

Answering Jehovah's Witnesses

There are many points at which the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses clearly contradict the teaching of the Bible. It is good to be sure of what you believe on those points and why you believe it, so that you are not easily shaken by their arguments. Here are some examples of Jehovah's Witness beliefs and biblical responses to them.

The Return of Christ

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus has already come, unobserved by most, in 1914. Both the Old and New Testaments and Jesus Himself tell us that every eye will see Him when he returns.

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:30 – 31

"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Acts 1:9-11

"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him."

Revelation 1:7

The Deity of Christ

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the true Scriptures speak of God's Son, the Word, as 'a god.' He is a 'mighty god,' but not the Almighty God, Jehovah. He was the first creation of God.

The deity of Christ is clear in both the Old and New Testaments.

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."

Zechariah 12:10

God — Jehovah — is speaking throughout the whole chapter and in the tenth verse He identifies Himself as "Me whom they pierced". This verse is quoted several times in the New Testament and identified as Jesus, the "Suffering Messiah", See Revelation 1:7, John 19:34,37.

In Hebrews chapter 1 we are clearly told the Son is not an angel, but God Himself. This is verified in several points in these verses.

“For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." And: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.””

Hebrews 1:5-14

The Trinity

Jehovah’s Witnesses do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity. We have already considered the Biblical evidence in support of it when answering the objections of Islam.

After Death

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that after death the person no longer exists but, if worthy, will be re-created at the resurrection. It is not difficult to demonstrate that this view is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

Philippians 1:21-24

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

Revelation 6:9-11

The souls who were killed dwell under the Altar, in Heaven, aware of how they were killed and the circumstances of their death.

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvellous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!”

Revelation 15:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

John 14: 1-4

Hell

Jehovah’s Witnesses also believe that Hell is just the grave. This too is contradicted by Jesus. In Luke 16:19 – 35 He contrasts the fate of two individuals. The rich man after his death goes to

torment in Hades (Hell); Lazarus goes to the place where Abraham dwells (Paradise). Both men clearly died on the earth and their lives continued after their death.

In Revelation the world is warned by an angel not to submit to the coming Antichrist: those who receive His mark will receive eternal punishment.

“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Revelation 14:9-11

The eternal aspect as well as the consciousness of their existence is evident.

The New World Bible Translation

In the New World Translation, in the New Testament we read the word “Jehovah” as the name of God. The word is not found in the Greek manuscripts. This addition is just one example of mistranslation. The following quotes are from the New World Translation.

“In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth proved to be formless and waste and there was darkness upon the surface of [the] watery deep; and God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters.”

Genesis 1:1 – 2

“Then those in the boat did obeisance to him, saying: “You are really God’s Son.”

Mathew 14:33 (among others)

“In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.”

John 1:1

“Jesus said to them: “Most truly I say to YOU, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been.”

John 8:58

“Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed YOU overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own [Son].”

Acts 20:28

“Because 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.”

Colossians 1:16,17

“While we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of [the] Saviour of us, Christ Jesus.”

Titus 2:13

The Bible warns against adding anything to the text.

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life.”

Revelation 22:18 – 19

Questions for Discussion

1. Referring to our study last week, what other points of Jehovah's Witness doctrine can you identify that go against the teaching of the Bible?
2. How would you respond to them using the Bible?

Topics to Avoid

144,000 And All That

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that entry into the Kingdom of Heaven will be limited to 144,000 individuals, called before 1935. All other Witnesses are part of the "Great Crowd" who will occupy paradise earth.

Many Christians will deliberately stir up a discussion on this matter, arguing about who or what the 144,000 of Revelation chapters 7 and 14 refers to. It will almost certainly prove fruitless, as will discussion of other controversial eschatological points.

Question for Discussion

3. Why do you think this particular issue is such a favourite of those who take on Jehovah's Witnesses in discussion?

Red Herrings

Similarly there are red herrings that Jehovah's Witness will commonly raise such as our celebration of Easter, Christmas, birthdays and so on. The effect is to put most Christians on the back foot, and that is what it is meant to do.

Question for Discussion

4. Why are we often so easily thrown by peripheral issues like these?

Focus On the Gospel

It is good, for the sake of your own safety and confidence, to be sure of what you believe and why you believe it but however much you are able for it that debate on points of difference, even important points, will not usually lead to a satisfactory conclusion.

Jehovah Witnesses sincerely believe that they have the truth, and that the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society is the vehicle God is using to dispense it. If you contradict them verse by verse and doctrine by doctrine they will merely redefine words to justify their position and, if they appear to be losing, withdraw from further discussion labelling you an emissary of Satan.

In talking with them, as when speaking to any unbeliever, begin with a clear idea in your own mind of what your goal is. Hopefully it is neither to drive them away from your door nor to merely win an argument. Your goal should be to win a sinner who is lost and dead in sin.

The Bible is clear, it is the gospel that is the power of God to save and the gospel, by definition, is good news.

Begin by addressing the needs and longings of the heart: longing for love, longing for security, longing for contentment, longing for peace. Speak about assurance and about salvation by grace alone. Talk about how the Lord has saved you and the difference He has made to your life. Wrong beliefs — heresies — can be addressed more effectively when your listener has been convinced that there is a good reason to listen to what you have to say.

Question for Discussion

5. How do you typically respond when someone questions your beliefs?
6. Is that response helpful or unhelpful?
7. Why do you respond that way?