and theological appraisal.” *Theology Today* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 1953): 65-85. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2012), 77.

⁶ “Jehovah’s Witnesses take the phrase ‘the first-born of every creature’ in this passage to mean that he was the first part of the creation to come into existence, just as the first-born of a family is the first child in that family to enter the world. Jesus was created first and after that all other things were created.” Harding, William N. “An examination of passages cited by the Jehovah’s Witnesses to deny Jesus is God.” In *Interpretation and History*, 273-279. Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2012), 274.

⁷ *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 14.

God' means that Jesus was the first thing God created... According to this interpretation, Jesus is a created being and as such he cannot be God, for God is eternal (cf. Ps. 90:2).”⁸

Finally, Proverbs 8:22: “Jehovah himself produced me as the beginning of his way, the earliest of his achievements of long ago” (NWT). This section of Proverbs 8 is a personification of wisdom, and Jehovah’s Witnesses (claiming agreement by “most scholars”⁹) understand “wisdom” to stand for Christ in his pre-human existence. In this verse, they take the Hebrew verb יָרָא to mean “to create, produce” rather than other common translations such as “to acquire, possess.” Thus they say it is clear from the passage that Christ is not eternal but was created, or produced, as the earliest of God’s creative achievements. To support this interpretation, Jehovah’s Witnesses make special note of the Septuagint translation of this passage (κύριος ἔκτισέν με, “the Lord created me”) as well as the surrounding context, which they claim closely parallels Colossians 1:15-17.

After the Son of God was created, he then was given the special honor of serving as Jehovah’s instrument or agent in the creation of everything else in existence: first the angels and other spirit beings,¹⁰ and then “the heavens and the earth,” as Genesis 1:1 says, and everything in them. Colossians 1:16-17 (and its Old Testament parallel, Proverbs 8:22ff.) is the primary text Jehovah’s Witnesses use to teach that Christ created all other things in the universe after he was created: “By means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist” (NWT). Although the word is not in the original Greek text, Jehovah’s Witnesses insert the bracketed “[other]” a number of times into this passage because they say it completes the sense of the passage much like is normally done at Luke 13:2, 4 (“all *other* Galileans... all *other* men

⁸ Harding, "An Examination of Passages Cited by the Jehovah's Witnesses to Deny Jesus is God," 273.

⁹ *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 14.

¹⁰ However, as opposed to Jehovah God who alone is immortal and eternal, “Logos, the Angels, and the other spirit beings created before the beginning of the world were not endowed with immortality.” These “other spirit beings” must refer to the good angels who rebelled against God, which are now known as the devil and his demons. McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 51.

inhabiting Jerusalem”).¹¹ Therefore Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Jehovah God is not the Creator of all things directly but that his only direct creation was Christ the Son of God, who acted as Jehovah’s instrument in the rest of creation. So God was not in some strange way speaking reflexively to himself when he said at Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man,” but rather he was speaking to his previously-created Son as his faithful subject and co-worker who was assisting him in the creative work.¹²

So far we have covered two main points concerning the Jehovah’s Witness concept of the person of Christ, along with their supporting Scripture passages:¹³ Christ is a created being, having been created directly by Jehovah himself as the first and most excellent of all created beings; and after his own creation, Christ then created everything else in the universe as the instrument of Jehovah.¹⁴

¹¹ “[Jehovah’s Witnesses] say that... if [‘other’] can be inserted in those verses because it is implied by the context, the word ‘other’ can also be inserted in these verses for the same reason.” Harding, “An Examination of Passages Cited by the Jehovah’s Witnesses to Deny Jesus is God,” 275.

¹² “If you were to say, ‘Let us make something for ourselves,’ no one would normally understand this to imply that several persons are combined as one inside of you. You simply mean that two or more individuals will work together on something. So, too, when God used ‘us’ and ‘our,’ he was simply addressing another individual, his first spirit creation, the master craftsman, the prehuman Jesus.” *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 14.

¹³ Alongside Scripture, Jehovah’s Witnesses also readily quote early church fathers in support of their Arian teachings such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen, as well as more current “scholars,” translations, and writings. See *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 7. Jehovah’s Witnesses go to great lengths to argue that they teach what is good and right according to Scripture and true Christian tradition and the best scholarship, and this can often seem very convincing and be very intimidating to the reader who doesn’t know better. However, one must keep in mind that there is nothing new under the sun, and with enough searching, digging, and taking out of context some measure of support can undoubtedly be found for any interpretation or understanding, no matter how wrong it is. Furthermore, Jehovah’s Witnesses are often dishonest and misrepresentative in citing outside support of their positions. See Bowman, Robert M. *Understanding Jehovah’s Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 104: “Jehovah’s Witnesses often cite scholarly sources selectively and out of context, usually to support a conclusion opposite to that supported by the source... They have quoted from the scholarly work in a way designed to give the misleading impression that the source reaches the same conclusion as they do;” Bowman, Robert M. *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 28: “To back up this interpretation [of John 1:1], [Jehovah’s Witnesses] have over the years appealed to numerous translations, commentaries, articles, grammatical textbooks, and other scholarly sources which they feel lend credence to their interpretation. Sorting through what these various sources have said, and learning through careful study what they actually meant, will show that in almost every instance the JW’s have misunderstood the sources they quote;” and finally the quotation of a certain scholar in Ehlike, Roland Cap. *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2008), 96: “The Watchtower article has, by judicious cutting, made me say the opposite of what I meant to say.”

¹⁴ But what about Isaiah 44:24, which says, “I, Jehovah, am doing everything, stretching out the heavens by myself, laying out the earth. Who was with me?” (NWT). Doesn’t this mean that Christ must *be* Jehovah, since Jehovah *alone* created everything in existence? No, say Jehovah’s Witnesses. “The Father simply used the Son as a workman to help Him create the universe. The JW’s maintain that this is the same thing as an engineer who declares: ‘See, I built that bridge; however (continues the JW) the engineer who built the bridge used other

Having introduced those points, we turn to the gospel of John for further discussion. No treatment of the person of Christ in Jehovah’s Witness theology can be complete without an understanding of the first verses of the gospel of John in particular, as well as the book as a whole. The NWT at John 1:1-3 reads: “In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god. This one was in [the] beginning with God. All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence.” This passage perhaps more than any other is the *shibboleth* between Jehovah’s Witnesses and traditional Christians. It almost certainly is the passage that generates the most heated discussion between the two groups because of the unique way¹⁵ Jehovah’s Witnesses handle it. Whereas the majority of English translations translate the last clause of John 1:1¹⁶ “the Word was God” or an equivalent that expresses the true deity of the Word (Christ), Jehovah’s Witnesses buck that tradition and translate “the Word was a god,” claiming agreement by true and honest scholars. Their reasons for translating this way are these: 1) there is no Greek definite article before “god,”¹⁷ so this verse should be translated similarly to its parallel at Acts 28:6 (“they changed their mind and began saying he was a god,” NWT). 2) How could the Word be both with God and God himself?¹⁸ That is unreasonable. “God is not a God of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33, NWT), therefore the teaching that Christ *is* God as well as the doctrine of the Trinity as a whole

workmen to help him construct it.” Thomas, F. W. *Masters of Deception: An Exposé of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, with Clear-Cut Suggestions for Refuting their Teachings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 8.

¹⁵ Jehovah’s Witnesses are not the first to understand John 1:1 the way they do, but their translation and interpretation of the passage is and has been very uncommon from the early days of Christianity up to the present day.

¹⁶ See Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, 17-84 for a very thorough and excellent treatment of the pertinent exegetical and hermeneutical issues in John 1:1.

¹⁷ Much has been made in this passage of the proper application of E.C. Colwell’s rule concerning anarthrous preverbal predicate nominatives in common Greek usage. See Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, 66-69 for a discussion of the application of this rule here. This is the typical Jehovah’s Witness treatment of the issue (which, according to Bowman and others, drips with dishonesty and fallacy): “[Colwell] asserted that in Greek a predicate noun ‘has the [definite] article when it follows the verb; it does not have the [definite] article when it precedes the verb.’ By this he meant that a predicate noun preceding the verb should be understood as though it did have the definite article (‘the’) in front of it. At John 1:1 the second noun (*theos*), the predicate, precedes the verb—‘and [*theos*] was the Word.’ So, Colwell claimed, John 1:1 should read ‘and [the] God was the Word’...

“Colwell had to acknowledge this regarding the predicate noun...: ‘It is indefinite [‘a’ or ‘an’] in this position only when the context demands it.’ So even he admits that when the context requires it, translators may insert an indefinite article in front of the noun in this type of sentence structure.

“Does the context require an indefinite article at John 1:1? Yes, for the testimony of the entire Bible is that Jesus is not Almighty God. Thus, not Colwell’s questionable rule of grammar, but *context* should guide the translator in such cases. And it is apparent from the many translations that insert the indefinite article ‘a’ at John 1:1 and in other places that many scholars disagree with such an artificial rule, and so does God’s Word.” *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 28.

¹⁸ Jehovah’s Witnesses often misconstrue Trinitarian theology as Modalism.

must be false.¹⁹ 3) The rest of Scripture (and the gospel of John in particular) attests that Christ is a created being who is not true God co-equal with Jehovah, but is only God's Son and subordinate to the Father. This means according to Jehovah's Witnesses that John 1:1 not only doesn't support Christ's true and full deity, but even the passage's reference to the Word as "a god" is really only honorary²⁰ and has no literal meaning. The Word, Christ, was created "in the beginning" as a being wielding great power and sharing some of God's attributes, but only to a lesser degree or extent. He is called "a god" in a loose sense of the term, meaning more accurately that he is a "mighty one," just like the other angels. As Psalm 82:6 and John 10:34-36 make clear, one does not really need to be true God in order to be referred to by that term – after all, there are many gods in this world (1 Corinthians 8:5) and even Satan himself is referred to as a god (2 Corinthians 4:4).²¹ Such a title doesn't mean that Christ is God himself; it simply means that he does the work of God and reflects the divine quality of God.²²

Jehovah's Witnesses also make special note of the term *Logos*, "Word." This name for Christ means that he is the one who speaks on Jehovah's behalf, delivering messages and instructions as his spokesman and representative²³ – sort of like the chief executive officer of Jehovah God's kingdom.²⁴ However, while Christ does certainly occupy a high and honorable kingdom position, this does not mean that he is on level with Jehovah, who is Most High God. Jehovah's Witnesses insist as well that Christ's descriptions as "the Word" and as *μονογενής*,

¹⁹ But see this interesting and surprising Jehovah's Witness comment about God's eternity: "Our minds cannot fully comprehend it. But that is not a sound reason for rejecting it." *Reasoning From the Scriptures* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 148.

²⁰ See Burrell, "Twentieth Century Arianism: An Examination of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ Held by Jehovah's Witnesses," 131.

²¹ See a typical example of this argumentation in Perry, Victor. "Jehovah's Witnesses and the deity of Christ." *Evangelical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 1963): 15-22. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2012).

It is not uncommon in sources critical of Jehovah's Witness theology for the author to accuse Jehovah's Witnesses of polytheism because of their belief in one supreme God (Jehovah) and a lesser god (Christ). In fairness to Jehovah's Witnesses, though, that characterization is unfair according to their own description of Christ and their usage of the term "god" to mean not "a supreme being," but a simple honorific title meaning "a mighty one." But, of course, that still doesn't mean the Jehovah's Witness stance is correct.

²² By the generic term "divine quality," Jehovah's Witnesses mean no more than in similar expressions such as, "that dessert was divine," or "that man is a basketball god!" It is simply a way of expressing high honor and praise. See Bowman, *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, 70: "The JW reasoning here is that 'qualitative' means that the noun takes on some sort of vague and weakened adjectival force, so that John 1:1 means only that 'the Word was godlike, divine, a god.' In other words, the Word has *some* (not all) of the qualities or attributes of God, and possesses them to a *lesser degree* than God himself does. This allows the JWs to speak of Jesus as 'divine' and 'a god' while denying his omnipotence, eternity, and so forth."

²³ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 41.

²⁴ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 67. Since CEO is an important position, Jehovah gave Christ a certain amount of power and glory befitting his position – i.e., again, he made him "a god," a mighty one.

“only-begotten,” in John 1:14, 18²⁵ must be taken analogously to the way those same concepts normally function in this world.²⁶ Just as a word doesn’t exist until someone speaks it, so the Logos didn’t exist until Jehovah God created him. Just as a father begets a child and that child does not come into existence beforehand or without that impetus, so also the *Son* of God must have come into existence because God the *Father* brought him into existence.²⁷ This must be the case, otherwise those terms would be nonsense. Therefore “when the Bible speaks of God as the ‘Father’ of Jesus [the ‘only begotten’], it means what it says—that they are two separate individuals. God is the senior. Jesus is the junior—in time, position, power, and knowledge.”²⁸

So then the progression of John 1:1-3 is parallel to the progression in Colossians 1:15-17, which is why both these passages figure so prominently in Jehovah’s Witness teaching. Christ is a created being who was brought forth by the Father and is the highest ranking individual in all of creation, but still a lesser being than Jehovah God himself.²⁹ Christ then turned after being created himself and became Jehovah’s instrument in all the rest of creation.³⁰

²⁵ The translation of these verses is interesting because they reflect the bias that “only-begotten” must be taken analogously: “So the Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth... No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten god who is in the bosom [position] with the Father is the one that has explained him.” (NWT). See also this statement from the Watchtower book *New Heavens and a New Earth* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1953), 24: “Until his creation Jehovah God was sonless; by it he became a father... there was no coexistent matter present when God made himself a father... there was no female principle then in existence... So Jehovah God used nothing female, no mother, by which to produce his first son. For this reason he is rightly called ‘the only begotten Son of God,’ and he was given a ‘glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father.’”

²⁶ “Jesus’ being the ‘only begotten Son’ does not mean that he is of the same nature as God the Father or co-eternal with him. [The Jehovah’s Witnesses’] argument begins by noting that the Greek word *monogenes*, which is translated ‘only-begotten’ in John 3:16 to describe the Son of God, is the same word used in Heb. 11:17 to describe Isaac, the ‘only begotten’ son of Abraham. It is certainly clear, the Witnesses argue, that Isaac was only-begotten in the normal sense of the word, ‘not equal in time or position to his father.’ Abraham certainly existed prior to his only begotten son Isaac. The Witnesses go on to assert, based upon the fact that *monogenes* is used to describe both the Son of God and Isaac, that what is true of the begetting of Isaac must also be true of the begetting of the Son of God... The begetting of God’s Son, the Witnesses argue, must be exactly like that of human sons. Taking human begetting as their model, the Jehovah’s Witnesses conclude that there must have been a time when the Son did not exist, that the Father existed prior to the Son, and that the Son must be of some other, lesser essence than the Father.” Kennedy, “Making Man the Measure of God: Arius and the Jehovah’s Witnesses,” 26.

²⁷ Bergman, Jerry. “The Adventist and Jehovah’s Witness Branch of Protestantism,” *America’s Alternative Religions*. Timothy Miller, ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 34.

²⁸ *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 16.

²⁹ “It would seem that the Witnesses believe that there are really two Supreme Beings, one more supreme than the other. Jehovah, the highest God, is without beginning unchangeable, and immortal; Jesus Christ, the lesser God, had a beginning (was created by the Father), is changeable (as when he divested himself of his divinity to become a man), and is immortal only by virtue of a reward for his faithfulness to Jehovah.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 109.

³⁰ It is somewhat curious, though, how the two passages from John 1 and Colossians 1 proceed in different ways in the NWT. In Colossians 1 Jehovah’s Witnesses are very careful to add a bracketed “[other]” where it is needed, and

But now what of this claim that the rest of Scripture and the gospel of John in particular makes clear that Jesus is less than true God and is subordinate to the Father? Jehovah's Witnesses base this teaching on such passages as John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:16; 8:42; 14:28; 17:3; 20:17; and I Corinthians 3:23; 8:6; 11:3; 15:24, 28. These clear statements of Jesus himself and of the inspired apostle Paul make evident that Christ neither claimed to be God's equal nor ever showed himself as such; in fact the Scriptures show very clearly that the Son of God is totally distinct from and inferior to the Father. After all, what could be clearer than Christ's own words, "the Father is greater than I am" (John 14:28, NWT) and the testimony of the apostle that "the head of every man is the Christ...in turn the head of the Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3, NWT)? As far as Jehovah's Witnesses are concerned, any attempt to prove otherwise is merely grasping at straws and ignoring the clear words of Scripture and the context around them.³¹

Jehovah's Witnesses furthermore add to the previous clear passages that Christ is seen to be subordinate to the Father by implication:

- John 1:18 says that no man has ever seen God. If Christ were really true God this statement would be false, since many people saw Christ during his earthly life.
- Would omniscient, holy God need to learn anything, especially obedience, because he didn't know it? No, but Christ needed to (Mark 13:32, Hebrews 5:8).³²
- The Father had to expressly show his approval of Christ at his baptism (Matthew 3:16-17); if Christ were co-equal with the Father, he would not have needed that special endorsement.
- God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), and yet Christ was (Matthew 4:1-11).
- If Christ were actually true God, what point could he have been making at Mark 10:18 by saying to the rich young man, "Why do you call me good? Nobody is good, except one, God" (NWT)? While Christ is certainly good compared to other human beings, this must mean that Jehovah God is good in an absolute sense, at a level all his own to which Christ cannot compare.

yet they do not do the same with John 1:3, which would seem to be a major oversight considering the implications of the plain text as it is. No doubt Jehovah's Witnesses do understand both passages the same way, though: the sense is clearly that *after* Christ was made, he brought everything else into existence.

³¹ Jehovah's Witnesses, as can be clearly seen by their understanding of the passages cited to prove Christ's subordination to the Father, have no concept of his states of humiliation and exaltation.

³² But consider this very interesting teaching concerning the kind of foreknowledge Jehovah has of historical world events, and particularly the fall into sin: "Selective foreknowledge means that God could choose *not* to foreknow indiscriminately all the future acts of his creatures. This would mean that, rather than all history from creation onward being a mere rerun of what had already been foreseen and foreordained, God could with all sincerity set before the first human pair the prospect of everlasting life in an earth free from wickedness." *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988), 853.

- How could Jesus' point at John 8:17-18 have legitimately applied if he were true God? Then there would really only have been one witness, God; but Christ differentiates between himself and God the Father as two separate witnesses.
- Christ was commissioned and given authority by the Father (Luke 4:18; Matthew 11:27, 28:18); that would have been unnecessary if the two were co-equal persons of the Triune Godhead.
- Christ deferred to the Father when the question of heavenly authority was posed to him by his disciples (Matthew 20:23). Had Jesus been true God, those positions of heavenly authority would have been his to give.
- Jesus prayed to the Father in times of distress, as an inferior to a superior (Luke 22:42, 23:46; Mark 15:34). Was he crying out to himself? Did he expect himself to answer? No, he prayed to the Father who was an entirely separate person from himself and who alone had the power to answer effectively.
- Finally, if Jesus were God, then the inspired prophet Habakkuk was wrong: "O my God, my Holy One, you do not die" (1:12; NWT); and even so, Christ should have been able to raise himself from the dead if he were truly God. However, Scripture shows that it was the superior, Jehovah God, who raised the inferior, Jesus Christ (Acts 2:24, among many other references).

Jehovah's Witnesses also have explanations for a number of other common passages presented by Christians to prove Christ's deity:

- Jehovah's Witnesses note at Isaiah 9:6 that Jesus is called "Mighty God," not "Almighty God," which is a title reserved only for Jehovah (Genesis 17:1). There are degrees of mighty – the world's strongest man or greatest warrior would surely be considered mighty by many – but their might pales in comparison to the *almighty* Jehovah.
- When Christ is given the prophetic names "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14) and "The LORD Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6), those have no more significance than any other name which incorporates the names God and Jehovah, such as Elijah and Joel. In the latter case, Jerusalem is given the same title (Jeremiah 33:16); this must mean that both Christ and Jerusalem are simply guaranteed righteousness and blessedness by Jehovah.
- Some point to Isaiah 43:11 as proof that Christ and Jehovah are the same, since Jehovah says, "besides me there is no savior" (NWT). However, Jude 25 clears up any misunderstanding: "to [the] only God our Savior *through* Jesus Christ our Lord" (NWT; italics mine). Jehovah made provision for salvation by sending Christ to be the Savior. Thus, Jehovah can rightly say that there is no savior besides him, because there would be no salvation if he hadn't acted to start the process.
- Does Micah 5:2 prove that Jesus is eternal, and thus uncreated God? No. Not only do the rest of the Scriptures not support that conclusion, but the verse itself refers to Christ's "origin" and scholars generally agree that the Hebrew phrase **מִקְדָּם מֵיָמֵי**

עולם should be translated along the lines of “from of old, from ancient times” (NIV84) or “from early times, from the days of time indefinite” (NWT). Therefore this passage says nothing more about Jesus than that he was God’s first creation at the beginning of time, before anything else came into existence.

- John 1:23 and parallel passages in the other gospels say that Jesus was the fulfillment of John the Baptist’s preaching: “Clear up the way of Jehovah, YOU people! MAKE the highway for our God through the desert plain straight” (Isaiah 40:3, NWT). Therefore, some say, Jesus must be Jehovah. However, Jesus is the fulfillment of this passage only insofar as Jesus represented his Father. As such, this passage is generally parallel to Matthew 21:9: “Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name!” (NWT).
- When such passages as John 5:18, 10:33, and 19:7 are cited to show that Christ did in fact at times equate himself with the Father, Jehovah’s Witnesses maintain that the unbelieving Jews misunderstood what Jesus was saying and their own misinterpretation of his words has no bearing on the truth. After all, Jesus himself did call them children of the devil (John 8:44), which obviously means that their spiritual opinions and understandings cannot be trusted. The Jews were merely leveling false charges against Jesus, as is often shown in the immediately following context. For example, in John 5:19, Jesus clarifies his position by stating that he can’t do anything on his own initiative, whereas someone equal to almighty God would certainly be able to act independently. Then also, following John 10:33, Jesus quotes Psalm 82 to show that he’s not saying anything different about himself than any other humans who have borne the honorific title of “god.” The error of misunderstanding is with the Jews and everyone who thinks like them, not with Jesus or Jehovah’s Witnesses.
- If someone tries to point to John 5:23 to prove that Christ and God the Father are co-equal in honor and should be treated as such, Jehovah’s Witnesses cheerfully report that they do honor both the Son and the Father as is appropriate to each (they just hold the Father in higher honor than Christ).
- Jesus at John 8:58³³ says, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί, the last clause of which is commonly translated “I am.” Some claim that Jesus here is equating himself with the eternal, self-existent God – Jehovah – based on allusions to Jehovah’s “I AM” statements in Isaiah 40-48 and especially Exodus 3:14. However, Jehovah’s Witnesses prefer an uncommon translation of this verse: “Most truly I say to YOU, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been” (NWT). In defense, they first of all appeal to the fact that other “scholars” have translated the verse similarly in the past. Secondly, they have claimed grammatically that ἐγὼ εἰμί should be rendered in secondary sequence of tense after the aorist infinitive clause, as a “perfect indefinite tense,”³⁴ a “historical present,” or most recently as a “present of past action

³³ This passage is a very hotly contested battleground between orthodox Christians and Jehovah’s Witnesses, perhaps second only to John 1:1. See Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, 87-140 for a thorough exploration of the issues.

³⁴ Which tense, as Ted Dencher in *The Watchtower Heresy Versus the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1961), 22, as well as any basic Greek student, is quick to point out doesn’t actually exist.

still in progress.” The bottom line is that ἐγὼ εἰμί should not be literally translated “I am,” but should be nuanced to “I have been” as NWT does. By translating this way, Jehovah’s Witnesses avoid any possible connection between Christ and Exodus 3:14 or Isaiah 40-48, and they are able to maintain their position on the person of Christ. In this passage, they say, Christ does certainly mean to claim for himself existence before Abraham – but not eternal existence. He is simply attesting to his status as firstborn of all creation.

- If one points to John 10:30 to prove that both Christ and the Father are one as true God, Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that Christ meant that they are simply one in spirit, thought, and purpose – not essence. If John 10:30 meant that Christ and God are one in essence, then John 17:21-22 must mean that believers are also one in essence with God and Christ, which is simply nonsense. Furthermore, in the immediately following context, Jesus clarifies to the misunderstanding Jews that he was not claiming to be God the Son, but only the Son of God. There is a real and important difference.
- In John 20:28, Jehovah’s Witnesses allow for a couple different acceptable views of Thomas’ exclamation. Given their meeting under such miraculous circumstances, Thomas may have been acknowledging that Jesus truly was a “god,” a mighty one; or what he said may simply have been an expression of great surprise. However, based on the rest of scriptural evidence, it is certainly not proper to understand Thomas’ exclamation as an affirmation of Christ’s true and full-fledged deity.
- Does Acts 20:28 really say that it was God’s blood that redeemed the Church? According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, this verse is often mistranslated. The Greek of the second half of the verse is τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου. Normally translated along the lines of, “...the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (NIV84), a better translation of this verse that more accurately reflects the word order toward the end of the verse is “the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own [Son]” (NWT).
- Much like the last verse, Romans 9:5 is also commonly mistranslated according to Jehovah’s Witnesses. NIV84 translates it “...from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.” However, Jehovah’s Witnesses say that the last words of the verse better fit the context and Paul’s writing style as a separate doxology to God: “from whom the Christ [sprang] according to the flesh: God, who is over all, [be] blessed forever. Amen.” (NWT).
- Jehovah’s Witnesses simply explain away Colossians 2:9 by translating “it is in him that all the fullness of the *divine quality* dwells bodily” (NWT, italics mine; see footnote 22 for the significance of this phrase), rather than common translations such as “Deity, Divinity, God’s nature.” Thus Jehovah’s Witnesses empty this verse of any apparent equating of Jesus with true God.
- At Titus 2:13 (much like 2 Peter 1:1), some introduce the “unit concept” which says that since the phrase τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is governed by only one definite article, Jesus Christ must be both God and Savior. However, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses, this passage must be understood in light of the context of the rest of Scripture and particularly the context of the book itself, which

says just previously at Titus 1:4, “May there be undeserved kindness and peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Savior” (NWT). Thus a better translation of Titus 2:13 is “glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Savior of us, Christ Jesus” (NWT). This properly shows the distinction between our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

- Regarding Hebrews 1:3 where Jesus is referred to as “the reflection of [God’s] glory and the exact representation of his very being” (NWT), Jehovah’s Witnesses are quick to assert that a copy of something is never actually the real thing; a reflection in a mirror is not truly the object reflected.
- At Hebrews 1:8, some claim that Jesus is addressed as “God” prophetically. However, a grammatically and contextually better translation of this verse is “with reference to the Son: ‘God is your throne forever and ever’” (NWT), meaning that God is the source and upholder of Christ’s kingship.
- In much the same way as Hebrews 1:8, at Hebrews 1:10-12 some say that Christ is addressed as “Lord” (a reference to Jehovah), and divine creative works are ascribed to him. However, this passage really says nothing different than Colossians 1:15-17 – Christ was Jehovah’s instrument of creation. Jehovah performed his creative works through the Son, so this passage is in perfect harmony with the rest of Scripture.
- Some claim that 1 John 5:20, which reads, “We know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us intellectual capacity that we may gain the knowledge of the true one. And we are in union with the true one, by means of his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life everlasting” (NWT), equates Jesus Christ with the true God, since they are immediately next to each other in the sentence. This is naïve, say Jehovah’s Witnesses. The phrase “This is the true God and life everlasting” obviously modifies “that we may gain the knowledge of the true one.” Since gaining knowledge of Jehovah is one of the requirements for life everlasting, it follows that “the true God” must be “the true one” – Jehovah, not Christ.
- At Revelation 1:8, 21:6, and 22:12, some point to the title “the Alpha and the Omega” as referring to both God and Christ, and so Christ must therefore be God. Jehovah’s Witnesses answer first of all that it is impossible to say decisively whether any of these references actually address Christ. It is very possible (probable even) that all these verses are meant to refer to Jehovah God himself, echoing Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12. However, even if it is granted that one or more of these verses do refer to Christ as “the Alpha and the Omega,” Scripture makes clear that Christ is a different Alpha and Omega from Jehovah. When that phrase refers to Jehovah, it can rightly mean that he is eternal, since Psalm 90:2 says the same. However, in speaking of Christ, the phrase must refer to his special, unique creation – that he was the first and the last direct creation of Jehovah God.³⁵

³⁵ Magnani, Duane. *The Watchtower Files: Dialogue with a Jehovah's Witness* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 224, 226. As an alternative explanation, F. W. Thomas cites this: “In their booklet ‘The Word Who Is He?’ (page 45), the Society attempts to get around this embarrassing scriptural evidence by suggesting that Christ was merely ‘the first and last in the matter of resurrection... He was the first one on earth that God raised from the dead to be ‘alive for evermore.’ He is also the last one whom God raises thus directly.” Thomas, *Masters of Deception*, 49.

- Lastly, although some point to Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 to prove the co-equality and coordinate nature of the three persons of the Trinity, those passages really do nothing more than name three subjects. Those passages cannot prove conclusively or objectively that the Son and Holy Spirit are equal in the Godhead to Jehovah.

Then finally, an all-important concept in the theology of Jehovah's Witnesses is that Christ is just a pseudonym of sorts and the "Son of God" is actually Michael the Archangel. The very phrase "Michael the Archangel" in fact describes perfectly the Jehovah's Witness understanding of Christ. "Michael" is a name that means "Who is like God?" or "One who is like God." Following the common axiom "like father, like son," who is more like God than his only-begotten Son?³⁶ And just as a son is like his father but a different person than his father, Christ being *like* God means that he is not actually God.

Furthermore, "Archangel" is the perfect term to describe Christ in relation to God and the rest of creation. He is an angel, a created being, and so he is less than God; but as a spirit creature,³⁷ he is greater than everything and everyone in the physical world. In fact, as the first and greatest of the angels, he is even superior to all the rest of the spirit creatures. Thus, while some go so far as to say that Hebrews 1 proves that Christ is God because he is greater than the angels, Jehovah's Witnesses instead understand Hebrews 1 as confirmation of Christ's true identity as the *Archangel* Michael, because in their view Christ *is* superior to all the rest of the angels. He has a greater name (archangel as opposed to simply angel); he is the first creation, the only direct creation of Jehovah God (thus, the Son of God), and all other angels and the rest of

³⁶ Compare our common phrase "a spitting image" with Colossians 1:15: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (NWT).

³⁷ This is terminology mostly unfamiliar to mainstream Christianity. What exactly is a "spirit creature," or a being with a "spirit body?" See "Do All Good People Go to Heaven?" *The Watchtower* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, February 1, 2010), 4: "A spirit is a form of life higher than a human. A spirit is not composed of physical material, such as flesh and blood, that can be seen and felt by human senses. So when Jesus said that he used to dwell alongside his Father in 'heaven,' he meant that he used to have a form of life that is more glorious than any physical form of life."

Often Jehovah's Witnesses will also echo ancient Gnosticism by contrasting the superiority of the spirit body over the physical body (See 1 Corinthians 15:35-50, especially verses 44 and 50: "It is sown a physical body, it is raised up a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual one... However, this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom" [NWT].). This is why all those who are resurrected with a heavenly hope are resurrected with spirit bodies, whereas those who have an earthly hope for eternity keep their physical bodies, though gradually perfected. More will be said about this later.

creation came into being through him; and as Hebrews 1:6 testifies, God commanded regarding Christ, “And let all God’s angels do obeisance to him” (NWT).³⁸

But Jehovah’s Witnesses base the correlation between Christ and Michael the Archangel on more than just semantics. They also point to the scriptural passages that mention Michael, along with contextual evidence within the various verses and parallel accounts. In this way Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Scripture makes the conclusion clear and inevitable that Christ is without question Michael the Archangel. The pertinent texts are Daniel 10:13, 21 and 12:1-2; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7; and I Thessalonians 4:16.

The passages from Daniel 10 and 12 refer to Michael as “one of the foremost princes... the prince of YOU people... the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of your people” (NWT). A prince always implies the existence of a king, and so naturally this can be understood as a parallel between Jehovah God, the king, and the Son of God, the prince. Furthermore, consider the work that Michael is said to do in Daniel 12:1-2:

“And there will certainly occur a time of distress such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation until that time. And during that time your people will escape, every one who is found written down in the book. And there will be many of those asleep in the ground of dust who will wake up, these to indefinitely lasting life and those to reproaches [and] to indefinitely lasting abhorrence” (NWT).

Rather obviously the work Michael is doing is the same work that Christ will do at and after the battle of Armageddon. There will be a tremendous distress, God’s people will be saved, and the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous will occur. Who else could this Michael the Archangel be than Christ? It is clear not only from his title as prince, but also by the work that he will do.

Consider also Revelation 12:7-9 concerning the tremendous distress and great battles in the last days:

³⁸ Present day Jehovah’s Witnesses translate προσκυνέω “do obeisance to” (rather than the normal translation of “worship”) in Hebrews 1:6 and other places in Scripture where that verb refers to Jesus because they want to avoid the appearance that Jesus ever received worship. Only Jehovah God should rightly be worshipped (Matthew 4:10). However, this has not always been the case. “In 1944, the Watch Tower Society’s charter was amended and Article II stated that one of the purposes of the Society was for ‘public Christian worship of Almighty God and Christ Jesus.’ After changing this doctrine in 1954 by prohibiting the worship of Jesus, efforts were made to hide this portion of the charter whenever it was cited in Watch Tower publications.” Gruss, Edmond C., and Jay Hess. “Is it proper to worship Jesus? Examining a Jehovah’s Witness doctrine.” *Christian Research Journal* 23, no. 4 (January 1, 2001): 22-25. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2012), 1. See the whole article for a more thorough investigation of the issue.

However, even if Jehovah’s Witnesses were to grant that Jesus was “worshipped” or prayed to (a form of worship), they still claim that this is only “relative worship” – that is, worship directed to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ, his Son. This is a similar concept to the way Roman Catholics direct their prayers and praise to God through the saints (which, ironically, is a practice Jehovah’s Witnesses condemn). See Magnani, *The Watchtower Files*, 166-176.

“And war broke out in heaven: Mi’cha·el and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him” (NWT).

Who would rightly be a match for Satan and do battle with him other than the one who came to destroy the devil’s work (1 John 3:8)? This can be none other than Christ, and the parallel passage Revelation 19:11-16 confirms it. In that passage, Christ is pictured on a white horse, riding out to make war against the nations and everyone that opposes the kingdom of Jehovah God. Are there two angel armies? No, there is only one host of angels who will battle against Satan and his forces of evil, and the leader of that angel host is one and the same: Christ, Michael the Archangel.

One final passage is used to support the claim that Christ is Michael the Archangel. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 reads: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice and with God’s trumpet” (NWT). When the Lord Jesus returns, it says, he is going to call out with the voice of an archangel. If he has the voice of an archangel, then he must be an archangel; and since there is only one archangel ever mentioned in the Bible – Michael – then Jesus must be Michael the Archangel.

What then did Christ, or Michael the Archangel, *do* before he came to this earth? Of the three states of Christ’s existence, it is the most difficult to tell exactly what Jehovah’s Witnesses believe Christ’s main activity or purpose was in this one. However, Scripture does periodically give glimpses of Christ at work in Old Testament times. Christ was Jehovah’s instrument in the creation of all things in the universe other than himself, as we have discussed. Jehovah’s Witnesses also believe that Christ was the angel who led the Israelites through the wilderness after the Exodus, whose voice the Israelites were strictly to obey because “[Jehovah’s] name is within him” (Exodus 23:20-23, NWT). He is also mentioned at Jude 9 as disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, and “the Angel of Jehovah” in his various Old Testament appearances may well be identified as Jesus Christ in his pre-human form.³⁹ Other than that, presumably Christ in his capacity as Michael the Archangel did what all the other angels do: guard and serve God’s people.

³⁹ Gruss, Edmond C. *Apostles of Denial: An Examination and Expose of the History, Doctrines and Claims of the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1975), 129-130.

The Human State

A good place to start in considering the human state of Christ is the way Jehovah's Witnesses translate and understand Philippians 2:5-8. This section is enlightening as to their view of the reason Christ came into this world.

"Keep this mental attitude in YOU that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure,⁴⁰ namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake" (NWT).

A couple thoughts are first in order about the relationship between Christ and the devil. According to Jehovah's Witness teaching, since Christ is an angel and Satan was an angel (and both high ranking), they are considered brothers.⁴¹ The devil early on challenged the rightfulness, deservedness, and righteousness of Jehovah's supremacy and sovereignty over all creation – specifically, whether his sovereignty was being exercised in a worthy way and in the best interests of his subjects. Apparently the devil thought he could rule better than Jehovah and that humans would be better off without Jehovah's overbearing laws and restrictions. He heard Jehovah's command to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:27-28 to have children and fill the earth, and he thought he was more deserving of the worship of all those people.⁴² Thus it was the devil's pride that became his undoing, and Jehovah's main purpose for the rest of the course of history became not so much to undo the devil's spiritual work of holding humanity in slavery to sin, but rather to reinforce his own sovereign power and glory over all creation and to prove the devil a liar in his presumptuous accusations.⁴³

⁴⁰ Jehovah's Witnesses understand and translate this passage differently than most. Whereas often this passage is translated to convey the idea that Christ did not consider his eternal divine nature something to be grasped or clung to, Jehovah's Witnesses translate it to convey the idea that the naturally inferior being Christ (who only existed in God's form, not actually as God) would not have even considered trying to snatch the exalted divine nature that does not rightly belong to him in order to be considered equal with God. "Far from saying that Jesus thought it was appropriate to be equal to God, the Greek of Philippians 2:6, when read objectively, shows just the opposite, that Jesus did not think it was appropriate... Jesus, who 'esteemed God as better than himself,' would never 'grasp for equality with God,' but instead he 'humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death.' Surely, that cannot be talking about any part of Almighty God. It was talking about Jesus Christ, who perfectly illustrated Paul's point here—namely the importance of humility and obedience to one's Superior and Creator, Jehovah God." *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 25-26.

⁴¹ Dhavamony, Mariasusai. "Salvation offered by sects (a theological analysis and evaluation)." *Studia Missionalia* 41, (January 1, 1992): 325-352. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed October 2, 2012), 328.

⁴² *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 29.

⁴³ "Thus, the question of integrity in the part of God's intelligent creatures was a secondary, or subsidiary, issue arising out of the primary issue of God's right to universal sovereignty... The entire Bible account revolves around this issue and its settlement, and makes manifest Jehovah God's primary purpose: the sanctification of his own name. Such sanctification would require a cleansing of God's name of all reproach and false charges, that is, a

At some point in the history of humanity, Jehovah chose his Son to carry out this purpose and work. Through his roles as divine spokesman and instrument of creation, Christ proved himself faithful, worthy, and responsible for the task, since in all his doings he had never abused his position and authority. Jehovah needed someone whose loyalty, humility, and devotion were unquestioned, and he saw that his Son was just the right person to come to earth and provide vindication for his Name.⁴⁴

That is the dramatic backdrop dynamic behind Philippians 2:5-8. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that, far from the pride of Satan, Christ never viewed himself as co-equal with God, though he did have his own measure of glory and power as the Son of God. He certainly never would have thought about trying to seize or usurp the throne of God for himself; he didn't even once allow himself to entertain that sort of thinking. So in order to prove his loyalty and willingness for humble service to Jehovah, Christ instead gave up his place in heaven as the Son of God and the first in rank among the angels and the whole created order. He humbled himself to the extreme degree of becoming a human being whose primary characteristic was service and who was even willing to undergo a disgraceful death on a torture stake.⁴⁵ In return, Jehovah God offered eternal life to his Son for his faithful obedience (Romans 6:9, Revelation 1:17-18).⁴⁶

There are two key terms to consider regarding the conception and birth of Christ in Jehovah's Witness theology: virgin birth and incarnation. These will give us an accurate picture of just who Jesus was while he was in his human state on this earth. His work while in this state will be dealt with later on.

Our first term is the virgin birth. Jehovah's Witnesses firmly believe that by a divine miracle the life force of the only begotten Son was transferred to the womb of the Virgin Mary

vindicating of it. But, much more than that, it would require the honoring of that name as sacred by all intelligent creatures in heaven and earth. This, in turn, would mean their recognizing and respecting Jehovah's sovereign position, doing so willingly, wanting to serve him, delighting to do his divine will, because of love for him... Jehovah does not exaggerate mankind's importance... It is contrary to Scriptural fact and a putting of matters in wrong perspective to view human salvation as if it were the all-important issue or the criterion by which God's justice, righteousness, and holiness can be measured... The sanctification of Jehovah God's name rightly means more than the life of all mankind." *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 16-17.

⁴⁴ *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 67.

⁴⁵ Another unique teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses that sets them apart from the rest of Christendom is that Christ was impaled on a torture stake (a single upright beam), not crucified on a cross (two beams in either a T or X or the traditional † formation).

⁴⁶ "Endless life is dependent upon unending obedience to God. By faithful and perfect obedience the Word of God could live with the Father forever. In the fullness of time Jehovah God opened up to the Son the opportunity to gain immortality. This opportunity involved the renunciation of his divine nature (kenosis) and the taking on of human nature to accomplish God's purposes. By making good use of the opportunity, the Son of God merited eternal life as a reward." McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 67-68.

and Jesus Christ was born without the involvement of an earthly father, in fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Christ's sinlessness was not due to the immaculate conception of Mary beforehand (for she was sinful and born in sin, just like everyone else), but to the fact that Jesus did not have an earthly father:

“The life-force of Jesus as ‘The Word’ in heaven was transferred from heaven to the ovum or egg-cell in the womb of the unmarried Mary, and thereby she was blessed with the privilege of supplying Jesus’ human body. It was a perfect body, because its life was not from the sinner Adam, but was the original life of the Word from the great life-giver Jehovah God. The holy spirit or active force of Jehovah God kept the body of Jesus holy and free from sin and imperfection, even though nurtured in the womb of the virgin daughter of the sinful Adam.”⁴⁷

At face value, the Jehovah's Witness teaching on the virgin birth may seem to fall closely in line with historic Christianity. However, that is only true until we look into the matter of incarnation: what exactly *happened* in Christ's conception and virgin birth? Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus Christ was an “incarnation” in flesh – that he was true God (or more accurately, the Son of God) made flesh. Jehovah's Witnesses instead teach that when Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, he ceased to be a divine spirit being, although he still recognized his heavenly past and background (thus John 3:13). Then, in the fall of 2 B.C.E., Jesus Christ was born as a human (and nothing more!) son of God, a perfect man – the exact equivalent of Adam prior to the fall. Concerning the traditional Christian teaching of the incarnation that Christ Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh and remains the Son of God therein, Charles T. Russell, founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, writes:

“All this is wrong, and violently in opposition to the truth on the subject, as presented in the Word of God. The Scriptural declaration is not that our Lord assumed a body of flesh as a covering for a spiritual body... but that he actually laid aside, or as the Greek renders it, ‘divested himself of’ [presumably a reference to Philippians 2:7] his prehuman conditions, and actually took our nature... the Logos was made flesh. There was no fraud, no sham, about it:... he actually became a man – ‘the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for us all’ (I Timothy 2:5).”⁴⁸

The implication of Russell's teaching is that when Christ was conceived, he completely gave up his heavenly, spiritual nature and *became a man*, nothing more. Why else would he have had to be born, grow up, and mature? The Son of God certainly would not have had to do that. Furthermore, a very important concept in Jehovah's Witness theology is that, according to the Biblical principle of justice, the price paid should fit the wrong committed. That means in order

⁴⁷ *The Kingdom is at Hand* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1944), 49.

⁴⁸ Russell, Charles T., *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 5 (Brooklyn, NY: International Bible Students Association, 1924), 94-95. It does need to be mentioned, though, that here Russell misrepresents the teaching of Orthodox Christianity about the incarnation as what seems to be a form of Docetism. Misrepresentation of true Christian doctrine, especially regarding the deity of Christ and the Trinity, is common among Jehovah's Witnesses.

to balance the scales of justice, man's ransom price must correspond exactly and equivalently to what was lost by Adam in the fall – a perfect human life.⁴⁹ After all, do not the Scriptures declare in Exodus 21:23-25, “But if a fatal accident should occur, then you must give soul for soul, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, branding for branding, wound for wound, blow for blow” (NWT)?

Clearly Jehovah's Witnesses have no need to wrestle with the union of the two natures in Christ, because Christ only ever had one nature at any time: prior to his birth, he laid aside the divine nature in order to take up the perfect human nature, and then did so in reverse order at his resurrection.

Having dealt with Christ's conception and birth at the beginning of his earthly life, we now move toward the end of his earthly life to his ministry and passion. Strictly speaking, according to Jehovah's Witnesses Christ was not *Christ* until after his baptism in the fall of 29 C.E.⁵⁰ At that point he was begotten by Jehovah to spiritual sonship⁵¹ in the divine nature – that is, he was divinely chosen and appointed to the work of vindication and salvation, as the voice from heaven proclaimed (Matthew 3:17). At this time also Christ's human mind was doubtless illuminated on many spiritual points, including the memory of his pre-human existence.⁵² Only after Christ was anointed with God's holy spirit⁵³ at his baptism did he begin his work as Savior and Jehovah's chief witness.

