

Busy Christian's Guide to Jehovah's Witnesses

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A. Basic Facts

Founder	Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), former Protestant from Pittsburgh
Organization	Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, headquartered near Warwick, NY
Names	Jehovah's Witnesses (name since 1931); known earlier as "Bible Students"
Founded	1879 (first issue of <i>The Watchtower</i>); Brooklyn corporation 1881
Periodicals	<i>The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom</i> (doctrinal) <i>Awake!</i> (news, general interest, from Jehovah's Witness slant)
Scriptures	<i>New World Translation</i> (NWT, a doctrinally biased Bible version)
Key Events	Failed predictions for the years 1925 and 1975 Purge of Watchtower leadership in 1980
Membership	Almost 9 million active JWs worldwide; over 1 million in the U.S.; almost 20 million people worldwide attend the annual JW "Memorial"
Sects	Laymen's Home Missionary Movement; Dawn Bible Students Association; et. al.

B. Prohibitions

Prohibition	Biblical Response
Birthdays	The fact that Pharaoh (Gen. 40:20) and Herod Antipas (Matt. 14:6) are the only men in Scripture who observed their birthday, and both had someone killed, does not prove that God forbids birthdays; it is murder God forbids!
Christmas, Easter, or other holidays	Holidays should be neither required nor forbidden (Gal. 4:8-10; Col. 2:16; Rom. 14:5-6). It doesn't matter whether Jesus was really born on Dec. 25; what matters is that his birth is joyful news (Luke 2:10-11).
Blood transfusions	Scripture forbids eating blood taken from animals that have been killed, as a sign of respect for life (Lev. 17:10-14; Acts 15:20, 29); transfusions take blood from living humans to save life and does not involve digestion.
Using a cross as a symbol	Jesus died on a cross (John 20:25). A symbol is pagan only if its meaning is pagan (John 3:14-15). We ought to glory in Christ's cross (Gal. 6:14).
Political activity	Daniel held office in a pagan nation without betraying Israel (Dan. 2:48). Erastus was an official in Corinth (Rom. 16:23). Paul claimed privileges of Roman citizenship (Acts 23:25-29) and also claimed citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20).
Participation in war	God authorizes governments to use lethal force to protect its citizens (Rom. 13:4) from criminals or invaders, though not to advance God's kingdom (John 18:36).

C. For Further Information

Bowman, Robert M. Jr. *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
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D. False Teachings

	Jehovah's Witnesses	Biblical Christianity
Scripture	The Bible is God's word, but it was corrupted when "Jehovah" was taken out of the NT; only the NWT is reliable	The Bible has been reliably preserved (Isa. 40:8; 55:11; Jude 3); "Jehovah" is in none of the Greek NT manuscripts
Authority	The JW "Governing Body" rules on all doctrinal and ethical matters; its interpretations of Scripture are needed for salvation and may not be questioned	Christ through Scripture alone, no human organization, has authority over all Christians (Acts 17:11; Gal. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:2)
God	One "Almighty God," named Jehovah (an OT name for God that they insert into the NT), personal and (more or less) infinite, but only one person (no Trinity)	One God (Isa. 43:10; 1 Tim. 2:5) called Jehovah (Yahweh) in the OT, but not in the NT, which uses "Lord"; God exists eternally as three persons (Matt. 28:19): Father (John 17:1-3), Son (John 20:28), and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4)
Christ: Before Earth	First and only direct creation of God, identified as Michael the archangel; empowered by Jehovah to create all other things; was "a god," not God	Existed eternally (John 1:1-2; 8:58; 17:5; Col. 1:17) as God (John 1:1); all things were created through him (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
Christ: On Earth	The spirit person of Michael annihilated, his life-force made into the human Jesus, who was a mere man, though perfect and sinless	Jesus in the flesh was still the Word or Son (John 1:14; 5:17-23); he was God (John 8:24, 28, 58; cf. Isa. 43:10, 13; John 10:28-30, cf. Deut. 6:4; 32:39)
Christ: In Heaven	Christ "resurrected" (i.e., recreated) as a spirit again, no physical body except on occasion to appear to men; is not to be worshipped or offered prayer	Jesus' body that died was raised (Luke 24:39; John 2:19-22); he is both man (Acts 17:31) and God (John 20:28); he receives worshipped (Matt. 28:17) and prayer (Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2)
Holy Spirit	God's invisible active force, not a divine person	A divine person (Matt. 28:19) who is sent in Jesus' name, teaches, speaks, etc. (John 14-16; Acts 13:2; 15:28)
Salvation	Requires 1) faith in Christ, 2) Bible study through Watchtower "helps," 3) obedience to God's laws (no political activities, holidays or birthdays, blood transfusions, etc.), and 4) association with God's "channel," which today is the Watchtower; does not involve being born again	A gift of God's grace, not of works (Rom. 3:23-24; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9), through faith in Christ (John 3:16-17), in which all who believe in Christ are born again (John 3:3-5), resulting in a changed life and good works (Gal. 5:6, 19-21; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:3-11)
Church	Two classes of Christians: the "anointed," numbering 144,000 total, now down to about 8,000 JWs; and the "great crowd," millions of other JWs; only the JWs are true Christians, all others are apostate	Not two classes of Christians: all have same hope (Matt. 5:3-12; Eph. 4:4), all are part of the church (1 Cor. 12:12-27); no church-wide apostasy (Matt. 28:19-20; Jude 3)
Future	No second coming: Christ has been invisibly "present" from heaven since 1914 (despite a history of false predictions); the wicked will be annihilated	Christ will come again to the earth to bring eternal salvation and eternal judgment (Acts 1:9-11; 3:20-21; Heb. 9:26-28; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:10)