

INTRODUCTION TO STUDIES RELATIVE TO THE TEACHINGS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS) was founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1879 and the members were called 'Bible Students' up until 1931 when the name of Jehovah's Witnesses was chosen for them by the second president Joseph Rutherford.

From Russell's time until the present there have been many changes in doctrine and it is clear from an analysis of Scripture that a good amount of Watchtower Bible and Tract Society teaching presented to and by Jehovah's Witnesses is correct. This includes their teaching against the Trinity, against an inherent immortal soul, against Calvinistic predestinarianism, and against any obligation to keep the Sabbath. Furthermore, the teaching of a coming paradise on earth and the gaining of everlasting life is fully scriptural.

THE GROUPS THAT HAVE BROKEN AWAY

There was an early split during the life of Russell and a number of splits immediately after his death and several in later times. Most of the earlier groups have held to the teachings of Charles Taze Russell and trace their origin to him and denounce Jehovah's Witnesses as not tracing their origin to him. In response to this Jehovah's Witnesses call all of these groups "the evil slave" class. They are:

1. **New Covenant Believers** was formed in 1909 by former Society secretary-treasurer E.C. Henniges, the Australia branch manager of the International Bible Students Association, also called Free Bible Students - based in Melbourne.
2. The **Pastoral Bible Institute** was founded in 1918 by former directors of the WBTS. It is now defunct but still publishes *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*, first edited by R. E. Streeter and now with only an editorial committee publishing the magazine.
3. **Berean Bible Institute** formed in 1918 in Australia and publishes *The Voice* and the *People's Paper* magazine. Membership is estimated to be less than 100.
4. **StandFast Bible Students Association** of Portland Oregon was formed in 1919 after Charles E. Heard and others had a pacifism issue with Rutherford over purchase of war bonds, which they considered to be wrong.
5. **Laymen's Home Missionary Movement** was founded by Paul S. L. Johnson in 1919. He believed he had been appointed by God as Russell's official spiritual successor. Johnson's death in 1950 led to the formation of new splinter groups, such as the **Epiphany Bible Students Association**, and the **Laodicean Home Missionary Movement**.
6. **Christian Millennial Fellowship** as formed in 1928 by the Italian Bible Students Association in Hartford, CT after their break with the WBTS. In 1940 they began publishing *The New Creation, a Herald of God's Kingdom* magazine and later relocated to New Jersey, forming branches in Australia, Austria, England, Ghana, Germany, India, Italy, Japan and Romania. However, eventually they discarded most of Russell's writings and joined the "**New Covenant Bible Students**" as "Free Bible Students."
7. **Dawn Bible Students Association** is the largest of the Bible Student movements. It was formed in 1931 when Norman Woodworth, cousin of C. J. Woodworth to resume publication of Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures*, which the WBTS Tower Society had ceased to publish in 1927. Their magazine is entitled *Dawn—A Herald of Christ's Presence*. In recent times some have distanced themselves from some of Russell's teachings. In 1974, a splinter group was formed called

Independent Bible Students.

8. **The Goshen Fellowship** was formed by Jesse Hemery in England in 1951. He had been the overseer of the WBTS's British Isles branch office, appointed by Russell in 1901 and holding that post until 1946.
9. **The True Faith Jehovah's Witnesses Association** was formed by Romanian Witnesses after their isolation during the communist era when there was little communication with the WBTS. Evidently this involved a difference of opinion about procedures or in doctrine.

NOTE: The history of Jehovah's Witnesses may be read in the WBTS produced book *Jehovah's Witnesses - Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, although there are certain important omissions concerning the splits, and a certain gloss and prejudice has been put upon some events.

THE DIFFICULTY FOR INDIVIDUAL JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

In spite of the above mentioned correct teaching of the WBTS there is much that is unbiblical. Sadly individual Jehovah's Witnesses who follow the rules of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society are generally not adequately equipped to investigate Bible teachings themselves because they are directed to have a mind-set of using only the materials provided by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and so never using the up-to-date work of Bible scholars for research. However, when the WBTS has occasionally made quotations from scholarly publications these quotations have been found at times to have been taken out of context. At other times they have taken a very selective approach to information and so ignoring large amounts of factual information which is contrary to the WBTS position. So by its one-sided presentation of information the WBTS has caused Jehovah's witnesses to exist in an intellectual bubble and therefore to have a somewhat distorted understanding of a number of biblical issues. It is only when an individual makes a personal search that these distortions are removed.

The foundational teachers of Jehovah's Witnesses: Charles Russell, Joseph Rutherford and Frederick Franz had no professional training in Bible interpretation i.e. they, too, were amateurs - inadequately equipped to do accurate Bible study. Yet, it is argued by Jehovah's Witnesses that only these leading men of the Society truly had God's spirit, and therefore they must have been right. The same view is taken of the leading men within the WBTS today. However, this entire argument is proved to be false by the many changes in doctrine that have occurred over time, including some most ludicrous teachings presented as truth in the past which are no longer believed by Jehovah's Witnesses (Please see STUDY 19). This is not to say that all past wrong teachings of the WBTS have now been corrected as we shall see by a thorough comparison of them with the Scriptures. Furthermore, the same claim of having God's spirit has been misused by the founding teachers of other denominations such as by Ellen White of the Seventh-day Adventists, Herbert Armstrong of the World-Wide Church of God, and the two main founders of original Mormonism etc.