⁴⁹ The Jehovah's Witness stance is somewhat puzzling here in light of traditional Christianity:

“If Jesus, however, were part of a Godhead, the ransom price would have been infinitely higher than what God's own Law required... It was only a perfect human, Adam, who sinned in Eden, not God. So the ransom, to be truly in line with God's justice, had to be strictly an equivalent—a perfect human, ‘the last Adam.’ Thus, when God sent Jesus to earth as the ransom, he made Jesus to be what would satisfy justice, not an incarnation, not a god-man, but a perfect man.” *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 15.

“Jesus could not have redeemed mankind if he had been a divine being, because it was man that sinned and man that was to be redeemed... A work of supererogation on Jehovah's part would have been ineffective in securing man's deliverance from Satan, sin, and death.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 69.

Surely Jehovah's Witnesses have in mind the famous patristic saying, “What Christ has not assumed, he has not healed,” but that was only said in light of the fact that Christ's divine nature was a sacrifice worth the redemption price of humanity as a whole, not just for the one man Adam.

⁵⁰ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 40. Therefore it must have been in a prophetic sense that the angels used this term when announcing Christ's birth to the shepherds: “There was born to YOU today a Savior, who is Christ [the] Lord” (Luke 2:9-11, NWT). A more accurate translation would be, “...a Savior, who is *to be* Christ [the] Lord.”

⁵¹ This means that Christ received the right to heavenly life once more as a spirit Son of God after his death.

⁵² *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 59.

⁵³ Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the holy spirit is the impersonal active force of Jehovah God, which is a working power or energy (much like electricity) that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will. See *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 20, as well as Reed, *Jehovah's Witness Literature*, 141: “To a certain extent this concept is similar to that found in the 1977 motion picture *Star Wars*, which has Luke Skywalker and his friends greet one another with the expression, ‘May the Force be with you!’”

So then what happened at Christ's death? Recall that in birth Christ was the exact equivalent of Adam before the fall; so also in death he had to be the exact equivalent of Adam before the fall in order to ransom all those who inherited sin from Adam after the fall. Thus, when Christ died in the spring of 33 C.E., his human nature was completely annihilated, never to be raised back up again – for that would nullify the ransom sacrifice. Christ spent the Sabbath resting in hell, otherwise known as unconsciousness in the grave.⁵⁴ His body then was most likely disintegrated into its various gases and elements without passing through the process of decaying (Acts 2:27).⁵⁵ God did this in order to strengthen the conviction of Jesus' disciples that he had actually been raised, and so as not to cause offense to anyone afterwards who might be prone to doubt if Jesus' body remained in the grave.

The following is a good summary of what Jehovah's Witnesses believe about Christ's nature while on this earth and the transitions Christ made between pre-human, human, and post-human states:

“Jesus was not a combination of two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of the two natures produces neither the one nor the other, but an imperfect hybrid thing, which is obnoxious to the divine arrangement. When Jesus was in the flesh he was a perfect human being; prior to that he was a perfect spiritual being; and since his resurrection he is a perfect spiritual being of the highest or divine order.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Christendom's teaching of eternal torment of hellfire is unacceptable to Jehovah's Witness theology, because 1) it is unreasonable; 2) it is repugnant to justice; 3) it is contrary to the principle of love; and 4) it is entirely unscriptural. “Hell” is simply the grave, where the dead pass into unconscious non-existence (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). “Exposed: Six Myths about Christianity.” *The Watchtower* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, November 1, 2009), 5: “The Hebrew word *Sheol*, which referred to the ‘abode of the dead,’ is translated ‘hell’ in some versions of the Bible... Hell, in the Biblical sense, is simply the common grave of mankind, where all activity has ceased.”

Consider this brash statement from *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 64: “Some religions teach that if a person lives a bad life, after death he will go to a place of fiery torment to suffer forever. This teaching dishonors God. Jehovah is a God of love and would never make people suffer in this way. (1 John 4:8) How would you feel about a man who punished a disobedient child by holding his hands in a fire? Would you respect such a man? In fact, would you even want to get to know him? Definitely not! You would likely think that he was very cruel. Yet, Satan wants us to believe that Jehovah tortures people in fire forever – for countless billions of years!” This means that any reference in the Bible to eternal torment and punishment must simply refer to the unforgettable humiliation unbelievers will suffer because of their wickedness and because of the preaching of judgment upon them by God's servants.

It has also been claimed that this denial of the reality of hell as a place of eternal conscious torment is the most basic foundation for all of Jehovah's Witness teaching. See Schnell, William J. *Into the Light of Christianity: The Basic Doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses in the Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 53-55. For an interesting consideration of how the rest of Jehovah's Witness doctrine outcrops from that position, see Schnell, *Into the Light of Christianity*, 129; Bowman, *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses*, 91-92.

⁵⁵ *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 349. See also Gruss, *Apostles of Denial*, 88.

⁵⁶ Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 179. “Thus, there was no union nor mixture of natures in Jesus. The problem of the two natures was solved by metamorphic changes in the nature of Jesus; a change first from spiritual to human, afterwards from human to spiritual. In each case the one was given up for the other.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 70. “The individual who laid down his life at Calvary was not the individual who existed previously in heaven and was God's agent in creation; the individual who is now ruling over his

The Post-Human State

After Christ died and completed his work as the perfect Savior who paid the ransom price for Adam's sin, his body was disintegrated and his human nature was annihilated. However, because of his perfect faithfulness and loyalty to Jehovah God and his purposes in vindicating his Name, "Even Christ died once for all time concerning sins... he being put to death in the flesh, but *being made alive in the spirit*" (1 Peter 3:18, NWT; italics mine. See also 1 Corinthians 15:45). Christ's human body is dead and gone, that fact never to be reversed.⁵⁷ When Jesus finished his work on earth, Jehovah God raised him up out of annihilation into his post-human state as a reward for his sacrificial obedience. Christ then resumed his existence as a divine spirit being,⁵⁸ the Archangel Michael – although this time with the honor, power, and glory that goes along with the work that he had completed.

"It is important to note that the Lord's change from human to divine nature at his resurrection was a greater change than that from divine to human nature which occurred 33 years previously. Before coming to earth Jesus did not have immortality; at his resurrection Jehovah granted him inherent life, or deathlessness. Thus, after his resurrection he was not just a spirit being whose life was insured by obedience to Jehovah. He is now both Lord and Christ. Further, he is both owner of all things and endowed with power and authority to carry out Jehovah's plan."⁵⁹

But some might ask: if Christ had no human nature or body post-resurrection, what about his various appearances – particularly the ones where he seems to have taken pains to prove that he was alive bodily? The answer is simple: look at other places in the Bible where angels materialized bodies in order to appear to people. In the same way, after Christ's death and spiritual resurrection, a number of times he materialized a body resembling the one in which he died so that he could appear to the disciples and others in order to prove that he was alive.

Forty days after his resurrection, Christ ascended back to heaven to officially present to Jehovah the ransom price he paid by his death. He was then appointed high priest in the order of

heavenly Kingdom is not the individual who died on the cross for us." Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 276.

⁵⁷ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 58-59: "In [Jehovah's] Word, the Bible, he explains the condition of the dead. Its clear teaching is this: *When a person dies, he ceases to exist*. Death is the opposite of life. The dead do not see or hear or think. Not even one part of us survives the death of the body. We do not possess an immortal soul or spirit... We are mortal and do not survive the death of our body. The life we enjoy is like the flame of a candle. When the flame is put out, it does not *go* anywhere. It is simply gone" (italics theirs). This teaching about death is known as annihilation.

⁵⁸ But some might ask, what about 1 Timothy 2:5, which refers to the resurrected and ascended Lord as "a man, Christ Jesus" (NWT)? Jehovah's Witnesses explain that this expression simply conveys that Christ Jesus was at one time a man on earth. *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 438.

⁵⁹ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 76-77.

Melchizedek, as well as messenger and mediator⁶⁰ of the new covenant.⁶¹ At that point Christ took his seat at Jehovah's right side and was given ruling power over Jehovah God's remnant of 144,000 chosen believers. However, Christ had to await the day when Jehovah would give him full access to his heavenly throne and he could begin to reign along with the 144,000 over all creation.⁶² Though Christ had merited that office by his perfect sacrifice as chief vindicator of Jehovah's Name, Jehovah made him wait until the end of the "Gentile times"⁶³ (Luke 21:24) before taking the throne⁶⁴ and inaugurating the end times. By the delay of Christ's coronation, God's sovereignty and glory could manifest itself all the more clearly through the failure of worldly government.

Based on the prophecies of Daniel 2:44⁶⁵ and 4:10-16,⁶⁶ Jehovah's Witnesses understand that Christ finally and fully took his throne as the heavenly king in the fall of 1914 and began his

⁶⁰ "Since by definition a mediator is someone separate from those who need mediation, it would be a contradiction for Jesus to be one entity with either of the parties he is trying to reconcile. That would be a pretending to be something he is not." *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 16.

⁶¹ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 117.

⁶² Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 280 n. See also *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 84: "Did [the Kingdom] come when Jesus ascended to heaven? No, because both Peter and Paul said that after Jesus was resurrected, the prophecy at Psalm 110:1 was fulfilled in him: 'The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is: "Sit at my right and until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet."' (Acts 2:32-34; Hebrews 10:12, 13) There was a waiting period."

⁶³ Jehovah's Witnesses define the "Gentile times" as the period of time which began at the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 607 BC when God's appointed rulers were unseated and mankind was allowed to rule itself under Satan's powerful influence. This time period came to an end in 1914 when Christ began his invisible earthly presence.

⁶⁴ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 31, 32: "Nowhere does the Bible say that either Jehovah God or Jesus Christ is ruler of this world. In fact, Jesus specifically referred to Satan as 'the ruler of this world'... The Bible even refers to Satan as 'the god of this system of things'... Regarding this opposer, or Satan, the Christian apostle John wrote: 'The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.'"

⁶⁵ "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite" (NWT). According to this passage, Christ's kingdom will be set up even while other earthly kingdoms remain. Christ and the 144,000 – the rightful rulers of this kingdom – will rule this kingdom forever and never lose their place. When the time is right, the day of Armageddon will come and Christ will bring all other earthly kingdoms to ruin so that his theocratic kingdom will stand alone in the universe. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 81.

⁶⁶ Daniel 4 depicts a great tree being cut down, which Jehovah's Witnesses believe symbolizes the Davidic kingship that Jehovah established on the throne in Jerusalem. Of special note is verse 16: "let seven times pass over it" (NWT). "How long a period is that? Revelation 12:6, 14 indicates that three and a half times equal 'a thousand two hundred and sixty days.' 'Seven times' would therefore last twice as long, or 2,520 days... On the basis of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, which speak of 'a day for a year,' the 'seven times' would cover 2,520 years. "The 2,520 years began in October 607 B.C.E., when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the Davidic king was taken off his throne. The period ended in October 1914. At that time, 'the appointed times of the nations [Gentiles]' ended, and Jesus Christ was installed as God's heavenly King." *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 217; italics theirs.

invisible⁶⁷ earthly *presence*⁶⁸ (the Jehovah's Witnesses' preferred translation of the Greek term *παρουσία*), which is more accurately described as the time when he began to focus his attention specially toward the earth.⁶⁹ At that point Christ revoked the lease of power that belonged to the kingdoms of the world⁷⁰ since the fall of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. and began what Revelation 6 portrays as Christ's conquering ride atop a white horse – a time of conquest which “begins with the initial defeat of Satan, continues with the rescue or protection of his people from harm, and will culminate in victory against Satan's entire organization at Armageddon.”⁷¹

⁶⁷ Understandably the question arises: if Christ is invisible, how can we tell that he has actually begun his earthly presence? A simple but somewhat evasive answer is offered: “The moment of his arrival may pass unnoticed, but the fact of his presence will become more and more evident until at last it's inescapable.” Crompton, Robert. *Counting the Days to Armageddon: The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Second Presence of Christ* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1996), 35-36. Jehovah's Witnesses also point to the signs of the end times in Matthew 24 – “wars involving many nations, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, an increasing of lawlessness, false religious teachers misleading many, a hatred and persecution of [Jesus'] true followers, and a cooling off of the love of righteousness in many people” – and thereby assert that “The conditions mentioned above started to be evident in that widely heralded year 1914! It marked the end of the Gentile Times and the beginning of the transition period from human rule to the Thousand Year (Millennial) Reign of Christ.” *Jehovah's Witnesses: Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2000), 15. Therefore passages that seem to refer to Christ's visible return (e.g., Matthew 24:27, Acts 1:9-11, Revelation 1:7) must actually mean that he is *spiritually* visible to those who are discerning (John 14:19). After all, Jehovah's Witnesses add, it wouldn't make sense for him to come visibly, because the people on the other side of the world wouldn't be able to see him anyway. And what else could be meant by his “coming in the clouds” than that we won't literally be able to see him, as when the heavenly bodies are hidden from our sight by the clouds in the sky?

⁶⁸ “Major support for [Charles Russell's] conclusion that the Scriptures teach Christ's coming is invisible came from the Christadelphian Benjamin Wilson, who produced a bilingual New Testament called *The [Emphatic] Diaglott*. In Matthew 24:27, 37, 39 it renders the Greek word *παροῦσία* [sic] ‘presence’ instead of ‘coming’ as is used in almost all other English versions. From this, Russell and Barbour [The man who influenced Russell toward his Adventist leanings] concluded that *παροῦσία* actually means not a visible physical coming, but an invisible presence.” Bergman, “The Adventist and Jehovah's Witness Branch of Protestantism,” 35-36. Jehovah's Witnesses appeal to such passages as John 14:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:16 to support this teaching. Thus Christ's *παροῦσία* is truly neither a coming nor even a presence, but really only a paying close attention.

⁶⁹ Since Christ is not God, he cannot be omnipresent (in fact, while Jehovah's Witnesses do believe that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and immutable, they don't actually even believe that Jehovah God has the attribute of omnipresence. See Gruss, *Apostles of Denial*, 81); thus Christ's presence has to take a figurative meaning, since he is locally confined to his heavenly throne. Compare Old Testament usage regarding God's “visitations” (inspections) upon Israel and other nations and people.

“Notice what they are saying: Jesus came down, suffered, bled and died; went back to Heaven and promptly forgot all about the whole thing, as if He lost interest! Then, suddenly, in 1914, he remembered! He recalled that there is a planet earth, and He began to give attention to it! That's how He returns, according to Jehovah's Witnesses!” Dencher, *The Watchtower Heresy Versus the Bible*, 96.

⁷⁰ “All of which is something like proclaiming for forty years that on a certain date the undesirable occupant of a property is going to be completely expelled, removed for all time, and then, when that date comes and goes and the undesirable occupant is still there carrying on as usual, explaining this away by saying, ‘Well, I cancelled his lease and as far as I'm concerned it's the same as if he were actually moved out. And, besides, I'm keeping a much closer watch on things now.’” Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 197.

⁷¹ Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 111-112. Especially in the Jehovah's Witness mind here with regard to the rescue and protection of his people from harm is Christ's deliverance of Jehovah's Witness organizational leaders who were imprisoned in 1918-1919 for being war protesters and refusing to take part in any sort of military service whatsoever during World War I, whether directly or indirectly.

As soon as Christ took his heavenly throne,

“war broke out in heaven: Mi’cha·el and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him” (Revelation 12:7-9, NWT).

Three and a half years⁷² after Satan’s revolution in heaven was overthrown and he and his demons were cast down to earth,⁷³ in the spring of 1918, Christ came to his heavenly temple (Malachi 3:1) to do two things. First he began his judgment of all the religions of the world, especially all currently professing Christians. During this inspection, Christ found and in the following year officially recognized and commissioned Jehovah’s Witnesses among all others to be his true servants (“the faithful and discreet slave”⁷⁴ [NWT] of Matthew 24:45) to herald Jehovah’s theocratic kingdom.⁷⁵ Secondly Christ inaugurated the first resurrection, that of the 144,000 anointed believers who would be raised up from earthly death with spiritual bodies to reign with Christ in heaven during the millennium.⁷⁶ Only after heavenly peace was secured did Christ bring his Bride to himself.⁷⁷ Witnesses believe that now “those who died in the Lord from

⁷² Jehovah’s Witnesses arrive at this figure in two ways: first, as a parallel to the length of Christ’s earthly ministry, from his baptism to the cleansing of the temple during Holy Week; and second, three and a half years is a period of forty-two months. This is the same as the “time and times and half a time” of Revelation 12:14, where a “time” represents a twelve-month year (12 + 24 + 6 = 42). See Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 118.

⁷³ How did this war in heaven manifest itself on the earth after Satan was cast down in all his raging fury? Primarily by the outbreak of World War I (during which many Jehovah’s Witness dissenters were imprisoned) and the formation of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations. That all this uproar happened right on schedule in 1914 and following is proof to Jehovah’s Witnesses that their understanding of Bible chronology is correct. See Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 111-112.

⁷⁴ That is, “[Christ Jesus] approved agency for directing his work and caring for his interests on earth, his sole channel for communicating guidance and illumination to his servants earthwide.” Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 175.

⁷⁵ “The Watch Tower Society claims that Jesus Christ began to reign invisibly in 1914. He needed an organization to announce his kingdom and administer his interests. They claim that in 1919 Christ carefully examined all the Christian religions but rejected them in favor of the Watch Tower Society.” Chretien, Leonard and Marjorie. *Witnesses of Jehovah: A Shocking Expose of What Jehovah’s Witnesses Really Believe* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1988), 61.

⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:23 is cited for the period when the spiritual resurrection of the 144,000 will take place: “But each one in his own rank: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ *during his presence*” (NWT; italics mine).

⁷⁷ “The second coming of Christ was different in many respects from the first advent. The first advent was to the earth in the flesh—perfect humanity, in order to vindicate the name of Jehovah; the second advent was to the temple in heaven as an immortal spirit being to be crowned King; the first advent was to meet the challenge of Satan (that no human could meet the rigid requirements of obedience and righteousness imposed by Jehovah); the second advent was to overthrow the heavenly organization of Satan. The first advent was to redeem men; the second advent was to restore, bless, and liberate the redeemed. Finally, the first advent was to found the Church; the second advent was to receive the Church, his bride, unto himself as a royal subject of the heavenly Theocratic kingdom.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 94-95.

early apostolic times to 1914 have been resurrected and have ascended to heaven to be in the court of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁸

As soon as Christ ascended his heavenly throne and raised the 144,000 anointed class believers to reign with him, the march toward the final battle of Armageddon at some unspecified time in the near future⁷⁹ was on. Christ did not immediately crush his enemies when he took the throne because he wanted to allow time for global preaching work to take place (Matthew 24:14); this is vitally important because no one who dies in the battle of Armageddon will be resurrected in the millennium.⁸⁰ However, since then the forces of Satan and the forces of Christ have also been marshaling for battle. This will be the greatest war, the greatest distress in the history of the world. This will be a war of global proportions, not limited to the geographical mountain of Megiddo in Palestine (*Armageddon* comes from a Hebrew term meaning “mountain of Megiddo”).⁸¹ This will be the ultimate, climactic showdown between good and evil to decide once and for all whether Jehovah’s Name will be vindicated or whether Satan was right in his accusations against him (Job 1:9-11, 2:4-5).

The details of this war are set forth in Revelation chapters 19 and 20. Jesus Christ will lead Jehovah’s forces of the heavenly angel hosts against Satan, his demons, and all the wicked political kingdoms and individuals who inhabit the earth. None but Jehovah’s Witnesses will be left alive at the end.⁸² This battle of Armageddon will be a great blessing to God’s people because Christ himself will fight for them; they won’t have to do any of the fighting for themselves, and so their victory is assured. Through this battle Christ will dethrone all worldly, satanic governments and usher in a new world of righteousness under his theocratic kingdom.

⁷⁸ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 97.

⁷⁹ The 1914 teaching is becoming rather embarrassing for some Jehovah’s Witnesses the further and further into the past it gets. Originally it was taught, according to Matthew 24:34, that Armageddon would come before the generation of people who were able to witness and understand the events of 1914 would pass away – that is, people who were 15 or so in 1914. As time went on and that generation got older and more nervous for the fulfillment of that teaching, Jehovah’s Witness leadership appealed to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25, which indicates that there will be a time of waiting as the end approaches which will test the faithfulness of many. However, that position about the 1914 generation has now become rather tenuous for obvious reasons. In 1995, the Watchtower was forced to revise this teaching (according to their principle of progressive revelation based on Proverbs 4:18, “bright light that is getting lighter and lighter”) to more generally refer to “this generation” as this current society of sinful people (Matthew 16:4, 17:17). See also Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 267 and surrounding context.

⁸⁰ Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 308.

⁸¹ This name is simply fitting because of Megiddo’s role in history as the site of a number of decisive wars. *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 45-46.

⁸² Kern, Herbert. *How To Respond – Jehovah’s Witnesses* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 46.

After the battle is won and Satan and his demons are defeated and helplessly chained and thrown into the abyss to await their final judgment and annihilation, “there will be a universal form of government in the new age – a perfect theocracy. The theocratic rule on earth will be a counterpart of the heavenly theocracy under the rule of Jesus Christ.”⁸³ The 144,000 elect who live spiritually in heaven with Christ will work in perfect accord alongside him to rule the earth⁸⁴ for a thousand years⁸⁵ and assure that everyone there is faithfully carrying out a mass educational program about Jehovah and his law, as well as to do away with those who dissent and balk at Jehovah’s rule.

This leads us into the subject of Judgment Day. While Christ is reigning as king during the millennium after the great battle of Armageddon, the general resurrection of all the dead (except Adam and Eve and all other willful sinners⁸⁶) will take place. All those who are not a part of the elect 144,000 and who died before the battle of Armageddon will arise from their graves⁸⁷ to live bodily on the earth. During this time the number of the 144,000 elect will finally be complete and Judgment Day will commence. This will not be a 24-hour day, but rather the remainder of the millennial age. During this “day” all the resurrected dead will be thoroughly trained in all the truths about Jehovah and his law and then given the opportunity to choose life or death, obeying or disobeying.⁸⁸ For all those who have consciously and defiantly chosen to

⁸³ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 100.

⁸⁴ See 2 Timothy 2:12, “If we go on enduring, we shall also rule together as kings,” and Revelation 5:10, “You made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth” (NWT).

⁸⁵ At Matthew 12:8, Jesus referred to himself as the Lord of the Sabbath (the seventh day of creation and of the normal week, a day of physical and spiritual rest and refreshment). Thus, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses, the loving purpose of Jehovah God will reasonably see to it that Christ’s millennial reign will run at least roughly parallel to the seventh millennium of man’s existence, which began in the year 4026 BC. See Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 135.

⁸⁶ “The Witnesses believe that Adam is unredeemable, since he was perfect and had no excuse for his sin. His act of disobedience forfeited, for all eternity, his right to life. Not even the merit of Christ’s sacrifice can be applied in his case.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 104 n. See also *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 62.

Consider in addition *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 791-792: “Jehovah God has the right to refuse to accept a ransom for anyone he deems unworthy. Christ’s ransom covers the sins an individual has because of being a child of sinful Adam, but a person can add to that by his own deliberate, willful course of sin, and he can thus die for such sin that is beyond coverage by the ransom.”

⁸⁷ This concept of the resurrection is different from the traditional Christian concept. In Jehovah’s Witness theology, once a person dies, they are annihilated forever – whether believer or unbeliever. However, “all those sleeping in death who are in God’s memory will be brought back to life.” *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 36. God keeps a memory bank of all the people who will be raised to life at the general resurrection, much like a carbon copy or photographic negative. Those who are raised are in every detail exact re-creations of the people who lived earlier in history, not the same people themselves.

⁸⁸ “On what basis will all be judged? According to the apostle John’s vision, ‘scrolls were opened,’ and ‘the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds.’ Are these scrolls the record of

reject Jehovah's kingdom from the beginning of time until then – Satan, his evil angels, and all the willfully disobedient of every age – “Jesus Christ, as Jehovah's king, will execute the judgment... The sentence of death, complete annihilation,⁸⁹ will be executed against these workers of iniquity. This is the second death from which there will be no resurrection.”⁹⁰

Following the judgment and the annihilation of all those opposed to Jehovah and his purposes, all those remaining who have proven faithful will be brought together harmoniously under the kingdom of Jehovah and thus all will become children of God forever. This will bring Isaiah 9:6 to fulfillment, where Christ is prophesied to be “Eternal Father” of all those privileged to live as his subjects. At this point Christ's main purpose of vindicating the name and honor of Jehovah will be finally and fully complete, and Jehovah will proceed to shower unnumbered blessings upon his people for the rest of eternity. Then at last will be, as 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says,

“the end, when [Christ] hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government and all authority and power. For he must rule as king until [God] has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing. For [God] “subjected all things under his feet.” But when he says that ‘all things have been subjected,’ it is evident that it is with the exception of the one who subjected all things to him. But when all things will have been subjected to him, then the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone” (NWT).

Christ will deliver up his kingdom to Jehovah God, by whose power and to whose ultimate glory all this was accomplished. In one final act of submission and humility Christ will once again subject himself to Jehovah God, the supreme ruler who will reign over his people in perfection and perfect harmony and justice forever and ever.

people's past deeds? No, the judgment will not focus on what people did before they died. How do we know that? The Bible says: ‘He who has died has been acquitted from his sin.’ (Romans 6:7) Those resurrected thus come to life with a clean slate, so to speak. The scrolls must therefore represent God's further requirements. To love forever, both Armageddon survivors and resurrected ones will have to obey God's commandments, including whatever new requirements Jehovah might reveal during the thousand years. Thus, individuals will be judged on the basis of what they do *during* Judgment Day.” *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 214-215; italics theirs.

“Jesus Christ and his princes will sit in judgment on the resurrected from all the nations. This judgment will not be conducted in court room fashion with each defendant presenting his case before the just Judge of the earth. Rather, the Judgment will be a period of instruction and trial for all sinners who have been raised to life. The teachers of God's law trained in the ‘ecumenical institute’ during the Millennial age will begin their course of instruction. When all men will have recognized the propriety of his righteous demands, this proposition will be placed before them, ‘Choose you this day life or death.’ To make a choice will be a categorical imperative, an either/or, for each individual. Then to test the sincerity of the choice, Jehovah will loose Satan for a season.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 104. After this short season, Satan will be everlastingly destroyed and the world will go on in perfect peace and harmony and righteousness forever.

⁸⁹ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 73: “[Jehovah] will never resurrect those whom he judges to be wicked and unwilling to change.”

⁹⁰ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 105-106.

WHAT DID CHRIST DO FOR US DURING HIS TIME ON EARTH?

This is the question that is most important in every religion that claims to have Christ at its center, and this is the question that is at the heart of this study. We have been through the person of Christ in Jehovah's Witness theology, so we now turn to his soteriological work – the work which demonstrates that both the love and the justice of God are exactly equal and absolute.

Early Life and Ministry

We will begin our study of Christ's earthly ministry with the background of his early life. Recall that Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus did not have an earthly father, but was the birth child of Mary by means of conception by Jehovah's holy spirit, or active force. He was not at the same time true God and true man in one person, as traditional Christianity teaches. When Christ became man, that is exactly what he was – nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. Christ left his divine spirit nature behind and took on the human nature and that alone. So he became a perfect human being – the exact equivalent of Adam before the fall.

That fact is huge in the Jehovah's Witness plan of salvation, because everything revolves around Christ undoing the mess that Adam made of this world by his willful sin. However, salvation for humanity wasn't truly the top priority in Jesus coming to this earth and living a perfect human life. The top priority in Jesus' life according to God's grand design was to vindicate Jehovah's name and sovereignty after Satan challenged it by attempting to usurp God's throne before the fall and by his accusations against the followers of Jehovah at Job 1:9-11 and 2:4-5.⁹¹ Jesus didn't come here with the sole purpose of winning salvation for humanity; he came to prove that Satan's accusations were groundless and that mankind could in fact be perfectly faithful to all of Jehovah's laws and regulations. When Christ lived his perfect life and died his

⁹¹ “The primary purpose of the Son of God in coming to earth was to meet and decisively answer Satan's charge that God cannot put on earth a creature who will keep his integrity and abide faithful till death under the test of persecution from the Devil and his demons (Job 1:8-12; 2[:3-]5)... By keeping his integrity under the most fiery test Christ Jesus would vindicate his Father's name and would prove his worthiness to be the Seed or King of God's capital organization, Zion... John showed (John 1:29, 36) the secondary purpose for which the Son of God came to earth, namely, to die as a holy sacrifice to Jehovah God in order to cancel the death's condemnation, that they might gain eternal life in the righteous new world which God has promised to create... when he presented himself in full dedication to God's will, Jehovah God accepted him for sacrifice as humankind's Redeemer.” *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1951), 240-245.

innocent death in obedience to the command of Jehovah, Satan was proved a liar and Jehovah's name was vindicated once and for all.

But that purpose in our minds isn't the primary focus of Christ's work while on earth. As God's people it is of course important to us that Jehovah's name be vindicated against anyone who would defame it, but our primary focus is on what Christ did *for us*.

After his birth and during the early years of his life, Christ lived very inconspicuously in Nazareth under Joseph and Mary and worked in his father's carpentry shop. Jehovah's Witnesses don't give this part of Jesus' life much treatment not only because it gets very little attention in Scripture itself, but particularly because it doesn't factor into the plan of salvation or his work toward it. It wasn't until Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River that he took up his ministry as the Christ. Therefore it wasn't until then that Christ truly began his task of undoing the sin and all the effects thereof that came into this world through the unfaithfulness of Adam.

Jesus submitted himself to John's baptism, not because he needed it to wash away his own sins or to present himself as the perfect substitute to take the place of humanity, but to symbolize his complete devotion to the will of God and Jehovah's coming theocratic kingdom.

“So John submerged Jesus beneath the Jordan stream to symbolize Jesus' immersion into the will of God. He raised Jesus out of the water to symbolize how Jesus was raised up out of death to his own will and was now made alive to God's will as this would be further revealed to him. It was here that God's 'woman' or spiritual organization brought Jesus forth as a spiritual Son of God, the heavenly Seed... There Jehovah acknowledged Jesus as the Seed of his 'Woman,' begotten by his spirit to a heavenly destiny... Thus Jesus began his work as the Christ or Messiah. Christ means 'Anointed One,' and immediately after his water baptism Jesus had been anointed with God's holy spirit.”⁹²

Following Jesus' baptism, he went out into the desert to be tempted by Satan. This was a very important step in Jesus' ministry because it was integral to both the primary and secondary purposes of Jesus' coming to this earth. When Jesus' withstood the onslaught of temptations by Satan, he proved that a perfect human⁹³ could in fact stand up to Satan's advances and remain faithful to Jehovah. Christ wasn't interested in gaining glory and power for himself, as Satan was at the beginning of time. His only interest was in serving Jehovah and bringing his everlasting kingdom to reality. He also remained faithful under temptation, whereas Adam had not during his own temptation in the Garden of Eden when he first fell into sin.

⁹² *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1943), 251-252.

⁹³ “Satan was trying to cause Jesus to be disloyal to God. But what test of loyalty would that be if Jesus were God? Could God rebel against himself? No, but angels and humans could rebel against God and did. The temptation of Jesus would make sense only if he was, not God, but a separate individual who had his own free will, one who could have been disloyal had he chosen to be, such as an angel or a human.” *Should You Believe in the Trinity? Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*, 14-15.

After his temptation in the desert, Jesus undertook his ministry of preaching and teaching about the coming kingdom of Jehovah that will bring endless blessings to obedient humans.⁹⁴ Through his perfect life in fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, his mighty acts,⁹⁵ and his message of righteousness and the theocracy to come, Christ proved himself to be Jehovah's chief witness and the perfect example for all other Witnesses to emulate.⁹⁶

Death and Resurrection

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus' death accomplished for mankind redemption or ransom from the sin of Adam (Matthew 20:28, Romans 5:12), which we would understand as original sin. In other words, Christ became a ransom sacrifice that compensated exactly for what Adam lost – the right to perfect human life on earth. Adam prior to the fall was a perfect human being, just as God created him to be and expected him to remain. God created Adam with a free will to obey his righteous decrees or not, and when Adam chose to follow the temptations of the devil and sin by eating the fruit of the tree forbidden to him by God, Adam lost his perfection. Thus he lost his right to life and incurred for all generations Jehovah God's wrath and punishment – that is, the inevitability of death and annihilation. Adam's sin separated all of mankind from God and placed them in slavery under Satan's control. Just as Psalm 51:5 says, this guilt of sin belongs to every human being due to his or her descent from Adam. The only way someone can escape that judgment is by living the perfect life that Adam was supposed to, by making the choice of life rather than death. However, no one is able to pay their own ransom price to atone for their sinfulness before God, because as Psalm 49:7-9 says, "Not one of them can by any means redeem even a brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him; (And the redemption price of their soul is so precious That it has ceased to time indefinite) That he should still live forever [and] not see the pit" (NWT).

⁹⁴ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 43.

⁹⁵ Whereas some point to Jesus' miracles as signs that he was God in the flesh, Jehovah's Witnesses are quick to point out that many of the apostles and prophets in the Bible performed miracles, not the least of which were Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, and Paul. Yet none of them claimed to be God. God merely gave them power to do miracles in order to show that he was behind them and working through them. Therefore Jesus' miracles only prove that he was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God.

⁹⁶ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 37-38, 45. See also *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 441: "True Christians imitate Jesus' example as the Great Teacher and Faithful Witness of Jehovah... 'Go...make disciples of people of all the nations' is their Leader's command."

It is in the context of that hopeless situation that Christ stepped into the picture. By virtue of his miraculous conception and virgin birth, Christ had the basis for completing the ransom sacrifice. By virtue of his perfect human life, he also fulfilled all of Jehovah's requirements for humankind. Then Christ accomplished what no *imperfect* human ever could have, according to Psalm 49:7-9. By his death, that is, "in becoming man's ransom, the man Jesus gave the equivalent (perfect manhood) for that which man lost. Therefore, all mankind may receive again, through faith in Christ and obedience to his requirements, a glorious, perfect human nature."⁹⁷

When Christ died on Calvary, he settled the debt that mankind owed because of Adam. However, that debt was not paid immediately; the price was simply credited to Christ's account in preparation for when he could formally deliver up the full price to Jehovah God in person. Christ's redemptive work was of no real value for the forty days that he remained on this earth after his resurrection to appear to his followers.⁹⁸ Since Jesus during his time here was only a perfect *human* and nothing more, that means at his death his human nature was annihilated. However, that poses a real problem if the benefits of the ransom sacrifice were ever to go into effect. "Therefore, Jehovah raised him from the dead and made him a spirit being as a reward for his faithfulness and loyalty."⁹⁹

This presentation of the resurrection of Christ might be confusing at first to the typical Christian. What seem to be two polar opposites are held in balance with each other. On the one hand, it was completely necessary for Christ to remain dead and annihilated; on the other hand, as Jehovah's Witnesses will testify on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, it was completely necessary that he be raised. But this is only an apparent contradiction, the solution to which rests solely on Jesus' different states before and after his death. The man Jesus Christ had to remain dead bodily because only through the sacrifice and annihilation of his human nature could that ransom price he paid be legitimately credited to his account. Had he risen from the dead bodily – had his human nature not remained dead and annihilated – that would have been similar to someone paying the price at a store for merchandise, and then going back a few days later and wanting his money back. The only way that person will actually get his money back is by

⁹⁷ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 73.

⁹⁸ It appears that Christ waited this long because he wanted to be able to confirm with his disciples what he had told them beforehand when he predicted his suffering, death, and resurrection. "Evidently, [Jesus] was aware of the fact that he had gained eternal life as a reward for his exclusive devotion to Jehovah." McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 76.

⁹⁹ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 73. Again, it must be specially noted that Jehovah's Witnesses DO NOT believe in a physical, bodily resurrection of Christ, but only a spiritual resurrection.

returning the merchandise.¹⁰⁰ In the same way, a bodily resurrection of Christ would have nullified the ransom price. You can't have your cake and eat it too, say Jehovah's Witnesses.

However, Jesus had to be raised from death as a spirit being because it was necessary for him to return to heaven in order to lay into the hands of Jehovah the ransom price that he paid to cancel out the sin of Adam so that it could be imputed to Adam's race.¹⁰¹ In doing so, Christ left Satan powerless and empty-handed and became the owner, master, and Lord of all. The value of that ransom sacrifice – the perfect human life of Christ, the exact corresponding equivalent to the perfect human life that Adam forfeited (1 Timothy 2:5-6, NWT) – was now available for all people to give them the same opportunity Adam had to gain eternal life, as Jehovah intended. And for all who do not get the opportunity to hear and heed this good news for themselves in this life, Christ's ransom sacrifice will provide them with one final chance to enter into a saving covenant relationship with God following the resurrection in the future millennial kingdom of Christ.

So as a summary of this section, "Jesus' work of atonement involved two phases. First, there was the satisfaction of divine justice; secondly, there was the bringing back into harmony or atonement with God of his creatures."¹⁰² Through his physical death and spiritual resurrection,

"Death has been changed from destruction to a suspension of existence, called sleep... Death has been robbed of its sting by Christ... Those who sleep now are being preserved until the great awakening at the end of the Millennial age when they will be given the final opportunity to attain everlasting life on earth... [Christ's] resurrection was the beginning of the first resurrection, in which his disciples are promised to share."¹⁰³

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S WORK MEAN FOR US AND OUR SALVATION?

"But the sacrifice for sins does not complete the work of Atonement... Another object [of the atonement] was the placing of the fallen race... under the special supervision of Jesus, who as representative of the Father's plan proposes not only to satisfy the claims of Justice, but also undertakes the instruction, correction, and restitution of so many of the fallen race as shall show their desire for harmony with Justice. Such he will ultimately turn over to the Justice of the divine law, by then so perfected as to be able to endure its perfect requirements."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ "If a man pays a debt for a friend but then promptly takes back the payment, obviously the debt continues. Likewise, if, when he was resurrected, Jesus had taken back his human body of flesh and blood, which had been given in sacrifice to pay the ransom price, what effect would that have had on the provision he was making to relieve faithful persons of the debt of sin?" *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 217.

¹⁰¹ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 51, 53.

¹⁰² McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 74.

¹⁰³ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 76-77.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 74-75.

In the last two sections we have appropriated the person and work of Christ in the theology of Jehovah's Witnesses. In this section we will move to the application of how that pertains to the lives and salvation of human beings. The above quotation from Charles Russell gives a good picture of the meaning of Jesus' work for our lives. Salvation to Jehovah's Witnesses is not by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; salvation comes because Christ gives us a kick-start and teaches us how to fall in line with everything God wants of us. If we fall in line and stay in line with that perfectly, then we will have harmony with God and he will let us live forever in a paradise on earth. That is salvation.

The Image of God and Sin

In order to understand the process of salvation for Jehovah's Witnesses, one must understand the image of God. Basically, the image of God is the sharing of God's attributes that makes us superior to the rest of creation and gives us the capacity for spirituality. According to Jehovah's Witness teaching, "The image of God in man is found in man's power of perception and his ability to reason, weigh arguments, use logic and decide between right and wrong. If man was not created in God's image... there would have been no need of a sin offering to redeem him."¹⁰⁵ We might compare this understanding of the image of God and the sentence sin brings because of it with a criminal who is charged with committing a crime in a healthy state of mind versus one charged with committing a crime in a state of mental illness. Someone who is deemed to be insane is not held responsible for his actions – or at least not nearly to the extent of someone who is mentally healthy. However, someone who does not have any mental issues may be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. In the same way, if we did not have the image of God – if we didn't have reason and the ability to choose between right and wrong – we could not be liable to punishment, because we would simply be robots without the ability to think critically and make moral decisions. But since we were created in the image of God, God holds us responsible for our actions.

However, the image of God was damaged and obscured by the fall into sin. Concerning the image of God after the fall, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* says, "The situation might be illustrated with a pan used for baking bread. If the pan has a dent in it, what happens to each loaf

¹⁰⁵ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 59.

of bread made in the pan? Each loaf has a dent, or an imperfection, in it. Similarly, each human has inherited a ‘dent’ of imperfection from Adam. That is why all humans grow old and die.”¹⁰⁶

So then our natural spiritual state according to Jehovah’s Witnesses comes into focus: our liability for punishment from God for sin is not our own fault, but Adam’s. Thus God views us as pitiable and on that basis is willing to show mercy toward us. As long as we have this inherited sinful condition, we cannot always choose and do what is good and right according to Jehovah’s will. That’s where Jesus comes in. According to the bread pan analogy, Jesus’ job was to pound the dent out of the pan so that those who trust in his work can have the image of God restored in them and they can have a chance to succeed where Adam failed. Whereas Adam lost the image of God when he willfully chose what was wrong, through faithfulness to Jehovah and studying his law, the image of God can be restored to willing hearts and salvation can be won.

But what about our own actual sins? In short, God is willing to look past them if our hearts are devoted to doing the right thing – whether the “right thing” is what we actually do or not.¹⁰⁷ God does not hold us spiritually responsible for our sins because they are due to the negative influences of our inherited imperfection and Satan’s control over this world,¹⁰⁸ so God will forgive if we are repentant and we do not continue to practice them habitually.¹⁰⁹ Since the fall, the image of God has been defaced and mankind has been given over to the slavery and control of the devil because of Adam’s willful sin and rejection of God’s law. Therefore one cannot be blamed for his own sins; they are the result of Satan’s temptation and work in his life.

¹⁰⁶ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 29.

¹⁰⁷ “Since [Noah, Job, and other servants of God] were descendants of the sinner Adam and hence sinners, it is clear that such men were ‘faultless’ and ‘blameless’ in the sense of measuring up fully to God’s requirements for them, requirements that took into account their imperfection and disability [original sin]... Even as a potter would not expect the same quality when molding a vase from common clay as he would when forming one from special refined clay, so Jehovah’s requirements take into consideration the weakness of imperfect humans... Though committing errors and wrongs because of their fleshly imperfection, such faithful men nevertheless manifested ‘a complete... heart’ toward Jehovah... Thus, within the limits possible for them to attain, their devotion was complete, sound, satisfying the divine requirements in their case... Certain relative perfections are set forth as attainable by sinful humans. Jesus told his followers: ‘You must accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.’” *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 605.

¹⁰⁸ “There are several questions raised by the position that the Witnesses take toward sin and the problem of evil. Simply stated, the position is that all the sins which man commits, and the evils which mankind experiences, are due to the work and influence of Satan. It is not man’s freedom of choice which makes it possible for him to sin, but it is slavery to Satan that compels him to sin.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 61 n.

¹⁰⁹ For Jehovah’s Witnesses, sin is action born from temptation that is allowed to grow unchecked, not a condition of imperfection that manifests itself in action. “Because of inherited imperfection, we have a real struggle to do what is right. All of us sin either in word or in deed. But by means of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice, we can receive ‘the forgiveness of sins’... To gain that forgiveness, however, we must be truly repentant.” *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 53. True repentance must be proved by renewed obedience to Jehovah’s commands. Thus, for Jehovah’s Witnesses, even forgiveness is not something God graciously gives, but it is something that must be earned.

Only in the smallest measure is man responsible for his sins and so liable to punishment. However, through probation and penance and finally through death (Romans 6:7) one's sins during this life are excused.

Salvation in the Present Age

A time is coming, though, when all will have the chance to prove their worthiness for salvation. Right now, conditions in this world are not conducive to accurate judgment about whether someone is truly a follower of Jehovah or not. Satan still rules, Adamic sin still has widespread influence, and God's name is still not vindicated. That vindication is Jehovah's main objective in history at the moment, but soon the battle of Armageddon will come, Satan and his followers will be bound and imprisoned, and Christ will begin ruling the world in perfect peace and righteousness. Then will exist the perfect circumstances for people who have had God's image restored in them to prove their loyalty to Jehovah and be granted eternal life.

So what hope do Jehovah's Witnesses have right now for reaching that future theocratic kingdom? "If a man turns to God through Jesus Christ, he is justified, sanctified, and delivered from the penalty of death... The work of grace in preparing man for eternal life has several distinct stages. At each stage man has the responsibility of responding or surrendering himself to the will of God."¹¹⁰ In *The Harp of God*,¹¹¹ Joseph Franklin "Judge" Rutherford, the second President of Jehovah's Witnesses, specifically lays out five stages: repentance, conversion, consecration, justification, and sanctification. In the repentance stage, a person is prepared to receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice by coming to recognize his sinfulness and honestly desiring to know the Lord and do his will. The conversion stage then follows, when that person comes by his own volition to follow Jesus more and more closely and continue to learn more about him and what he has done for us. Then comes the consecration stage, which is a conscious act of an individual to dedicate his life to the Lord and to set aside his own will in deference to Jehovah's (just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 16:24-28). Only then can he come into a right and completely harmonious relationship with Jehovah and possibly proceed to the justification

¹¹⁰ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 62-63.

¹¹¹ Rutherford, J. F. *The Harp of God: A Text-Book for Bible Study Specially Adapted for Use of Beginners; With Numerous Questions and Scripture Citations* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society and International Bible Students Association, 1921), 119-206.

stage. Only the elect 144,000 receive justification¹¹² so that they can be perfect when Christ presents them to Jehovah and brings them to heavenly life after their resurrection. Finally a believer will go through the sanctification stage, which really began at the consecration stage when his relationship with Jehovah was fixed and made right again. Jesus Christ is the one who accomplishes the sanctification of his people through continued thorough education in the law of Jehovah so that they can be considered a part of his body. Once a believer is made holy and the image of God is restored in him, that believer is officially set apart for Jehovah's use as a Witness.

It cannot be emphasized enough that salvation in the theology of Jehovah's Witnesses sits squarely in the lap of the human being who wants it. Mortal man can have everlasting life as a gift of God if he would accept it – if he would put his faith in the provisions that Christ has made through his ransom sacrifice and exercise that faith in pursuing righteousness, maintaining integrity, and obeying Jehovah's righteous decrees.¹¹³ Those who do so to Jehovah's satisfaction and approval will be granted eternal life. Christ provided the opportunity for everyone (whether now or in the future, even if some rejected it or weren't aware of it in this life) to make a choice between a life of full obedience on earth, or death and non-existence. It is the job of humans to choose the right path, and then prove by their actions that their choice was sincere – that they truly do have living faith (James 2:14-26).

As former Witness Duane Magnani puts it:

“What the Watchtower means by ‘free gift’ is that Christ's death only wiped away the sin inherited from Adam. They teach that without this work of atonement, men could not *work their way toward* salvation. But the ‘gift’ of Christ's ransom sacrifice is freely made available to all who desire it. In other words,

¹¹² By “justification,” Jehovah's Witnesses mean “absolving or clearing of any charge, holding as guiltless, and hence acquitting, or pronouncing and treating as righteous... an act of God whereby one is accounted guiltless... and also... God's act in declaring a person perfect in integrity and judged worthy of the right to life.” *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 603-604.

¹¹³ “Although giving lip service to salvation through faith in Christ, Witnesses actually believe that salvation is impossible apart from full obedience to the Watchtower Society and vigorous participation in its prescribed works program. Even individual JW's who are not sufficiently zealous for the organization may not survive Armageddon, and those who do make their way into the earthly paradise must maintain good works throughout Christ's thousand-year reign before they can be sealed for life.” Reed, David A. *Jehovah's Witnesses Answered: Verse by Verse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 15-16.

“*Illustration*: A family head may become a criminal and be sentenced to death. His children may be left destitute, hopelessly in debt. Perhaps their kindly grandfather intervenes on their behalf, making provision through a son who is living with him to pay their debts and to open up for them the possibility of a new life. Of course, to benefit, the children must accept the arrangement, and the grandfather may reasonably require certain things as assurance that the children will not imitate the course of their father.” *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 308.

without Christ's sacrifice, the individual wouldn't have a chance to get saved. But in view of His work, the free gift which removed the sin inherited from Adam, the individual now has a *chance*."¹¹⁴

But what of the claim of Christianity that Christ came to earth in order to be the all-sufficient Savior of the world? Didn't Jehovah send Jesus into this world with the intention of providing salvation for all people through faith in him alone? Jehovah's Witnesses say obviously not, since Isaiah 55:10-11 states,

"For just as the pouring rain descends, and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, and seed is actually given to the sower and bread to the eater, so my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it" (NWT).

Had God wanted to convert all people and bring everyone to faith through his Word and so receive salvation in that way, he would certainly have done it and the accomplishment of his purpose would not have been denied. Instead man rejected God's offer of eternal life. That is proof enough that salvation is not freely offered to everyone through the gospel.¹¹⁵ The Word is not a means of grace, as confessional Lutherans understand that term. However, Jehovah's Witnesses do certainly believe that the Word has an integral part in their lives and in the working of Jehovah's kingdom. They confess the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and proudly attest to its ultimate truthfulness as the only source for their doctrine. But to a Jehovah's Witness, the Word simply carries with it the authority of Jehovah God himself to educate people about who Jehovah is, what he has done for this world, and what we should do as his children who strive to keep his righteous laws. Therefore the true purpose of preaching the "gospel of the kingdom" (as Jehovah's Witnesses call it) is not to convert the world to faith, but to select the "little flock," which is a specific class of people identified in the next paragraph. When each person hears the gospel, he must then decide on his own whether to accept the Word or reject it. Therefore, as far as Jehovah's Witnesses are concerned, the Bible is similar to a code of laws or executive orders from a boss or superior – it is certainly authoritative and deserves our utmost respect and attention, but it does not have power in and of itself to effect any kind of a response. The response is totally up to the hearer.

¹¹⁴ Magnani, *The Watchtower Files*, 232.

¹¹⁵ Jehovah's Witnesses have never entertained the idea of universal salvation (or that salvation was won for all and offered to all), because Jehovah has never attempted such a thing. Thus, the purpose of Jehovah's Witnesses going door to door with their evangelism work is, rather than sharing Christ's salvation, to preach about the triumphant kingdom of God as a witness to all nations (Matthew 24:14). That will be a jumpstart for the educational program in the new world, so that the people who hear in this age aren't starting from scratch in the next.

The Two Classes

What about the Christian claim that before the creation of the world God in love elected some to be saved for eternal life in heaven? The Jehovah's Witnesses do have a concept of election or predestination, but it is very different from the Bible's found in Romans 8-9 and Ephesians 1, for example. The election of the Church is spoken of only in reference to the 144,000 *class* – and even that only to the number, not to specific people. God determined at the beginning of time that he would save a remnant of 144,000 anointed people¹¹⁶ – the “little flock,” (Luke 12:32), as it is sometimes called – to live in heaven for eternity as spirit beings, to reign with Christ, and to share in the glory of his divine nature¹¹⁷ (2 Peter 1:4) and priestly work.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ “Viewed as applying to a class, to the Christian congregation, or ‘holy nation’ of called ones as a whole (1 Pe 2:9)... God foreknew and foreordained that such a class (but not the specific individuals forming it) would be produced. Also, these scriptures would mean that he prescribed, or foreordained, the ‘pattern’ to which all those in due time called to be members thereof would have to conform, all of this according to his purpose. (Ro 8:28-30; Eph 1:3-12; 2Ti 1:9, 10) He also foreordained the works such ones would be expected to carry out and their being tested because of the sufferings the world would bring upon them.” *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 859.

“If the individuals were predestinated to salvation, they could not possibly fail, regardless of what they did. Since effort is required on the part of the individuals, it must be the *class* that is foreordained. God purposed that the entire class would conform to the pattern set by Jesus Christ. Those selected by God to be part of that class, however, must prove faithful if they are actually to attain the reward set before them... [In connection with God’s election *before the founding of the world* at Ephesians 1:4-5,] it is noteworthy that, at Luke 11:50-51, Jesus parallels ‘the founding of the world’ with the time of Abel. Abel is the first human who continued to have God’s favor throughout his life. Thus, it was after the rebellion in Eden but before the conception of Abel that God formed his purpose to produce a ‘seed’ through which deliverance would be provided. [Gen. 3:15] God purposed that associated with the principal Seed, Jesus Christ, would be a group of his faithful followers who would share with him in a new government over the earth, the Messianic Kingdom.” *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 143-144.

This 144,000 number is, of course, based on Revelation 7:4-8; interestingly, Jehovah’s Witnesses take that number literally, but say that the 12 tribes listed in those same verses are figurative of “spiritual Israel.” See Martin, Walter Ralston. *Jehovah of the Watchtower: A Thorough Exposé of the Important Anti-Biblical Teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1974), 89.

¹¹⁷ See Magnani, *The Watchtower Files*, 160.

¹¹⁸ “Only then in the new heavens will the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel have their complete population, the 144,000. Jesus and the Church, the 144,000, will constitute the Christ. This is the great mystery which Jehovah has been preparing for six thousand years. The Christ, now completed, will rule over all creation as Prophet, Priest, and King.” McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 101; see also 118.

Furthermore, see Chretien, *Witnesses of Jehovah*, 139. This priestly work includes “the power to cleanse persons of sin and imperfection... By making continual progress in righteousness and with the help of the heavenly priesthood, they will progressively grow young and strong, until they reach perfection of health in mind and body. They will be set completely free from the bondage to sin and death inherited from Adam.”

Finally, see the Watchtower tract *Life Everlasting – In Freedom of the Sons of God* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1966), 391-392, 400 for the results of this priestly work among the “great crowd” on earth: “The ‘great crowd’ of survivors of the ‘war of the great day of God the Almighty’ will then be on their way to gaining absolute righteousness and perfection in the flesh. They want to become perfect human sons of God through their Eternal Father Jesus Christ... Not imputed human perfection by faith in Christ’s blood, but actual human perfection in the flesh by the uplifting, cleansing help of God’s Messianic kingdom—this is what the ‘great crowd’ will need and what they will attain by Christ’s kingdom of a thousand years. Under Christ’s kingdom everything on earth will be arranged, regulated and carried on righteously and in favor of righteousness, Satan and his demons being in the abyss... Finally, through faithful molding of themselves to righteousness they will get that

That number is being filled “upon the conditions of severe trials of faith and obedience... Thus, by an individual trial and by individually ‘overcoming,’ the individual members of the predetermined class are being chosen or accepted into all the blessings and benefits predetermined of God for this class.”¹¹⁹ The gathering of the elect 144,000 began at Pentecost when Jehovah poured out his spirit on all the people and has continued throughout the centuries. However, by presidential decree (but with no scriptural support), Judge Rutherford declared that as of 1935 there is “no vacancy” in heaven – all the 144,000 anointed slots have been filled. Those members of the elect (or anointed) class who have lived past 1918 are, at their death, immediately being raised as spirit beings and going to heaven to reign with Christ.

How does one know that he is part of the elect? Outwardly, the extent of a person’s faithfulness to Jehovah’s law may be a good indication of whether he is part of the elect or not. However, there are no unmistakable signs to prove that someone is among the elect or not. One cannot simply choose to be a part of the elect; Jehovah must make the choice (Romans 9:16). The simple answer about how one knows if he is part of the elect 144,000 is that he just does, because the spirit of Jehovah convinces him so:

“For YOU did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but *YOU received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: “Abba, Father!”* The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:15-17, NWT; italics mine).

Those who profess to be among the anointed class of Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that God specially pours out his holy spirit upon them so that they can properly understand, appreciate, and respond to the gospel.¹²⁰ Therefore in the leadership and writings of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the word and authority of those who claim to be among the anointed is viewed much more highly

‘law of sin’ nullified in themselves and become perfect human creatures, like the perfect Adam in the garden of Eden... All deadly effects from Adam’s sin in Eden must be wiped out. The ‘law of sin and of death’ must be abolished. Accordingly, as those of the ‘great crowd’ more and more cultivate actual, persistent righteousness within themselves, physical healing and betterment will be given. Eventually, before the thousand years of his healing reign are over, uplift to human perfection will be imparted to the obedient, God-fearing ‘great crowd.’ Now they will be able to stand before the God of holiness on the basis of their own righteousness... [Then finally at the end of the Millennium,] Jehovah God will justify, declare righteous, on the basis of their own merit all perfected humans who have withstood that final, decisive test of mankind.”

This is one of the Watchtower’s most shocking teachings, and one that many Jehovah’s Witnesses do not even seem to be aware of because it is guarded so tightly by the Organization. Essentially this means that Jesus is not himself the Christ, but only the most preeminent part. Jesus and the 144,000 together make up “The Christ” (the Head and body together) and perform all his functions of prophet, priest, and king. Thus the name “anointed class” takes on a much deeper meaning and may as well read “Christ class.”

¹¹⁹ Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 193-194.

¹²⁰ Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 32.

(in fact, essentially on par with Scripture itself) than that of those who do not claim to be anointed.¹²¹

There is, however, another class of believers in Jehovah's Witness theology that is non-elect and who do not have a heavenly hope.¹²² Their destiny is life on a perfect, post-Armageddon earth. Their number is neither limited nor specified, and this is the goal that Jehovah's Witnesses hold out for anyone who might join their ranks today. Jehovah has made provision even for the non-elect to inherit eternal life in an earthly paradise. These are sometimes called "Jonadabs" (II Kings 10:15-29), because they are friendly toward Jehovah's kingdom in their lives and assist in the kingdom work as best they can. Most often, though, they are referred to as the "great crowd" (Revelation 7:9) or "other sheep" (John 10:16). These are non-elect believers who will be saved because they acknowledge Christ and Jehovah and faithfully carry out the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. They are not born again (John 3:3) – that is, they are not baptized in water *and* begotten as spirit sons of God with the prospect of sharing in eternal heavenly life and kingdom rule – but they find refuge in the organization and fall in line with its requirements. It is possible that some who are at one time a part of the 144,000 may lose that status due to unfaithfulness, and some from the other sheep may become elect;¹²³ that all depends

¹²¹ "It is true that the Watchtower also teaches that the Bible is written directly for the 'anointed' and that the 'great crowd' must gain their understanding of the Bible from the 'anointed.'" Bowman, *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses*, 21. This presents an interesting dilemma in evangelism to Jehovah's Witnesses: most Witnesses are programmed to believe that the majority of Scripture doesn't apply to them (at least directly), but only to the anointed.

This also means that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses (their highest ruling council which is known as Jehovah's Mouthpiece, constituting approximately twelve men at a given time) will be always filled with men from the anointed class, if at all possible. But again, the passing time has brought some doubt as to how long that will be able to continue. See Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 44.

¹²² "Despite Paul's warning, Jehovah's Witnesses preach that God's kingdom was established invisibly in 1914, and therefore the gospel preached for almost 2000 years has never been the true gospel!.. Therefore, part of the good news of Jehovah's Witnesses is that only 144,000 persons are born again into the body of Christ and will inherit heavenly glory! The rest of the 'other sheep' cannot be born again. They cannot share in Christ's heavenly kingdom. They cannot be completely justified through faith in Jesus Christ... And they cannot participate in the sacrament of holy communion. In other words, whereas historic Christianity has invited all who wanted to come and partake in Christ's kingdom, the Watch Tower Society deprives its followers of that hope." Chretien, *Witnesses of Jehovah*, 133, 137.

¹²³ How exactly does the ongoing filling of the 144,000 anointed class work, if all the slots were taken by 1935? It is much like a major league baseball team. During spring training there are tryouts (from Pentecost to 1935), where a number of people vie for 25 roster spots (144,000 heavenly callings). Once spring training is over and the roster is filled (as of 1935), those who didn't make the team go to the minor leagues (great crowd with an earthly hope). However, if someone on the major league team leaves the team or gets injured or doesn't play well enough during the season (anytime in their lives after 1935), someone from the minor leagues will be brought up to replace him. "If an anointed one proves unfaithful, it is most likely that a person who has long served God faithfully as one of the other sheep would be called to fill the vacancy thus caused in the 144,000." "Why Get to Know God?" *The Watchtower* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, February 15, 2003), 20.

on the degree of devotion with which they exercise their faith and subject their own will to the Father. Only the most faithful Witnesses will gain the distinction of being elect and reigning with Christ in heaven as immortal spirit beings.

Requirements for Salvation

What is required of a Jehovah's Witness who hopes to gain everlasting life, either in heaven or on a paradise earth? A Jehovah's Witness must first know the true God and believe that Jesus died as the ransom sacrifice to cancel Adam's sin. He must also then show his appreciation for the ransom sacrifice in order to obtain its benefits. In other words, he must prove his faith by his actions. By doing so, that person not only proves his loyalty to Jehovah, but also contributes to Jehovah's purpose of proving Satan a liar and impostor for accusing God of being overbearing in his laws and questioning his right to rule all creation.¹²⁴

Two passages are most often used to make these points. John 17:3 says, "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ" (NWT). No one can prove his loyalty to Jehovah God or believe in the ransom sacrifice of his Son if he does not first know Jehovah God, his will, what he is like, and what he has done to open the opportunity for eternal life. In other words, for someone to have real confidence for everlasting life, he must be a Jehovah's Witness because only Jehovah's Witnesses truly know God and know Christ the way they wish to be known from Scripture. This passage, though, is perhaps most eye-opening for the emphasis of Jehovah's Witnesses' faith life: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone *exercising faith* in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life... He that *exercises faith* in the Son has everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him" (John 3:16, 36, NWT; italics mine). Jehovah's Witnesses commonly translate the Greek verb πιστεύω "to exercise faith," rather than the simple, common

¹²⁴ This dynamic of vindication between Jehovah and Satan provides a good backdrop for Jehovah's Witnesses to address the problem of evil and suffering in this world. Why does Jehovah permit so much evil to go on in this world, which is such an affront to his holiness and sovereignty? Because that is his way of facilitating the vindication of his name among his faithful people. Jehovah allows his people to undergo trials and sufferings so that, in maintaining their integrity and remaining true to him, Satan may be proved a liar and an impostor. It is for this same reason that Jesus had to go through such cruel suffering and meet such a brutal end. See *Jehovah's Witnesses: Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* 27.

translation, “to believe, trust, have faith.”¹²⁵ In this way Jehovah’s Witnesses turn “the gospel in a nutshell” into a law that puts the onus of salvation on the individual, rather than Christ.¹²⁶

In the Watchtower’s own words, “Simply believing in God is not enough to please him... Having true faith is more than merely knowing that God exists and that he hears and answers prayers. Faith is proved by our actions. We must give clear evidence that we have faith by the way we live every day. – James 2:26.”¹²⁷ Perhaps the following quotation captures even more clearly the tone of Jehovah’s Witnesses about the interplay between faith and works in salvation:

“Jehovah gives everyone on earth the opportunity to gain everlasting life. To have eternal life in Paradise, however, we must worship God properly and live now in a way that is acceptable to him... God requires that we obey Jesus and apply his teachings if we want everlasting life. That is why the Bible states: ‘He that exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son will not see life.’ – John 3:36.”¹²⁸

Faith alone is not sufficient to be saved; Christ simply nullified Adam’s sin. The rest is up to us. Having secured the benefit of Christ’s ransom sacrifice for ourselves and removed the obstacle of original sin, we are free¹²⁹ to exercise that faith by living a holy and righteous life of good works – the same life that Jehovah intended Adam to live. *Integrity* is an extremely important concept for Jehovah’s Witnesses – that is, maintaining a life of moral soundness, blamelessness, and faultlessness, and maintaining completeness of heart devotion to Jehovah. “Integrity requires uncompromising loyalty to God and adherence to righteousness, not merely under favorable conditions or circumstances, but under all conditions and at all times... [Jehovah’s Witnesses’] constant concern for gaining Jehovah’s approval brings stability to their lives, enabling them to follow a straight course to their goal.”¹³⁰ Only by maintaining integrity

¹²⁵ See Bowman, *Understanding Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 69-70 for further comments.

¹²⁶ See Romans 10:9-10 for an example of how the translation of “exercise faith” can become nonsense: “For if you publicly declare that ‘word in your own mouth,’ that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation.” (NWT).

¹²⁷ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 151, 166.

¹²⁸ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 145, 149.

¹²⁹ Concerning the subject of freedom, Jehovah’s Witnesses firmly believe in the free will to choose one’s own course of life. “Humans were created with free will... Jehovah is not interested in service performed under compulsion... To illustrate: What would please a parent more – a child’s saying ‘I love you’ because he is told to say it or his saying it freely from the heart? So the question is, How will *you* use the free will that Jehovah has given you? Satan, Adam, and Eve made the worst possible use of free will. They rejected Jehovah God. What will you do?

“You have the opportunity to put the marvelous gift of free will to the best possible use. You can join the millions who have taken a stand on Jehovah’s side. They make God rejoice because they take an active part in proving Satan a liar and a miserable failure as a ruler... You too can do that by choosing the right course of life.” *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 113-114.

¹³⁰ *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, 1211.

till death can Jehovah's name rightly be vindicated against Satan's accusations; only by maintaining integrity till death can a Jehovah's Witness prove worthy of eternal life.

What are some of the best ways to "exercise faith" and maintain integrity? The best way is to study the Bible regularly, with the assistance of Jehovah's Witnesses and their literature. This new-found Bible knowledge will then lead a Jehovah's Witness to spread the good news of the kingdom door-to-door, following the example of Jesus and the apostles so as not to miss anyone. In every facet of life Jehovah's Witnesses strive to imitate Christ's perfection.¹³¹ In their own words, these are the four basic requirements one must meet if he or she hopes to live forever:

"Jesus Christ identified a first requirement when he said in prayer to his Father: 'This means everlasting life, their *taking in knowledge* of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.' (John 17:3) Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ includes knowledge of God's purposes regarding the earth and of Christ's role as earth's new King. . .

"Many have found the second requirement more difficult. It is to *obey God's laws*, yes, to conform one's life to the moral requirements set out in the Bible. . .

"A third requirement is that we *be associated with God's channel*, his organization. . . Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will [that is, the Watchtower Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses]. To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.

"The fourth requirement is connected with loyalty. God requires that prospective subjects of his Kingdom support his government by *loyally advocating his Kingdom rule to others* [that is, by selling Watchtower publications and keeping the membership growing]."¹³²

Of special significance for Jehovah's Witnesses in their constant striving for faithfulness to Jehovah are what Lutherans know as the two sacraments. "The Witnesses observe two high ceremonies, namely Baptism and the Memorial Supper. These ceremonies were ordained by Jesus to be outward symbols of Jehovah's activity in the Church."¹³³

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptism is a symbol of "complete, unreserved, and unconditional dedication¹³⁴ through Jesus Christ to do the will of Jehovah God,"¹³⁵ and a requirement for all who want to have a relationship with him. Jehovah's Witnesses also consider

¹³¹ "True faith is proved by 'works,' that is, by our actions. One way to show that we have faith in Jesus is by doing our best to imitate him not just in what we say but also in what we do." *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 55.

¹³² Magnani, *The Watchtower Files*, 233, 242, quoting from *The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1983, p. 12-13. These requirements are also laid out in the JW publication *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* (1958), 242-249.

¹³³ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, 86.

¹³⁴ But see *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 180: "You do not have to be perfect to make a dedication to God. Jehovah knows your limitations and never expects you to do more than you are able to do." This demonstrates yet again the paradox of Jehovah's Witness theology: such a legalism to earn one's way into God's good graces, and yet a need to downplay responsibility for sin because no one can truly live up to the standard God holds us to. See also p.121-122 from the same work that makes the same point.

¹³⁵ *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 54.

one's baptism to double as an ordination ceremony to the ministry of Jehovah.¹³⁶ Baptism does not create faith; it follows from faith, since it is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:7), not baptismal water. The only proper method is by complete submersion, not sprinkling or some other form. That was the method of Christ's own baptism¹³⁷ and only submersion rightly symbolizes death to one's former life course and arising for new life to do the will of God (Romans 6:1-4). "The word 'baptize' comes from a Greek term meaning 'dip.' Christian baptism therefore means being fully dipped, or immersed, in water."¹³⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses use the baptismal formula from Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit*" (NWT, italics mine), which "means that a baptism candidate recognizes the authority of Jehovah God and of Jesus Christ... He also recognizes the function and activity of God's holy spirit, or active force." Baptism is only for people of responsible age who can hear, believe, and make a solemn dedicatory decision¹³⁹ – not for infants or young children.

All this can be deduced from the fact that Jesus was baptized, though sinless (thus showing that the purpose of Baptism is not to wash away sins); Jesus went into the Jordan River to be baptized by John, no doubt being completely immersed; and Jesus waited until he was thirty years old to be baptized, rather than earlier on in life. One's baptism should closely follow after his consecration, since it is a public declaration that he has dedicated his entire life to the service of Jehovah after a course of study and accepted all the responsibilities and obligations that such a life imposes.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Gruss, Edmond C. *We left Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimonies* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 106.

¹³⁷ "Jesus' own baptism was by total immersion, and this is therefore regarded as the authentic means of performing the rite, which is dependent on profession of faith." Chryssides, George D. "Inauthentic Authenticity? Reviving authentic Christianity in the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." *Scottish Journal Of Religious Studies* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 1999): 5-18. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 2, 2012), 13.

¹³⁸ *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 175.

¹³⁹ Before being baptized, each person must consciously repent of their earlier sins from when they didn't know Jehovah's will and convert. "Repentance must be followed by conversion, or 'turning around.' You must do more than feel regret. You need to reject your former way of life and be firmly determined that you will do what is right from now on. Repentance and conversion are steps that you must take before being baptized." *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 178. Therefore conversion is nothing spiritual; it is something that a person does and is essentially making a commitment to live a holier life according to Jehovah's will.

¹⁴⁰ For the 144,000, following water baptism will come the baptism in the Spirit, whereby the person is united to the body of Christ and begotten as a spiritual son of God, and whereby God puts his seal of approval and acceptance upon him as a future heavenly king and priest. There is no special ceremony for Spirit baptism; this baptism is performed when and where Jehovah is pleased to do so.

The Memorial Supper is the Jehovah's Witness equivalent of the Lord's Supper.

“One reason why the Memorial was instituted had to do with one purpose served by Jesus' death. He died as an upholder of his heavenly Father's sovereignty. Christ thus proved Satan the Devil, who had falsely charged that humans serve God only out of selfish motives, to be a liar. (Job 2:1-5) Jesus' death in faithfulness proved this contention false and made Jehovah's heart rejoice... Another reason why the Lord's Evening Meal was instituted was to remind us that by means of his death as a perfect, sinless human, Jesus 'gave his soul a ransom in exchange for many'... Observance of the Lord's Evening Meal reminds us of the great love shown by both Jehovah and his Son in connection with Jesus' sacrificial death. How we should appreciate that love!”¹⁴¹

However, there are some significant differences in the way Jehovah's Witnesses go about the Lord's Evening Meal as opposed to confessional Lutherans. Following the lead of the Passover meal before it, the Jehovah's Witnesses only celebrate the Memorial Supper once a year – on the 14th of Nisan, the same night that the Old Testament Passover was celebrated¹⁴² and the night when Jesus first instituted the meal.¹⁴³ Jehovah's Witnesses view the Lord's Evening Meal as the New Testament form of a communion or fellowship offering (Leviticus 3; 7:11-21, 28-36),¹⁴⁴ which signifies peace between God and the partakers. Following the direction of Jesus and Paul (1 Corinthians 11:25-26), Jehovah's Witnesses will continue to observe the Lord's Evening Meal as long as there are anointed class believers on the earth to receive it.¹⁴⁵

The words of institution from Matthew 26:26-28 make clear the Jehovah's Witness understanding of the significance of this sacrament: “As they continued eating, Jesus took a loaf

¹⁴¹ “Why Get to Know God?”, 13.

¹⁴² “Should Jesus' death be commemorated monthly, weekly, or even daily? No. Jesus instituted the Lord's Evening Meal and was killed on the day of Passover, which was observed ‘as a memorial’ of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage in 1513 B.C.E. (Exodus 12:14) The Passover was held only once a year, on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan. (Exodus 12:1-6; Leviticus 23:5) This indicates that Jesus' death should be commemorated only as often as the Passover—annually—not monthly, weekly, or daily.” “Why Get to Know God?”, 14.

“If you commemorate an important event, such as a wedding anniversary, or if a nation commemorates an important event in its history, how often is it done? Once a year on the anniversary date. This would also be consistent with the fact that the Lord's Evening Meal was instituted on the date of the Jewish Passover, a yearly celebration...” *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 269.

¹⁴³ According to Jehovah's Witnesses, March 31, 33 C. E. “Why Get to Know God?”, 12.

¹⁴⁴ “Why Get to Know God?”, 16; *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 269.

¹⁴⁵ “How long would the body of anointed Christians observe the Memorial of Christ's death? ‘Until he arrives,’ said Paul, evidently meaning that these observances would continue until Jesus' arrival to receive his anointed followers into heaven by a resurrection during his ‘presence.’ (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)” “Why Get to Know God?”, 13.

Some try to point out a contradiction, or at least an inconsistency, in Jehovah's Witness teaching here. If Christ is already present, why do Jehovah's Witnesses still celebrate the Evening Meal? Because not all the anointed believers have been resurrected to spiritual life and gathered to heaven yet. As long as the anointed class continues on the earth, Jehovah's Witnesses will celebrate the Lord's Evening Meal. When that 144,000 number is complete, there will be no more need for the Meal of remembrance because then Armageddon and the millennium will come. Consider *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, 269: “Regarding the duration of the observance, ‘until he arrives,’ the apostle Paul evidently had reference to Christ's coming again and receiving them into heaven by a resurrection during the time of his presence.”

and, after saying a blessing, he broke it and, giving it to the disciples, he said: ‘TAKE, eat. *This means my body.*’ Also, he took a cup and, having given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: ‘Drink out of it, all of YOU; for *this means* my “blood of the covenant,” which is to be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins”’ (NWT, italics mine).¹⁴⁶ Just as Christ did, Jehovah’s Witnesses only use for their meal unleavened bread and red grape wine. Witnesses teach that the unleavened bread symbolizes the perfect, sinless human body Christ sacrificed, and the red wine¹⁴⁷ symbolizes the blood he poured out for our ransom. There is no miraculous changing of the emblems into Christ’s literal flesh and blood in this meal. “The memorial is exactly this: a reminder of Christ’s death, of his sacrifice, of the ransom whereby man may be saved to eternal life.”¹⁴⁸ The Memorial Supper helps all true believers to bear in mind and appreciate the ransom sacrifice Christ made when he gave his body and blood over to death.

Only members of the elect 144,000 may rightly eat the bread and drink from the cup, since only they can rightly say that they are of the body of Christ and will inherit the kingdom (Luke 22:28-30).¹⁴⁹ Those who partake must be in a healthy spiritual condition, showing neither disrespect nor contempt for Jesus’ sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). In fact, for someone who is of the “other sheep” to partake of the emblems would be to symbolize something that is not true – representing himself as a person called to be a heavenly king and priest while knowing full well that he doesn’t actually have such a calling. Therefore to do so would be to eat and drink judgment on oneself and sin against what the emblems signify. Thus, though all Witnesses are invited and obligated to attend the annual memorial meal, the vast majority simply observe and

¹⁴⁶ Jehovah’s Witnesses misrepresent historic Christian teaching here: “Some believe that Jesus turned the bread into his literal flesh and the wine into his blood. However, Jesus’ fleshly body was still intact when he offered this bread. Were Jesus’ apostles really eating his literal flesh and drinking his blood? No, for that would have been cannibalism and a violation of God’s law.” *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 207. Jesus must have been speaking figuratively, they say: “Consider the expressions ‘this is my body’ and ‘this is my blood’ in the light of other vivid language used in the Scriptures. Jesus also said, ‘I am the light of the world,’ ‘I am the gate of the sheepfold,’ ‘I am the true vine.’ (John 8:12; 10:7; 15:1) None of these expressions implied a miraculous transformation, did they?... Is it not more reasonable to conclude that what was in the cup *represented* Jesus’ blood...?” *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 263.

¹⁴⁷ “Red grape wine undoubtedly was the kind Jesus used when instituting the Memorial. Some present-day red wines, however, are unacceptable because they are fortified with spirits or brandy or have had herbs and spices added to them. Jesus’ blood was adequate, not needing anything to be added to it. Hence, such wines as port, sherry, and vermouth would not be suitable. The Memorial cup should contain unsweetened and unfortified red wine. Homemade, unsweetened red grape wine could be used, and so could such wines as red burgundy and claret.” “Why Get to Know God?”, 15.

¹⁴⁸ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 87.

¹⁴⁹ “This is also claimed to be the authentic practice enjoined by Jesus... It is thus only those who will share Christ’s table in heaven—that is to say to 144,000—who may partake of the Memorial emblems on earth.” Chrissydes, “Inauthentic Authenticity?” 13.

do not partake of the bread and wine because they are only members of the “great crowd,” not the “little flock.”

Salvation during the Millennial Kingdom and Beyond

Jehovah’s Witnesses put strong emphasis on the fact that, since Christ began his earthly presence in 1914, “a separating of people of all nations is taking place [Matthew 25:31-33] and that their response to the Kingdom message is an important factor in this... on the basis of people’s reaction to the Kingdom message, everyone is being ‘marked’ [Ezekiel 9:1-11] either for preservation through the great tribulation or for destruction by God.”¹⁵⁰ At the battle of Armageddon, these judgments will be finally carried out. Those who are faithful to Jehovah’s law and receive the kingdom message with goodwill can look forward to life on a perfected earth after the battle. They will be given eternal life¹⁵¹ – provided they remain faithful and do not decide to rebel like the devil. Earth will be governed by princes under the 144,000 and Christ, who will reign from heaven. These princes will consist of the Old Testament heroes of faith: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, and so on – particularly those men named in Hebrews 11.¹⁵² The Jehovah’s Witnesses alive at that time will conduct a worldwide educational program so that the knowledge of Jehovah can be thoroughly and accurately spread to the ends of the earth, and so that those who heed that education may get the opportunity to have their names written in the scroll of life (Revelation 20:12-13). Under this educational program, people on earth will reach human perfection by the end of the millennium. Since sin brings death, that means death will finally be brought to nothing (1 Corinthians 15:26). By that time Satan and all his evil cohorts will have been defeated and their influence will have been removed, so the kingdom will be able to go on uninterrupted in perfect justice and righteousness and the earth will be free from war, from fear, from want and need, and from disease and death.

“Under the Thousand Year Reign of Christ Jesus, Jehovah’s original purpose for creating the earth and putting the first human pair on it will be realized. The earthly Paradise will never become boring. Just as Adam was assigned work in the garden of Eden, so humankind will have challenging projects in caring for

¹⁵⁰ *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 17.

¹⁵¹ This is not to be confused with immortality. Immortality is only for spirit beings in heaven; everlasting life is for faithful humans on a paradise earth. Essentially the difference is that immortals don’t need anything outside of themselves to sustain life. Those who are given everlasting life still need food, water and air to sustain themselves.

¹⁵² After the millennium ends, though, these “ancient worthies” as they are called will not be left on earth with the rest of humanity. They will at least be given some measure of special honor – they will be taken to heaven, not to assume the divine nature along with the little flock, but they will assume the same spiritual nature as the angels. See Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 33.

the earth and the plant and animal life on it. They ‘shall long enjoy the work of their hands.’—Isaiah 65:22... Genesis 2:15.”¹⁵³

All people on earth will then have the ability to live the holy lives that God intended humans to live, beginning with Adam.¹⁵⁴ Mankind will finally be able to fulfill God’s primary purpose for this world: “God blessed them and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1:28, NWT). No one will die except the anointed class believers who survived Armageddon and will by means of their deaths be transferred to heaven, and those inhabitants of the new earth who turn away and refuse to obey Jehovah. This will go on for a thousand years in perfect righteousness, during which time the general resurrection of all the dead¹⁵⁵ will take place¹⁵⁶ and they will be educated in the laws of Jehovah. All those who did not serve or obey Jehovah in the previous age because they did not know him will then be granted one full and fair opportunity for life in the perfected image of God. Then they will be legitimately able to make their own choice whether to believe and live or reject Jehovah and be annihilated for eternity.

However, even those Jehovah’s Witnesses who are not faithful enough in their work and service to Jehovah may ultimately suffer annihilation. Like Adam in the beginning, those alive at the end of the millennium will be totally free from sin – but not incapable of it. At the end of that age, the sincerity of believers will be tested in order to weed out those who don’t truly belong

¹⁵³ *Jehovah’s Witnesses: Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* 18.

¹⁵⁴ “Jesus’ sacrificial death provides a ransom for all, but that does not guarantee that all shall have everlasting life. Rather, it guarantees that all shall have a second chance, under perfect conditions, to prove their obedience to the divine will... The same divine requirement of absolute obedience will apply then as applied in Eden, but the subjects of the millennial kingdom will have the great advantage of vastly increased knowledge...

“As the work of the millennial kingdom proceeds, the earth is brought to the state of perfection which God had originally intended. At the close of the millennium Satan, who has been restrained since his defeat at Armageddon, is to be released for a short while during what Russell describes as a ‘harvest’ of the millennial age. But where the Harvest of the Gospel age had gathered in only a ‘little flock’, the results will be reversed at the close of the millennium. All mankind having been brought to perfection and having seen the miraculous transformation of the world into a paradise, very few will thereafter submit to the temptation to follow Satan. Satan, all his demons and those few who succumb will finally suffer everlasting destruction. Then Christ will hand back the kingdom of Jehovah and Edenic perfection will be guaranteed for all eternity.” Crompton, *Counting the Days to Armageddon*, 33, 80.

¹⁵⁵ “It should be noted that those who are physically raised during the millennium are not raised with perfect human bodies. Their new bodies, it is said, will match the personalities of the individuals who are raised – personalities which were neither sinless nor perfect at the moment of death. These individuals, therefore, are raised in a fallen condition; only by the end of the millennium will they have been lifted out of their fallen condition and brought to a condition of human perfection.” Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 316.

¹⁵⁶ See Acts 24:15. Although this passage says that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses, not all the unrighteous will be raised. Some who were wicked and defiant enough in their previous life will not be given a second chance. So then what is the difference between those unrighteous who will be raised and those who won’t? Basically, we’ll just have to wait and see. “As to which ones of ‘the unrighteous’ will be raised, God will decide.” *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, 53.

when Satan and his demons are released from their prison for a short time. Those who stand firm will live in perfect righteousness and harmony forever apart from any and all effects of sin. But just as Satan fell into sin at the beginning of time when he allowed himself to entertain evil in his mind, there is always the possibility that sin may enter someone's heart and overtake him (James 1:14-15). In that case, Jehovah will be forced to withdraw his gift of eternal life and annihilate that person for his disobedience.¹⁵⁷

The following will serve well as a final summary of this section:

“Man is a mortal soul¹⁵⁸ whose right to life under the divine arrangement was forfeited by sin. He was created in the image of God, and given freedom. Because of sin the image of God in man has been defaced. He also lost his freedom. He is now under the curse of the divine sentence, death; but man's rights and privileges were purchased by the man Christ Jesus. Consequently, death is not to be accounted as death, but merely a temporary sleep. From this sleep mankind will be awakened by its Redeemer in the resurrection morning of the Millennial age. At the time of the great awakening man will be given the final opportunity to live forever on earth, provided he meets two conditions: (1) accepts Christ as Redeemer, and (2) strives to avoid sin and to live thenceforth in harmony with God.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ “The other sheep, including all who were raised during the millennium and have passed the millennial tests, will remain forever on the renewed earth... It must be remembered... that the ‘second death’ is always within God’s power to administer to possible rebels... So there exists the possibility that even these finally perfected inhabitants of the earth may still rebel against God!” Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 324.

¹⁵⁸ “The Hebrew word *ne’phesh*, translated ‘soul,’ means ‘a creature that breathes’... Therefore, ‘soul’ in the Biblical sense refers to the entire living being.” In Jehovah’s Witness theology, there is no immortal soul which is separate and distinct from the body, and to speak of the independent existence of the soul is an absurdity. Therefore, when a *soul* dies, that person is annihilated – that is, ceases to exist. “Exposed: Six Myths about Christianity,” 4.

¹⁵⁹ McKinney, *The Theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 65.

CONCLUSION

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’?... If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions (Matthew 22:41-43, 45-46; NIV84).

In the introduction, we considered the similarity in the way the Pharisees and Jehovah’s Witnesses might handle Jesus’ question, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” The way the Pharisees answered demonstrated their underhanded way of masking their true teaching behind pious sounding words. “He is the Son of David” – but nothing more, and it is even blasphemous to suggest such a thing. However, when Christ pushed the issue and showed from Scripture itself (the same Scriptures in which they considered themselves experts, according to John 5:39) that he was more than just a descendant of David, they were caught. The evidence that Christ showed them made it obvious that they were wrong and he was right, and that they were badly mistaken about who Christ was and about his purpose in this world. At least, to their credit, when Jesus clearly proved them wrong from the Scriptures, they kept silent and did not dare to question him further.

That is a rather back-handed compliment, admittedly. The Pharisees were in grievous error, and continued to be so even after this exchange. But at the very least, outwardly they bowed before the authority and the clear words of Scripture. Even this low compliment, though, is higher than any compliment we can give Jehovah’s Witnesses for their confession of Christ.

Jehovah’s Witnesses pat themselves on the back for giving the answer that Jesus was looking for in Matthew 22:42: “Jesus Christ is the Son of God!” Yet at the same time, they mean something very different and very much less than Christ himself and traditional Christianity mean by that term. They confess that Christ is the being first in rank among all of God’s creation, with greater glory and power than anything or anyone else in creation – but he certainly is not true God in the full sense of the term, nor is he at all on par with Jehovah who gave him all that power and glory and even his very being. And when, as Christ did to the Pharisees, Jehovah’s Witnesses are confronted with the clear words of Scripture regarding the Bible’s true teaching of the person and work of Christ, they are not willing to bow before the clear words of Scripture as the Pharisees did. Though in Jesus’ day “No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on

no one dared to ask him any more questions,” Jehovah’s Witnesses have no qualms about offering arrogant replies and daring to lord over God’s Word.

Throughout this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate the Scripture passages and lines of argumentation Jehovah’s Witnesses use to support their own doctrines, as well as to answer the common stances and passages Christians use to support the doctrines of historical Christianity. It is my hope that two main emphases have come through in the way Jehovah’s Witnesses think and work: 1) all their teaching must be agreeable to human reason and experience (at least to the extent that it fits their theological system); and 2) the *opinio legis* thoroughly permeates every bit of their theology. Even in as relatively short a study as this, it is not difficult to see that their core teachings about Christ and salvation leave them with not only a deficient gospel, but even with a deficient law¹⁶⁰ – for where there is a deficient gospel, there *must* of necessity be a deficient law.

In that light, then, I offer a real-world application for Jehovah’s Witnesses who are so thoroughly ensnared in error regarding the person and work of Christ and what that means for the salvation of humanity. I hinted in the introduction about the tendency in many Christian writings concerning Jehovah’s Witnesses to simply identify the main differences between Jehovah’s Witness teaching and traditional Christian teaching – the doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, particularly – and then spend the majority of their time proving why we *should* believe those things. In the reading I have done, I cannot help but conclude that such a focus is off the mark to an extent. Of course those doctrines are of vital importance to Christianity and are certainly not anything to take lightly. But Jehovah’s Witnesses are trained to resist and refute (at least in their minds) any argument that uses scriptural proof passages to prove the Trinity and Christ’s deity, because those are the most common objections they receive as they go about their door-to-door outreach work. A Christian will find it difficult not to be drawn into an argument about these issues, simply because of their own zeal for the truth and the offense they naturally

¹⁶⁰ Gruss, *Apostles of Denial*, 86: “How disabled was man as the result of the fall? It is evident after reading numerous Watchtower publications which deal with Adam’s disobedience, and its consequences, that the Witnesses hold a very weak view of sin. This is concluded because unregenerate man (the Great Multitude that does not seek the ‘born again’ experience) is capable of pleasing God with his works...[Footnote 43] A weak view of sin naturally stems from a rejection of eternal punishment and a denial of the deity of Christ.”

take at blasphemy – admittedly, this is a pitfall to which even this writer is prone. But as has often been said, no one will be brought into the kingdom of God by winning an argument.¹⁶¹

Christian evangelists need to recognize and address the heart of the matter with Jehovah’s Witnesses. A better way to approach and reach Witnesses is by using the simplest method: share clear law and gospel,¹⁶² and let the Holy Spirit do his work. Because Jehovah’s Witnesses have a deficiency in both, we have a message to share with them that they desperately need to hear. Their theology leaves them with a lack of understanding about the depths of their sinfulness and depravity, and so also a lack of understanding about their relationship with God. In their theology, there is no need for Jesus to be true God and true man in one person, because they don’t need a total vicarious atonement for all people of all time. All they need is an opportunity to earn eternal life on their own¹⁶³ – sort of like a child learning to ride a bike. They need that help to push off and get going – no child can successfully learn without it – but once they get going, it’s up to them to keep the bike moving and get where they want to go. Christ simply gives us the boost we need and the rest is up to us.

But the problem is that Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t understand or believe the *Biblical* concept of salvation, especially the centrality of Christ. First of all, Jehovah’s Witnesses run into real problems with their understanding of the relationship between Adam and Christ and its effect on the rest of humanity. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Christ was the exact equivalent of Adam prior to the fall, and that Christ came only to balance out Adam’s sin on the scales of divine justice so believers can have their own opportunity to earn everlasting life and not be hindered by someone else’s previous failure. However, if Jesus came only to be Adam’s

¹⁶¹ See Kern, *How To Respond – Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 11-14 for good advice on how to go about witnessing to Jehovah’s Witnesses without being drawn into a fruitless argument.

¹⁶² Jehovah’s Witnesses are trained to view the Bible not as something accessible to them, but only as something that the Watchtower Organization feeds to them. Therefore biblical truth is whatever the Watchtower says it is. Robert Morey submits that it is vitally important not only to speak the true law and gospel that people need to hear and through which the Holy Spirit can work on their hearts, but also to break the total control and influence of the Watchtower over its people. The most effective way this can be done is by demonstrating that the Watchtower Organization throughout its history has been a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Matthew 7:15), and so cannot be trusted and should not be feared. It is imperative that Jehovah’s Witnesses come to put their trust and confidence for spiritual authority in the Bible alone. Morey, Robert A. *How to Answer a Jehovah’s Witness* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1980), 12-19.

¹⁶³ “Looking at all this, one is forced to the conclusion that, in this theological system, man is saved not primarily by the grace of God shown to unworthy sinners, but rather by his own demonstration of his worthiness to be saved. William J. Schnell points out that during his years with the movement the other sheep were told that if they stayed close to the Watchtower organization, listened attentively to its indoctrination, went out regularly to distribute literature, and rigidly reported the time spent in doing so, they *might* be saved at Armageddon!” Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 285.

counterweight and to do right what Adam did wrong, where does that really leave all the people who have inherited sin and imperfection from Adam? Jehovah's Witnesses overlook the fact that everyone else has their own sin that needs to be dealt with and wiped out – not only the sin and guilt they inherited from Adam, but their own *actual* sins as well. In a global pandemic, is disaster averted if patient #1 who contracted that certain sickness is eventually cured after he has already passed it on to everyone else? No, each person needs to be cured of his own case of sickness. The health and welfare of patient #1 has no bearing on those who have contracted the sickness themselves. What really matters is that everyone is sick and so everyone else needs their own cure just as much as patient #1. Yet in effect Jehovah's Witnesses teach about original sin that since patient #1 was cured (Adam), no one else needs to worry about suffering ill effects – even though everyone else *has* contracted the sickness (sin) for themselves.

The fact is that the Bible says we are all dead in our sins – not only by birth, but also by the actual sins that we commit. Being even the least bit sinful (James 2:10-11) means that we fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and fail to live up to the standard he has set for earning eternal life on our own merits: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48, NIV84). Regardless of the temptations of evil in our lives, God holds us all personally responsible for our actions (Ezekiel 18:20) and warns that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23, NIV84). And as Rev. Reuel Schulz succinctly and rightly points out, “Witnesses contend that someone like me who doesn't accept their errors is simply headed for oblivion. Unfortunately, I can't return the favor. As a Christian pastor I am compelled by God's word to warn people that hell with its endless torments awaits them if they become members of this un-Christian sect.”¹⁶⁴ Left to fend for ourselves without a proper Savior, our sinfulness means only that we have an eternity of torment in hell ahead of us, with no possibility of avoiding that or doing anything to stop it. We are hopelessly doomed.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Schulz, Reuel J. “Jehovah's Witnesses.” *Our Great Heritage*. Vol. 1. Lyle W. Lange, ed. (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 576.

¹⁶⁵ “Jehovah's Witnesses argue that the atonement is not wholly of God, despite 2 Corinthians 5:21, but rather half of God and half of man. Jesus, according to their argument, removed the effects of Adam's sin by His sacrifice on Calvary, but the work will not be fully completed until the survivors of Armageddon return to God through free will and become subjects to the theocratic rule of Jehovah. For Jehovah's Witnesses, the full realization of the matter is reconciliation with God, which will be completed in relation to the millennial kingdom. . . Russell and Jehovah's Witnesses have detracted from the blood of Christ by allowing it only partial cleansing power, but the truth still stands; it is either all-sufficient or insufficient, and if the latter be the case, man is hopelessly lost in an unconnected maze of irrelevant doctrines which postulate a finite sacrifice and by necessity, a finite god.” Martin, *Jehovah of the Watchtower*, 71-72.

And make no mistake about it, Jehovah's Witnesses have a very deficient Savior. Though they "honor" Christ with that title, their understanding of his person and work puts them squarely outside of the possibility of salvation and eternal life as the Bible presents it. In their own words, Christ in his human state was a perfect man – nothing more. Then how could he possibly be the Savior of the world?¹⁶⁶ For Psalm 49:7-9 declares, "No *man* [to say nothing of perfection or imperfection] can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him— the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough— that he should live on forever and not see decay" (NIV84, italics mine). If Christ lived a perfect life and died, then he earned salvation for himself and himself alone because no man can redeem the life of another – not even a perfect man, and certainly not as a corresponding ransom price to undo all the effects of Adam's sin on humanity. Without a Savior-God whose blood is worth enough to atone for all our sins, again, there is no hope for us. We are eternally lost.

It isn't just Christ's insufficient atonement that excludes Jehovah's Witnesses from salvation, though. Jehovah's Witnesses also don't believe that Christ rose from the dead bodily.¹⁶⁷ Although they do in fact claim to believe in Christ's "resurrection," what they actually mean is that, although the man Christ is forever dead and gone (thus making the ransom payment legitimate and effective), Jehovah God re-created him to life as a spirit creature.¹⁶⁸ In the same way, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that those who have died throughout the history of the world cease to exist in any way at the time of their death, but will be "resurrected" during the millennium – that is, re-created from Jehovah's memory of them.¹⁶⁹ Since Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in an immortal soul distinct from the body, they believe that nothing of a person goes on living after death, nor even has any hope to. They do not believe that what dies is raised to life again, and so ultimately they don't believe that Christ defeated death and that which

¹⁶⁶ "Why should the sacrificed life of Jesus Christ have so much value that it can serve to ransom millions of people from annihilation? It was a perfect human life which was sacrificed, to be sure; we must not minimize this point. But it was the perfect human life of someone who was *only a man*. Could the life of a mere man, offered in sacrifice, serve to purchase a multitude which no man can number?" Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 279.

¹⁶⁷ Magnani, *The Watchtower Files*, 115-117.

¹⁶⁸ "Jehovah God raised Christ from the dead, 'not as a human Son, but as a mighty immortal spirit Son...' The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is therefore denied; Christ was raised not with the same body which he had before, but as a 'spirit Son, no longer flesh.'... Since Christ's material body was not raised, we are forced to conclude that Christ was actually annihilated when he died. While on earth Christ was only a man, with a nature which was only human; this human nature, however, was sacrificed on the cross so completely that he could not get it back again." Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 274-275.

¹⁶⁹ "This is not really a resurrection because, at least in the case of those 'raised' in 1918, these individuals had been completely annihilated when they died; hence it would be more accurate to call their 'restoration' to life in 1918 a new creation." Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, 305.

causes it, sin. But whereas Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ's bodily resurrection would nullify the ransom price, Scripture actually teaches that Christ's resurrection is what proves that the ransom price was fully accepted and satisfactory to God (Romans 4:25). And if Christ wasn't raised bodily, that means Jehovah's Witness teaching leaves humanity as a whole in a very unenviable position: "For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:16-19, NIV84).

By God's grace, though, many Jehovah's Witnesses know deep down that their relationship with God still isn't what it should be – whether consciously or not, whether they would ever be willing to admit it or not.¹⁷⁰ The natural knowledge of God cannot be silenced even in people who construct elaborate systems of doctrine to try and quiet or satisfy it. The Jehovah's Witnesses' lack of a sufficient Savior leaves them with a very legalistic and works-centered religion in practice, and that always leaves the adherents of such a religion wracked with guilt and uncertainty.¹⁷¹ They bear a tremendous burden to constantly stay in line with Jehovah's righteous law, maintain a place in Jehovah's good graces, and ultimately earn their own salvation. They never truly have any peace, any rest, any security, because for the rest of eternity their life and very existence is dependent upon living up to Christ's perfect example of keeping the law flawlessly and shunning evil.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ This probably is a contributing factor to Jehovah's Witnesses having such a high turnover rate – they are growing in numbers at an alarming rate, but they are also losing huge amounts of people out the back door, especially in America. See Ehlke, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses*, 153. Jehovah's Witness theology simply does not satisfy the spiritual needs of its people.

¹⁷¹ "When a person, on the basis of the Scriptural knowledge he has gained, has belief it would be a mistake for him [one who has belief in Christ] to think that he is now saved and cannot fall. He must show by his endurance in the Christian faith that he is worthy of salvation... Salvation from death is a gift from God to those that obey him, not to those that disobey'... Instead of the Bible's exhortations to do good works being taken as opportunities to respond to God's love in Jesus Christ, they become demands and burdens that must be borne to get into heaven. A statement from *Let God be True* sums it up: 'Christ Jesus received immortality as a reward for his faithful course of action, and it is also given, as a reward, to those who are of the true church or "body of Christ.'" Immortality is a reward for faithfulness.'" Ehlke, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses*, 122.

¹⁷² A good friend of mine once told me about a conversation he had with a couple Jehovah's Witnesses on his doorstep that illustrates the vast difference between our understandings of the way of salvation. The Witnesses told him something along the lines of, "We have great news that we want to share with you! If you become a Jehovah's Witness and obey Jehovah's law and do so much door-to-door canvassing work, you might have an opportunity for eternal life on earth!" Good Lutherans will no doubt appreciate his response: "That sounds like horrible news!"

To demonstrate this, consider the personal testimonies of a number of people who have come out of Jehovah's Witnesses into a right understanding of the true God and their all-sufficient Savior Jesus Christ:

"The Christ of the Jehovah's Witnesses is different from the biblical Christ. He isn't a personal Savior but an organizational savior... [Jonadabs], who never take communion, do not even claim salvation through Christ's atonement, but might be saved if they serve Christ's brothers, the anointed. They ultimately will stand before God 'on the basis of their own righteousness.'... We all became robot-like slaves for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. It is a religion which requires total submission." – Evelyn Bedwell¹⁷³

"Where do I stand now? I believe that I am saved through faith in the death of Christ for me. Salvation is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8, 9), not based upon what I can do, but rather upon what Christ has already done. Salvation is not in an organization, but in a Person. Based on what the Bible clearly states, I *know* that I have everlasting life (I John 5:13). A Jehovah's Witness cannot say these things because he cannot see salvation outside of the organization." – William Cetnar¹⁷⁴

"In the midst of [Leonard's] message he had a strange experience—one that is hard to describe. It was as though for a brief moment the congregation was transformed before his eyes and Leonard saw them as a gray, faceless, beaten-down group of people... It was though he had a new insight into the lives of Jehovah's Witnesses. We were an oppressed people." – Leonard and Marjorie Chretien¹⁷⁵

"Most Jehovah's Witnesses referred to Jesus Christ as 'the Savior,' but rarely as 'my Savior'... I knew in my heart that I had no personal assurance of salvation based on a vital, living relationship with Jesus Christ. I hoped I was saved thus far, but believed that I could lose it by unfaithfulness to the Society. I really didn't have the same peace, joy, and happiness that I saw radiating from the faces of these men and women who lovingly testified of their Lord Jesus Christ...

"By faith I claimed the precious promises of the Word of God as my own. I arose a new man in Jesus Christ, filled with peace and joy for the first time in my life. I felt as if a mountain had been lifted from my shoulders.

"When I returned home that night I told my wife... I had such a feeling of liberty. I told her that I was now free of the chains of Watchtower slavery." – Walter Davis¹⁷⁶

"As a JW, we did not celebrate Christmas or any other holiday. I learned all the ins and outs taught to me. I later made the decision to be baptized, or as I would also say, 'Dedicate myself to Jehovah.' I did this about the age of 14. As a baptized JW the rules are a little different. Going door-to-door was a have to, not a do when and if I wanted...

"I then came to marry my current wife, Michelle. She was a Lutheran. We got together and all was good until we talked about religion. We had some very difficult and agonizing discussions. Although I was not a practicing JW, it was all I knew and I somewhat believed that it was the 'TRUTH.' Many arguments and unhappy times. But for some reason we always stayed together. Married and wanting to keep my wife happy, I did go to church with her... Just let me say that my insides were burning with fury. My wife knew I was not happy and we left Church with lots of tension... I kept going to Church. Lots of questions and inner fighting with myself...

"My inner conscious was battling. Then [came] another hurdle. I asked Pastor to become a member... I was baptized... This was in my own view a miracle. The greatest days of my life... I'm happy with my decision because it is the truth and I can only believe that God will get me through this." – Wister Falcon¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Gruss, *We left Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimonies*, 47-48.

¹⁷⁴ Gruss, *We left Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimonies*, 88-89.

¹⁷⁵ Chretien, *Witnesses of Jehovah*, 81-82.

¹⁷⁶ Gruss, *We left Jehovah's Witnesses: Personal Testimonies*, 112, 115, 128.

¹⁷⁷ Email message to author, January 2013. Wister's story is recounted fully in Appendix E.

“Did [Witnesses] really hold up Jesus to the extent the Bible does? I found out that they said one thing but believed another. They will often speak highly of Jesus’ sacrifice and yet deny its efficacy by saying that to be saved one must do all the things the organization directs.” – Kenneth Guindon¹⁷⁸

“One of my wife’s sisters, upon becoming a Jehovah’s Witness around the year 1988 or ‘89, became a very active zealot for the cause of the Watchtower organization. There was not one member of her family that she didn’t try to persuade to join her newfound religion. I, her brother-in-law, and my wife of course did not escape from her efforts...

“I was sort of glad to hear that she had left the Catholic Church for this religion because I knew that they teach things that are contrary to the teachings of my Lutheran church... I didn’t concern myself with the situation any further. Now I wish I had, for as I have discovered, she merely went from the proverbial frying pan into the fire!..

“Then came Christmas in the year 1989... Of course, this one sister was also present and she had a gift for every one of her siblings. As we opened it, we discovered it was a book. A little red book entitled "YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER IN PARADISE ON EARTH"... My wife had questions and doubts about the foundation of her beliefs that I had few answers for. The more we read the book, the more I became frustrated and doubtful about my own faith, weak as it was...

“I read the book, checking into the references they gave in it with the Bible. At times, the reasoning in the book seemed to be rock solid as I read it, as long as I accepted the assumptions and preconceptions and interpretations that they put forth. On the surface, they seemed to teach what appeared to be the truth, citing passages that seemed to corroborate their assumptions and interpretations. As long as the cited passages were out of their context, this seemed to be the case...

“I then tried not to take things out of context as much as possible because I learned early on that you can run into problems when you do that. As the passages were put back into their original context, they were no longer in conflict with my past beliefs. I had to decide whose interpretations were true: hers or mine. Or was there possibly a third, more reliable interpretation? I decided that the only interpretation that could be more reliable would have to come from the Bible itself...

“As I studied further and further, [Jesus Christ] became more and more real to me. It also became more and more clear to me that the teachings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses couldn’t hold a candle to the glory of the truth of God’s Word...

“It wasn’t long after this that my wife’s family was once more getting together... It was the first weekend in October of 1990. I knew that my sister-in-law was going to be there and I also knew that she was going to ask me about what I believed concerning the material she had given us...

“Later on that same morning, sure enough, my sister-in-law who is the Jehovah’s Witness approached me, asking if I had considered all that she had given me concerning her beliefs and religion... I did not deny my Savior but spoke boldly of Him and of my faith in Him! I had broken free of my bindings but I had nothing to do with it. They fell away when Jesus arrived!.. Only a few months later, [my wife] was freed from her shackles and oppression also. I know, I was there...

“My sister-in-law is still a Witness. I yearn for her salvation. It was through this situation with her that I came to know the Lord so intimately. I hope and pray for my sister-in-law that she would come to know him through his word even as God did with me. I hope I will be able to spend eternity with her in heaven with and in Jesus Christ. Please, Lord Jesus, Please!” – Marvin Kirchner¹⁷⁹

“To reach disfellowshipped Witnesses, I would talk of God’s forgiveness. That will be hard for some Witnesses to grasp. Jehovah’s Witnesses’ ‘free’ forgiveness is earned by works shown to the congregation and elders.” – Don Luke¹⁸⁰

“There are never enough good works. [Witnesses] have law without gospel. The burden of guilt from our shortcomings is never alleviated by grace.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Gruss, *We left Jehovah’s Witnesses: Personal Testimonies*, 37-38.

¹⁷⁹ Email to the author, October 2012. It must be noted that Marvin never actually was a Jehovah’s Witness, although he “did seriously consider them a number of years ago.” However, he knows them very well due to his family connection and subsequent personal study of the cult and its teachings.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in Ehlke, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 167.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Ehlke, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 123.

To the question, 'How does a Jehovah's Witness know they are saved? What certainty is there for salvation?': "If you can find the answer to that question – let me know. This is the weakness to JW teaching – how do you know when you have done enough, believe enough to be saved? It's personal based upon what you as a person are capable... When you have a work-righteous religion, I think the more you do, the more pious of an attitude you can have. I think you can begin to look down on other JW's who are perhaps doing less. Internally, it's hard to judge each person's attitude; I always felt more guilt and fear." – Amy Mueller¹⁸²

"For me it was a question of whose disciple I was. Was I a follower of Jesus or an obedient servant to a human hierarchy?... It really disturbed me to see those men [JW elders and the organization as a whole] elevate themselves above God's Word... All those years as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Watchtower organization had taken us on a guided tour through the Bible. We gained a lot of knowledge about the Old Testament, and we could quote a lot of Scripture, but we never heard the gospel of salvation in Christ. We never learned to depend on Jesus for our salvation and to look to him personally as our Lord. Everything centered around the Watchtower's works program, and people were expected to come to Jehovah through the organization." – David Reed¹⁸³

"I saw Jehovah as demanding the impossible from me and threatening me with death if I couldn't meet His demands. Witnesses are taught that they cannot hope to be saved if they don't do enough. 'Therefore, take steps quickly to work for survival and for eternal life in God's new order.'... But even then there are no guarantees! How different we might have felt if we had had the faith that we would be saved; then, we might have wanted to do the works, instead of feeling forced into doing them in an effort to appease Jehovah.

"Warnings were given that if we were not giving our best effort to organizational activities when Armageddon struck, consequences would be dire for us. This warning was illustrated in Watchtower literature by a drawing of a man in a rowboat on a swiftly flowing river, with a huge waterfall just ahead. Rowing as hard as he could against the strong current, he was perspiring heavily and had a look of sheer terror on his face as his boat was swept toward the waterfall despite his strenuous efforts to prevent it from being carried away and crushed by the pounding force of the cascading rapids. The purpose of this illustration was ostensibly to give encouragement to Jehovah's Witnesses to 'row harder'—to make even more strenuous efforts to be active in the organization, to put more time into the preaching work, to study Watchtower literature more zealously, and to keep themselves increasingly separate from the world outside the organization—in order to avoid being swept away with the unrighteous world when Jehovah destroys it at Armageddon.

"In spite of obeying all the organization's rules, I still felt empty, distant from God, and unable to establish rapport with Him at all. I felt angry that all my hard work as a Witness brought only a hollow, aching feeling inside of me." – Diane Wilson¹⁸⁴

There is something that just rings hollow about Jehovah's Witness theology¹⁸⁵ and rigid formalism. That's because Witnesses are trying to find fulfillment in their lives through the law,

¹⁸² Emails to the author, December 2012-January 2013.

¹⁸³ Reed, *Jehovah's Witnesses Answered: Verse by Verse*, 124-127.

¹⁸⁴ Wilson, Diane. *Awakening of a Jehovah's Witness: Escape from the Watchtower Society* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), p. 67, 97, 103-104.

¹⁸⁵ Consider these statements from *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*: "Did Paul [at 1 Timothy 6:12, 18] mean that we *earn* 'the real life' by performing good works? No, for such marvelous prospects really depend on our receiving 'undeserved kindness' from God. (Romans 5:15) However, Jehovah delights in rewarding those who serve him faithfully. He wants to see you live 'the real life.' Such a happy, peaceful, everlasting life lies ahead for those who remain in God's love [by observing Jehovah's commandments]," 192-193. Jehovah's Witnesses want to say the right things and be Biblical. They want to honor Christ as their Savior who paid the ransom sacrifice. But ultimately their inwardly-focused emphasis on legalism always betrays their false understanding of salvation by grace through faith apart from works.

when the only thing that can do that is the gospel. To their credit, Jehovah's Witnesses are very serious about their religion and their convictions; much like Paul said about the Jews, "they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Romans 10:2-3, NIV84). To illustrate this, consider these ironic and self-indicting statements from past *Watchtower* magazines:

"Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the *Scripture Studies* aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the *Scripture Studies* with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures."¹⁸⁶

"From time to time, there have arisen among the ranks of Jehovah's people those who, like the original Satan, have adopted an independent, faultfinding attitude... They say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such 'Bible reading,' they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom's clergy were teaching 100 years ago..."¹⁸⁷

Jehovah's Witnesses yearn for something more than they have – they don't realize that what they need is plain and simple and clear, right before their very eyes in Scripture. The devil has firmly convinced Jehovah's Witnesses that salvation in Christ alone is "just too easy," so they don't realize that salvation in Christ alone is the only answer that will truly quiet their troubled consciences and put their hearts at rest about their relationship with God. Jehovah's Witnesses yearn for the true gospel of an eternal God who was made flesh and died to take away all the sins of a rebellious world and save us from an eternity in hell for an eternity in heaven with him. By God's grace, we have that pure and free gospel to offer them when they are confronted and killed by the law (which is a state in which many Jehovah's Witnesses live every day), and it is that gospel alone in which Jehovah's Witnesses and all people will find real fulfillment. May our attitude about Jehovah's Witnesses reflect Paul's about the Jews: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved" (Romans 10:1, NIV84).

"When you realize that people do not pass on to the spirit realm at death, the promise of everlasting life on a paradise earth takes on real meaning for you," 65. There is no spiritual life after this – only an opportunity for eternal life on a paradise earth if you are obedient to all of Jehovah's Laws. What a sad statement this is!

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Chretien, *Witnesses of Jehovah*, 33.

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in Bowman, *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses*, 58.

That question, “What do you think about the Christ?” has been the focus of this paper because it is the very heart of theology. There is no Christianity without a solid foundation of the person and work of Christ and what that means for humanity as far as our salvation is concerned. There is only a religion of works that leads to death. We have studied what Jehovah’s Witnesses believe about these issues and have seen the shortcomings of their teachings. Since theology is a *habitus practicus*, gospel ministers will take special note of the theology of Jehovah’s Witnesses not only because we want to reach out to current Witnesses with the good news of free and full salvation in Christ, but because we want to preserve our own people in the true Christian faith over against the advances of such false and dangerous teachings. Finally, the purpose of this paper has been to bring to light the doctrine of Jehovah’s Witnesses concerning Christ so it will be obvious what they are missing. They do not know Christ the way we do, as our gracious and all-sufficient Savior. But it is my hope that by knowledge of Jehovah’s Witness teachings about Christ and his work, we may all be better equipped not only to appreciate for ourselves what our Savior-God has so graciously done for us and given to us, but also to share with those who need to hear it our certain confidence for salvation in Christ alone. God grant it.

The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin (Exodus 34:6-7).

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30).

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them (Hebrews 7:25).

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12, NIV84).

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Appendix A. “Jesus is Equated with Jehovah” Chart. Kern, Herbert. *How To Respond – Jehovah’s Witnesses*, p. 18-21.

A particularly effective and powerful way of getting through to Jehovah’s Witnesses about Christ’s true identity is by looking at all the passages throughout Scripture that equate him with the true God in one way or another – whether by name, attribute, action, or honor. Appendices A-D are reproduced charts and diagrams I came across in my research that one may find especially helpful and enlightening in that regard.

Jesus Is Equated with Jehovah

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are right insofar as they say that there is only one God. This the Bible says. “I am the Lord [Jehovah]; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another” (Isaiah 42:8). “To whom will you compare Me or count Me equal? To whom will you liken Me that we may be compared” (Isaiah 46:5)? The answer is no one. Yet Jesus Christ is equated with the Lord (Jehovah) God again and again in the Scriptures. Study the following passages given by Jehovah in His Word:

Same Names and Titles

Jehovah (Yahweh)	Jesus Christ
God also said to Moses, I am the <i>LORD</i> (Exodus 6:2); I am <i>God</i> , and there is no other (Isaiah 45:22)	Thomas said to Him, My <i>Lord</i> and my <i>God!</i> (John 20:28)
God said to Moses, <i>I AM WHO I AM</i> (Exodus 3:14)	Jesus answered, “Before Abraham was born, <i>I am!</i> ” (John 8:58)
God, the blessed and only Ruler, the <i>King of kings and Lord of lords</i> (1 Timothy 6:15)	He has this name written: <i>King of kings and Lord of lords</i> (Revelation 19:16)
Surely God is my <i>salvation</i> (Isaiah 12:2)	Jesus Christ. ... <i>Salvation</i> is found in no one else (Acts 4:10, 12)
The <i>LORD</i> is my <i>shepherd</i> (Psalm 23:1)	I am the good <i>shepherd</i> (John 10:11)
Who is the <i>Rock</i> except our God? (Psalm 18:31)	... the spiritual <i>rock</i> that accompanied them, and that <i>rock</i> was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4)
... the <i>LORD</i> says ... I am the <i>first</i> and I am the <i>last</i> (Isaiah 44:6)	I [Jesus] am the <i>First</i> and the <i>Last</i> (Revelation 1:17)

Worthy of the Same Honor

You alone are the <i>LORD</i> the <i>multitudes of heaven worship you</i> (Nehemiah 9:6)	... when God brings His firstborn into the world, He says, “Let all God’s <i>angels worship Him!</i> ” (Hebrews 1:6)
I am God. ... Before Me <i>every knee will bow</i> ; by Me <i>every tongue will swear</i> (Isaiah 45:22–23)	... at the name of Jesus <i>every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess</i> that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11)
You are <i>worthy</i> , our Lord and God, <i>to receive glory and honor and power</i> (Revelation 4:11)	<i>Worthy</i> is the Lamb, who was slain, <i>to receive power ... and honor and glory and praise</i> (Revelation 5:12)
We will <i>serve the LORD our God</i> and obey Him (Joshua 24:24)	It is the <i>Lord Christ you are serving</i> (Colossians 3:24)
“ <i>You are My witnesses,</i> ” declares the <i>LORD</i> (Isaiah 43:10)	<i>You will be My witnesses</i> (Acts 1:8)

Same Qualities

I the <i>LORD do not change</i> (Malachi 3:6)	Jesus Christ is the <i>same yesterday and today and forever</i> (Hebrews 13:8)
I am God, and not man—the <i>Holy One</i> among you (Hosea 11:9)	You disowned the <i>Holy and Righteous One</i> (Acts 3:14)
How <i>unsearchable</i> His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! (Romans 11:33)	[I, Paul, preach] the <i>unsearchable</i> riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8)
The <i>LORD</i> is gracious and <i>righteous</i> (Psalm 116:5)	Jesus Christ, the <i>Righteous One</i> (1 John 2:1)
May the <i>LORD</i> be a <i>true and faithful witness</i> (Jeremiah 42:5)	These are the words of the <i>Amen, the faithful and true witness</i> (Revelation 3:14)

God is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1)

The LORD is my light and my salvation (Psalm 27:1)

You have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD (Psalm 71:5)

... they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water (Jeremiah 17:13)

To him who is thirsty I will give to drink (Revelation 21:6)

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13)

Jesus ... said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12)...

Christ Jesus, our hope (1 Timothy 1:1)

... the water I give him will become in him a spring of water (John 4:14)

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink (John 7:37)

Do not fear, for I am with you (Isaiah 41:10)

God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything (1 John 3:20)

I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct (Jeremiah 17:10)

The LORD disciplines those He loves (Proverbs 3:12)

No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand (John 10:29)

He will judge the world in righteousness (Psalm 96:13)

I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20)

Peter ... said, "Lord, You know all things" (John 21:17)

I am He who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds (Revelation 2:23)

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline (Revelation 3:19)

No one can snatch them out of My hand (John 10:28)

The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son (John 5:2)

Same Acts

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)

[The LORD] will redeem Israel from all their sins (Psalm 130:8)

I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34)

O You who hear prayer, to You all men will come (Psalm 65:2)

He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed (Psalm 107:29)

You [Jesus] laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands (Hebrews 1:10)

... Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness (Titus 2:13-14)

Jesus ... said, "... [F]riend, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:20)

You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it (John 14:14)

He ... rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm (Luke 8:24)

Appendix C. “Passages Which Show That Jesus Christ Is True God.” Ody, Aaron. Attachment from Email to the Author, November 2012.¹⁸⁹

Same Names and Titles	
Jehovah (Yahweh)	Jesus Christ
Exodus 6:2 God also said to Moses, “I am the <u>LORD</u> .” Isaiah 45:22 “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am <u>God</u> , and there is no other.”	John 20:28 Thomas said to him, “My <u>Lord</u> and my <u>God!</u> ” --Jesus did not deny this
Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘ <u>I AM</u> has sent me to you.’”	John 8:58 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, <u>I am!</u> ”
I Timothy 6:15 which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, <u>the King of kings and Lord of lords</u> .	Revelation 19:13,16 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the <u>Word of God</u> (Jesus; cf. John 1:1). On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: <u>KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.</u>
Isaiah 12:2 Surely God is my <u>salvation</u> ; I will trust and not be afraid. Isaiah 43:11 I, even I, am the <u>LORD</u> , and <u>apart from me there is no savior</u> .	Acts 4:10-12 It is by the name of <u>Jesus Christ</u> of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ He is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.” ¹² <u>Salvation</u> is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” II Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and <u>Savior</u> Jesus Christ.
Psalms 23:1 The LORD is my <u>shepherd</u> .	John 10:11 “I am the good <u>shepherd</u> . The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”
Psalms 18:31 For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the <u>Rock</u> except our God?	I Corinthians 10:4 they drank from the spiritual <u>rock</u> that accompanied them, and that <u>rock</u> was Christ.
Isaiah 44:6 “This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: <u>I am the first and I am the last</u> ; apart from me there is no God.	Revelation 1:17-18 “Do not be afraid. <u>I am the First and the Last</u> . ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!
Revelation 1:8 “I am the <u>Alpha and the Omega</u> ,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”	Revelation 22:12-16 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the <u>Alpha and the Omega</u> , the <u>First and the Last</u> , the <u>Beginning and the End</u> . ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. ¹⁶ <u>I, Jesus</u> , have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”
Isaiah 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. <u>Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me</u> .	John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and <u>the Word was God</u> .

¹⁸⁹ Another excellent resource Pastor Ody has produced is a congregational Bible study entitled “Witnessing Christ to Jehovah’s Witnesses.” To obtain it, contact pastor Ody directly via email at sophos_ein@yahoo.com.

Worthy of Same Honor	
Jehovah	Jesus Christ
Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the <u>multitudes of heaven worship you</u> .	Hebrews 1:6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s <u>angels worship him</u> .”
Isaiah 45:22-23 “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. ²³ By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me <u>every knee will bow</u> ; by me <u>every tongue will swear</u> .	Philippians 2:10-11 that at the name of Jesus <u>every knee should bow</u> , in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and <u>every tongue confess</u> that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, <u>to receive glory and honor and power</u> , for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”	Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, <u>to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!</u> ”
Joshua 24:24 And the people said to Joshua, “We will <u>serve the LORD our God and obey him</u> .”	Colossians 3:24 It is <u>the Lord Christ you are serving</u> .
Isaiah 43:10 “ <u>You are my witnesses</u> ,” declares the LORD	Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and <u>you will be my witnesses</u> in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Isaiah 42:8 “I am the LORD; that is my name! <u>I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols</u> .	John 5:23 that <u>all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father</u> . He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. Revelation 22:3 The <u>throne of God and of the Lamb</u> will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. --God doesn’t share glory with another, yet we see here that the Lamb, Jesus, shares the throne—shares glory—with God.

Same Divine Qualities	
Jehovah	Jesus Christ
Malachi 3:6 “I the LORD <u>do not change</u> .”	Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ <u>is the same yesterday and today and forever</u> .
Hosea 11:9 For I am God, and not man—the <u>Holy One</u> among you.	Acts 3:14 You disowned the <u>Holy and Righteous One</u> and asked that a murderer be released to you.
Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How <u>unsearchable</u> his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!	Ephesians 3:8 to preach to the Gentiles the <u>unsearchable</u> riches of Christ.
Psalms 116:5 The LORD is gracious and <u>righteous</u> ; our God is full of compassion.	I John 2:1 But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the <u>Righteous One</u> .
Jeremiah 42:5 “May the LORD be a <u>true and faithful witness</u> ”	Revelation 3:14 These are the words of the Amen, the <u>faithful and true witness</u> , the ruler of God’s creation.
Psalms 46:1 God is our refuge and <u>strength</u> , an ever-present help in trouble.	Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me <u>strength</u> .
Psalms 27:1 The LORD is my <u>light</u> and my salvation—whom shall I fear?	John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the <u>light</u> of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Psalms 71:5 For you have been my <u>hope</u> , O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.	I Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our <u>hope</u> ,
Jeremiah 17:13 Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.	John 4:14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a <u>spring of water</u> welling up to eternal life.”
Revelation 21:6 <u>To him who is thirsty I will give to drink</u> without cost from the spring of the water of life.	John 7:37 “If anyone is thirsty, let him <u>come to me and drink</u> .

Jeremiah 23:5-6 “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

Matthew 1:23 “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Along with this passage read:

Isaiah 44:24 “This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.

John 10:30-33 “I and the Father are one.” ³¹Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³²but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” ³³“We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

John 17:5 “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

Acts 20:28 “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

Romans 9:5 “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

Colossians 2:9 “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

Titus 2:13 “while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews 1:8 “But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.’”

I John 5:20 “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

“Comparison between God and Christ” Chart, p. 163-165.

All-embracing, in every aspect, note the following comparisons between God and Christ:

God		Christ
	As Saviour	
Ps. 106:21		Luke 2:11
Isa. 43:11		Acts 4:12
	As Creator	
		Col. 1:16
		John 1:3
		Heb. 1:2
	As Lord of Lords	
Deut. 10:17		Rev. 19:16
	As the Rock	
Ps. 18:2		1 Cor. 10:4
2 Sam. 22:2		
Deut. 32:4		
	As Our Strength	
Isa. 26:4		Phil. 4:13
	As Omnipresent	
Jer. 23:24		Matt. 28:20
Ps. 139:7-10		Matt. 18:20
	As Pierced	
Zech. 12:10		Rev. 1:7
	As I Am	
Exod. 3:14		John 8:58
	As Our Redeemer	
Jer. 17:10	Ps. 130:7,8	Rev. 2:23
2 Chron. 6:30		Titus 2:13,14
	As a Rock of Offense and Stumbling Block	
Isa. 8:13,14		Rom. 9:32-33
		1 Peter 2:8
	As Judge	
Ps. 96:13		John 5:22

God	Christ
Ps. 23:1	John 10:14 Heb. 13:20 1 Pet. 5:4 John 10:16
Isa. 60:19	Rev. 21:23
Zech. 14:5	1 Thess. 3:13
Exod. 6:3 Joel 2:32 Isa. 40:3	Rom. 10:11,13 Acts 16:31 Matt. 3:1-3 John 1:23
Jer. 17:7,13	1 Tim. 1:1
Ps. 102:25	Heb. 1:10 Col. 1:16 Heb. 3:4
Ps. 102:27	Heb. 1:12 (8) Heb. 13:8
Exod. 34:7	Mark 2:5-12
Ps. 71:22 Isa. 41:14	Acts 3:14
Ps. 27:1	John 8:12
Ps. 24:7-10	1 Cor. 2:8
Ps. 32:7 Isa. 32:2	Col. 3:3
Jer. 17:13	John 4:14
Neh. 9:6	Heb. 1:6
As Shepherd	As the Light
As Light in New Jerusalem	As Lord of Glory King of Glory
As Coming with All Saints	As Hiding Place
As Jehovah (the name)	As Living Waters
As Our Hope	As Worshipped of Angels
As Builder of All Things	
As Unchangeable	
In Forgiveness	
As the Holy One of Israel	

God	As Glory	Christ
Ps. 29:1 Ps. 29:3 Jer. 13:16 Ps. 115:1 Isa. 42:8		John 17:24 Luke 9:26 James 2:1 2 Peter 3:18 Rev. 1:6
Isa. 40:9,10 Ps. 47:7,8 Ps. 45:6	As El Elohim	Rev. 11:15 Rev. 19:16 1 Cor. 15:24,25
Isa. 6:1-3 Isa. 8:13	As Jehovah of Hosts	John 12:41 1 Peter 2:5-8
Isa. 43:10	The Great I Am	John 8:24 John 13:9 John 4:36 Mark 13:19
Ps. 110:1	Adonai	Acts 2:34-36 Matt. 22:41-45

“How Can Jehovah’s Witnesses Cope with the Following Scriptures?” Chart, p. 187-188.

- (1) How can all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwell in him? (Col. 2:9)
- (2) Why must Christ have pre-eminence in all things? (Exod. 20:3 with Col. 1:18; Phil. 2:10 with Isa. 45:23)
- (3) Why is He the Creator? (Col. 1:16 and John 1:3; compare these with Neh. 9:6 and Isa. 45:23)
- (4) How could He create all things for Himself? (Col. 1:16)
- (5) Why will He subdue all things unto Himself? (Phil. 3:21)
- (6) Why does He draw all men unto Himself, and the Father draw men unto the Son? (John 12:32; 6:43,44)
- (7) Why will He present His purchased unto Himself? (Eph. 5:27)
- (8) How can believers be complete (made full) in Him? (Col. 2:10)
- (9) Why the command to believers to grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? (2 Peter 3:18)
- (10) How can He be everywhere — know everything — foretell the future — have all authority? (Matt. 18:20; 1 Peter 1:11; John 16:30; 14:29; Matt. 28:18; Rev. 2:23)
- (11) How can believers count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord? (Phil. 3:8)
- (12) How could His riches be unsearchable? (Eph. 3:8)
- (13) How could His be a love that surpasseth knowledge? (Eph. 3:19)
- (14) How can God and Christ jointly receive the same honor, glory and praise? (Rev. 5:12,13; with Isa. 42:8; John 5:23)
- (15) How could the Son’s person be equal to the Father’s? (John 14:9,23; Matt. 11:27)
- (16) How could He baptize believers with the Holy Spirit? (Matt. 3:11)
- (17) How could He have power to forgive sins? (Mark 2:10)
- (18) How would He have the right to be worshipped? (Matt. 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33)

- (19) How would He have power to do miracles? (Mark 2:11,12; 3:5; 3:10,11)
- (20) How could He have a sinless character? (Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5 compare with Luke 18:19, where our Lord taught, indirectly, that none should call him good unless they admit that He is God, for there is none good but God. All they would do was call Him Master. That is all Jehovah's Witnesses do today either.)
- (21) How could He give these promises: Matt. 11:28,29; John 14:23?
- (22) Why should men trust Him even as they do the Father? (John 14:1-3)
- (23) Why would we read of Him in Luke 1:68, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed His people"?
- (24) Why would we read of Him as deity in Romans 9:5; John 20:28; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14-16; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:2?

In order to support their errant contention that in His pre-existence Jesus was a creature, the Jehovah's Witnesses can find to list in *Make Sure of All Things*, only thirty-eight Scriptures in the Bible which lend themselves to be twisted to agree with their Unitarianism that Jesus is not equal with God. In fact, it is their claim that He scorned such equality. Against the brilliant light which shines in Christ Jesus, illuminating His person in the brightness of God's glory, the Jehovah's Witnesses have great difficulty with their adopted view of Christ.

Appendix E. Wister's Story.¹⁹⁰

Wister Falcon recounts about his early life, "I lived with my parents in Colorado. My parents were originally from Connecticut; we moved back to Springfield, MA when I was about 9 years old. It was there when I began to associate with JW's, because my grandmother was a JW. I later learned that my mother was a JW earlier in life.

"My stepfather was not a JW and it took a long time for him to be convinced that JW's were the real thing. If I recall correctly my stepfather finally joined the JW's when I was about 10 years old. We went to all the meetings. Sunday was the public talk (what we would call our sermon) followed by the study of the Watchtower, Tuesday was a book study night where we went to a congregation member's house with about 10-15 people, and Thursday was the Theocratic school where individual members presented talks and we learned how to basically preach the good news. After that meeting we then had a Ministerial meeting which talked about the things happening with JW's locally and globally. Sunday - 2 hours, Tuesday - 1 hour, and Thursday - 2 hours. On Saturday morning we would go door-to-door preaching the good news.

"My family also had a family study which my father conducted on a weekly basis, usually for an hour. Here we would review some of the things going to happen in the particular meetings or just learn about a passage. At this time I was also learning Spanish. My family spoke Spanish and we attended a JW Spanish congregation. Unfortunately prior to being JW's we didn't speak much Spanish, but now that we were in a Spanish congregation I had to learn. So I did.

"Around the age of 12 I gave my first talk in the Kingdom Hall. It was a 5 minute Bible reading with a 30 second introduction and 45 second conclusion. It was the story of Jonah in Jonah 1:1-2:10.

"As a JW, we did not celebrate Christmas or any other holiday. I learned all the ins and outs taught to me. I later made the decision to be baptized, or as I would also say, 'Dedicate myself to Jehovah.' I did this about the age of 14. As a baptized JW the rules are a little different. Going door-to-door was a have to, not a do when and if I wanted. I grew in the types of participation that I had within the organization. I gave longer talks. Later in life, at the age of 19, I became a Ministerial Servant, which closely resembles being a Vicar. I never became an Elder (what we would call a Pastor). I just never got that far. I had one brother and one sister who were just as involved as I.

"I later married (at 21 years of age) another JW. We fell away from the JW's because of marital issues. I finally left being a JW and was considered disassociated. Now this category is worse than simply not being a JW. Being a disassociated individual means that no JW can associate with you at all for any reason. My family interaction was minimal. My family would not even eat with me at the same table. I remember once coming home to visit in Florida from Illinois. My mother made food and everyone ate at the table, and I had my food placed on the breakfast bar to eat alone.

¹⁹⁰ Toward the end of Ehlke's *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses*, he included sections entitled "Amy's Story" and "Don's Story" (p. 164-167). These related the testimonies of two former Jehovah's Witnesses that he interviewed for his book, whose testimony I also have cited in my paper. After that book was already finished, Wister Falcon contacted Ehlke about offering his own testimony toward the project. Since Wister's story couldn't be included in that work, Ehlke put me in contact with him so his story could be told. It is included here.

“I then came to marry my current wife, Michelle. She was a Lutheran. We got together and all was good until we talked about religion. We had some very difficult and agonizing discussions. Although I was not a practicing JW, it was all I knew and I somewhat believed that it was the ‘TRUTH.’ Many arguments and unhappy times. But for some reason we always stayed together. Married and wanting to keep my wife happy, I did go to church with her.

“We moved to a new town, Antioch, IL. The first sermon I heard was about the Trinity and I was not happy. My wife was going to send our two kids to Faith Lutheran School. She received a call from Pastor Christie about a class at church, right after service. She asked me to go and I figured it was just an hour that the Pastor was going to spend talking about the Church and School. Fifteen minutes into it I found out that it was the Adult Information Class. Just let me say that my insides were burning with fury. My wife knew I was not happy and we left Church with lots of tension. We got no more than 3 minutes from Church when I yelled at her saying that she and the Pastor tricked me into going to that meeting.

“The following week, my wife didn't even ask me if I wanted to go to Church, but to her surprise I got dressed up, as I usually would for any Church service, and went along. She was shocked. But I was determined to prove the Pastors wrong. Well I went through six weeks and basically learned the Lutheran point of view. I kept going to Church. Lots of questions and inner fighting with myself.

“After about one year, I approached Pastor Hermanson. I scheduled a meeting and laid down my rules. We would go through the Bible, but we wouldn't use anyone's literature. We could refer to it (JW literature, Northwestern Publishing [House Literature]) but the basis for everything had to be the Bible and its original translation. We started with John 1:1. The big question was: ‘the Word was God’ or ‘the Word was a god’? That was the pivotal question I needed answer. That was the big question that made me have questions. Pastor prepared several papers with examples of exact translations from several Bible sources. I learned grammar rules, the why and why not. How the translations applied from [certain] sections to different verses.

“[We did this for] two years – yes, two years – every Tuesday or Wednesday with a few months (like summers) off. But we spent the time. I challenged everything Pastor put in front of me. We both made valid points, but like we see, the Holy Spirit moved my heart. The day came when I had a recurring dream over and over and over. I was in Church and JWs came to attack the church. I always escaped with my family but many congregation members died in the attack. I finally said my first prayer then in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“My inner conscious was battling. Then [came] another hurdle. I asked Pastor to become a member. He stopped me in my tracks and said that I was never baptized correctly in the name of the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Wow, what a shocker. Even my wife was taken back. I struggled. I thought that when I dedicated myself back early in life that I was truly baptized. Unfortunately, Pastor was right. The basis of my baptism was all wrong. So I was baptized on a Saturday at Faith Ev. Lutheran Church and [that] Sunday I became a member. This was in my own view a miracle. The greatest days of my life.

“To circle back now on the JW side, my mother passed away of a heart attack. I went to the hospital before they took her off of life support. My wife and kids were there. The sad thing was that not one JW ever approached me to console me. Not one spoke to me. Not one even silently said ‘I am sorry for your pain.’ I had family there that was not JW and we all talked. But it was hard. There were people there that knew me as a young kid. But they didn't approach me.

“My step-father was an Elder in the congregation so he had a lot of support. My sister had passed away a few years earlier at the age of 27 due to breast cancer. My brother was there and he was consoled by many. Now for a little twist. My father, or in this case step-father, had some hard decisions. Yes, he raised me for the majority of my life, but he was not my blood father. Now that my mother had passed away that put him in a difficult position personally. We talk now, but very, very little. All because of my position outside of the JW organization.

“My brother and I talk; he lives here in California, but we don't really associate. We have lunch once every two or three months. He pays for his meal and I pay for mine. He regulates how much we do. It's sad and painful. All I can do is hope that the Holy Spirit somehow plants a movement in my family.

“I'm happy with my decision because it is the truth and I can only believe that God will get me through this.”