The fact is that when a JW develops a longing to search for biblical truth, the up-to-date work of Bible scholars contained in Bible encyclopaedias, dictionaries, commentaries and other writings can be very valuable toward gaining a correct understanding of Scripture. In fact, Jesus showed that he would make such a scholarly provision when he said, as recorded in Matthew 23:34: "*here I am sending forth to you prophets and wise men and scribes*" (KIT). Such *scribes* were not just public speakers (as wrongly translated in the NWT) with little scholarly background but, in Bible times, were a class of "experts in the Law" - professional Bible scholars. We, too, need to take advantage of the up-to-date work of such modern-day professionals because they help in the areas of better Bible translation, greater understanding of Jewish culture and ways of Jewish expression, more accurate definitions of Bible terms, and good analysis of the meanings in English. However, there is the warning for us to be discerning with some scholarly works because some scholars have allowed their own church background to affect their conclusions on certain biblical issues.

THE PROBLEM TEACHINGS

Regarding the studies presented in this volume, a logical analysis of the Scriptures reveals many wrong assumptions made by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and its splinter groups. It also reveals their failure to understand the sequencing of biblical events which has then led them into numerous false teachings and dangerous unbiblical positions. The main false teachings have been found to be in the areas of:

- The manner of Jesus' resurrection and of his return
- The date-setting for his 'parousia' in 1914 and other dates.
- The time of the end scenario
- The separating of true Christians into two classes
- The Kingdom future hope for all Christians
- The resurrection of Christians and its timing
- The misapplication of disfellowshipping and shunning
- The claim that Christians need an organization for their salvation
- The ban on the use of blood transfusions

There are many more false teachings of lesser significance that are also covered in these studies. So following the WBTS' own principle it is clearly right to try to warn Jehovah's Witnesses of these teachings as being false to the Holy Scriptures. The Watchtower magazine of January 15, 1974 stated that:

When persons are in great danger from a source that they do not suspect or are being misled by those they consider their friends, **is it an unkindness to warn them?** They may prefer not to believe the warnings. They may even resent it. But does that free one from the **moral responsibility** to give that warning.

Also on page 32, paragraph 19 of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* it says:

There cannot be two sets of truth when one does not agree with the other. One or the other is true, but not both. Sincerely believing something and practicing that belief will not make it right if it really is wrong. How should you feel if proof is given that what you believe is wrong?

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDIES

The WBTS operates a very tight system of control over the thinking of its membership so that open and free discussion of biblical subjects beyond what is stated in WT literature is strongly discouraged. This is in contradiction of God's encouragement in Proverbs 27:17 that: "*one man's face sharpens the face of another.*" Furthermore, the Holy Scriptures admonish all who want to serve Jehovah according to truthful teachings to examine all details before making decisions about what is actual biblical truth:

- ❖ "When anyone is replying to a matter before he hears [it], that is foolishness on his part and a humiliation" (Proverbs 18:13 NWT).

There are many teachings and details which are very clearly stated in the Scriptures and about which one can be fairly dogmatic when the known background is taken into account. However, there are also many subjects that are not so clearly stated and so require a lot of 'digging' to find the correct teaching and therefore making it advisable to be cautious as regards one's being dogmatic. So these studies are an attempt to draw together the many Scriptures that have a bearing on the various Bible teachings and no claim is made of being correct on all points, in spite of every effort having been made to express what is factual. So the studies are presented as substantially completed works although still in progress as new information about the early centuries background is received.

Although these studies present mainly single or partial verses it is strongly recommended that the reader examine from his or her own Bible **the context** in which these verses are set. Of course, the reason for the single or partial verses is to focus on the point the text makes and hence to gain clarity. At times it will be necessary to examine the Kingdom Interlinear Translation because there are some translation issues with the New World Translation used by Jehovah's Witnesses (Please see STUDY 23).

Also it is hoped that the sub-headings, the highlighted key words and the comments will help to connect the related information and act as a guide to bring out the teaching of the Bible on each subject. *The approach taken here is to use the **plainly understood texts** as the basis to understand the more difficult texts.*

I also acknowledge the research of many open-minded non-professional individual seekers of truth on these subjects. Many of their scriptural presentations are to be found on the internet as well as in books. Furthermore, we hope that these studies will be of benefit to other Bible students as truth-seekers as well as to Jehovah's Witnesses who wish to make their own personal search.

Whenever I have updated a Study the new point is identified by a vertical line set to the right of the new section.

By Raymond C. Faircloth
www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk

