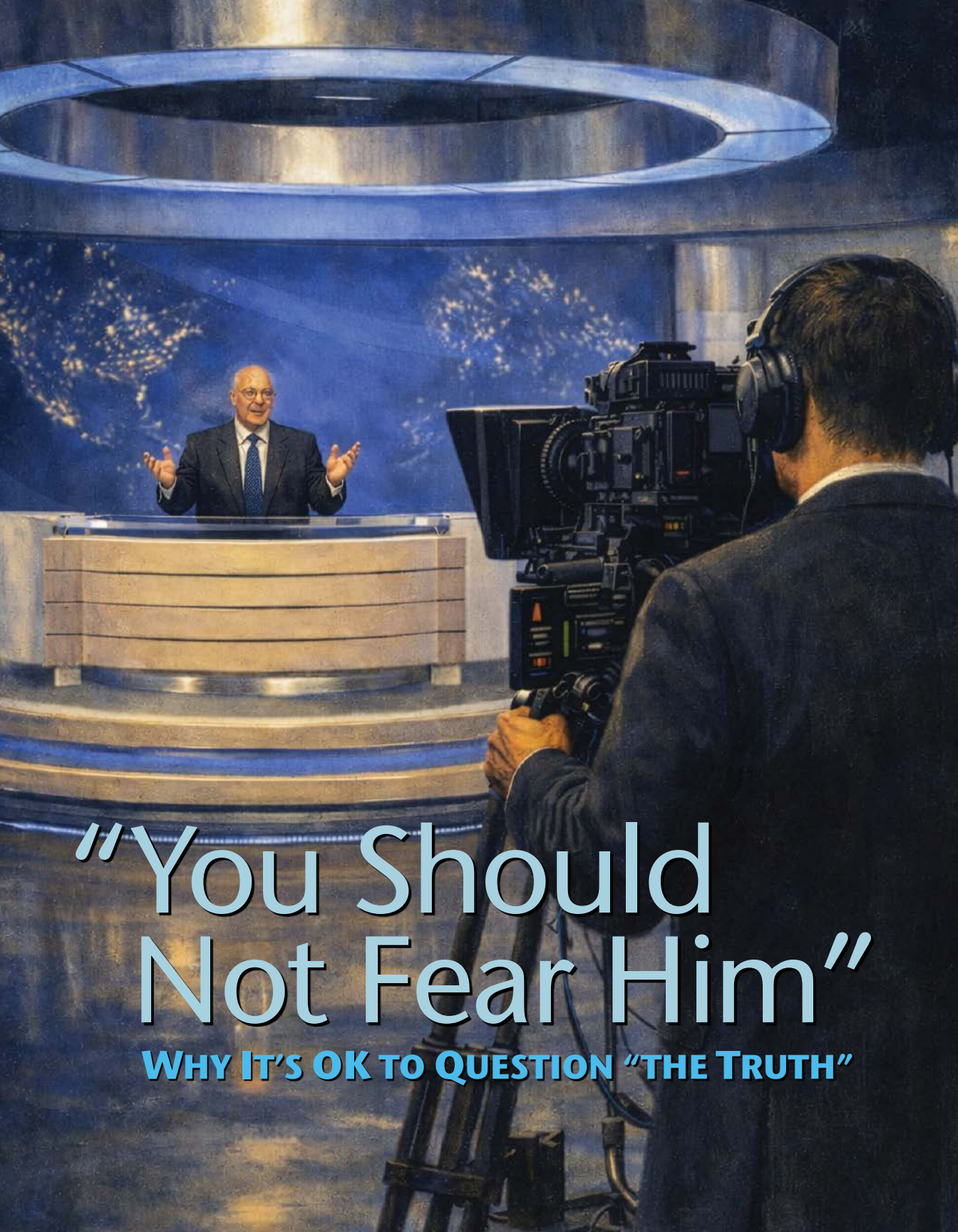




"You Should Not Fear Him"

WHY IT'S OK TO QUESTION "THE TRUTH"

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"You Should Not Fear Him"—Why It's OK to Question "the Truth"

English (snf-E)

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WHO WROTE THIS?

This brochure is not written or authorized by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. The writer is me, Lloyd Evans. I'm the father of two girls. I currently live in Croatia. I was born in Manchester, England. I'm a former elder and Ministerial Training School graduate. I began having doubts as a young ministerial servant at the age of 19, but it wasn't until I moved to Croatia in 2009 that the language barrier forced me to reexamine my beliefs.

By 2013 I had decided to leave the organization for conscientious reasons, and began documenting my thoughts and discoveries on my YouTube channel. I went on to write two books and make several TV appearances, including on the popular A&E show *Leah Remini: Scientology and The Aftermath*. More information on my story and background can be found either by scanning the QR code on page 36 or visiting my website at lloydonline.org.





Introduction



“When the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word is not fulfilled or does not come true, then Jehovah did not speak that word. The prophet spoke it presumptuously. You should not fear him.”

—DEUTERONOMY 18:22

Does truth really matter to you?

If you’re reading this brochure, hopefully the answer is a solid “yes.” Nobody appreciates being lied to, or having their trust exploited by hoaxes or scams that make absolute, black-and-white claims. Some groups pride themselves on having an exclusively true set of beliefs, even to the point of labeling themselves as “the truth.”

If you’re familiar with the Bible, the above quoted scripture will be of interest—it is the theme text for this brochure. The Israelites were given clear, logical guidance on how to identify a false proph-

et, or an impostor posing as a representative of God.

Put simply, if the presumed prophet made a prediction “in the name of Jehovah” that did not come true, they were to be condemned as false.



Can you think of a group of men who have made bold predictions of future events in Jehovah’s name, and when proven wrong, they have either subtly adjusted their predictions or quietly abandoned them?

Interestingly, the verse insists prophets were not to be **feared**. This is reassuring, because today there are many examples of religious leaders and high control groups (sometimes referred to as “cults”) that use fear to control people.

The threats can come in many forms. Some religions threaten physical violence (e.g.: whippings, corporal punishment, honor killings) or claim that future eternal torture in a fiery hell awaits sinners. Other groups may seem peaceful and friendly, but still inspire fear through threats of ostracism by family and loved ones, or the existential dread of being destroyed in an impending apocalypse.

Does this sound familiar?

If you’re one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, or have beliefs that have been shaped by Jehovah’s Witnesses, please keep the words in Deuteronomy in mind as you read these pages. You have nothing to fear by subjecting your beliefs to reasonable scrutiny out of a genuine desire to avoid being misled by “impostors.”—2 Tim. 3:13.

The Bible urges you to “make sure of all things” (1 Thess. 5:21) and to stay focused on “whatever things are true.” (Phil. 4:8) **Never give up on your honest, conscientious pursuit of truth** no matter how confident you feel in the convictions you have accumulated throughout your life.

This brochure will make a compelling case that the leadership of Jehovah’s Witnesses has repeatedly, throughout its long history, made specific claims related to Armageddon that have not come to pass.

Worse still, over many decades of positioning themselves as a moral authority deserving of respect and prominence, the self-styled “faithful and discreet slave” has

created and imposed cruel teachings and policies that have caused needless harm, even leading in some cases to abuse and tragic loss of life.

As we discuss the evidence that Jehovah’s Witnesses are not, in fact, “the truth,” please don’t feel pressured to agree with the contents of this brochure or reach any immediate conclusions.

The real “good news” you should consider is that **you are in control of your own life**. If, on reading these pages, you still feel you identify with the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses, that is entirely your call. But you should feel proud for keeping an open mind and proving that truth really does matter to you.

A PROMISE TO YOU

This brochure delves into a very sensitive topic: your beliefs as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. It will therefore present you with the facts and only the facts. All quotes from Watchtower publications will be presented accurately and in their proper context. If it brings you peace of mind, feel free to double-check any quote with the publications on the *JW Library*® app, in your personal collection, or in PDF files that can be found online. While every effort has been made to strive for accuracy, please bear in mind that the Jehovah’s Witness religion is continually changing and the passage of time may render some observations on various teachings and policies obsolete. But everything you read in this brochure is true as of early 2026.



SECTION 1

The Light Gets Brighter



“But the path of the righteous is like the bright morning light that grows brighter and brighter until full daylight. The way of the wicked is like the darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

—PROVERBS 4:18, 19



“So we have the prophetic word made more sure, and you are doing well in paying attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place (until day dawns and a daystar rises) in your hearts.”

—2 PETER 1:19

Well-known scientist Carl Sagan once reminded us that “extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.” That phrase eloquently describes a cornerstone of critical thinking: burden of proof.

If someone makes a claim that is mundane, such as “I spoke to my aunt yester-

day,” nobody really needs them to provide evidence to back it up provided she is known to be alive and well. Conversely, if someone makes an implausible or sensational claim, such as “I saw a dinosaur at the local park,” it’s reasonable to demand highly compelling evidence in support of their story.

When a group of men make the extraordinary claim that they are God's exclusive channel of communication with mankind, how can we know whether they're telling the truth? An obvious way is to look at their track record. Do their teachings from the past to the present bear the hallmark of divine guidance?

Remember: it's fair to demand *extraordinary* evidence in the face of an extraordinary claim, so we could reasonably expect some degree of consistency and accuracy when the group explains their theology, including their interpretation of Bible teachings and prophecies. If the group were to frequently change their minds or adjust their message only when the passage of time renders past teachings implausible, this would be a strong indicator that they are—like most religious leaders—not the genuine article.

Jehovah's Witnesses have a long history of shifting their stance on Bible teachings and prophecy, and in some cases doing what might be considered a "flip-flop," or reversion back to a previous teaching or position they had temporarily abandoned. Here are just a few examples of the Governing Body doing this:

- **Elders:** Under Charles Taze Russell, congregations or "ecclesias" of Bible Students had elders. In 1932, his successor Joseph Rutherford scrapped the arrangement in favor of having one "congregation servant." In 1972, the elder arrangement was reintroduced.
- **Beards:** Charles Taze Russell famously sported a beard, as did many of his Bible Student followers. Under Rutherford, beards came to be frowned

on to the extent that men were strongly discouraged from growing them. Fast forward to 2023, and the Governing Body has relaxed the rules, acknowledging they have no basis in Scripture.

- **Organ transplants:** A 1961 "Questions From Readers" article reassured Witnesses that donating or using replacement body parts was "something that each individual must decide for himself." (w61 8/1 p. 480) Later, in 1967, a rule was introduced declaring such a procedure tantamount to "cannibalism." (w67 11/15 pp. 702-704) Finally, in 1980, the organization executed a full U-turn, declaring: "There is no Biblical command pointedly forbidding the taking in of other human tissue. ... It is a matter for personal decision."—w80 3/15 p. 31.



Do the above examples strike you as being indicative of a movement that is:

- (1) **guided by God, or**
- (2) **man-made and making things up as they go along?**

"NEW LIGHT"—A DIVINE PLAN OR AN EXCUSE?

To get around the obvious contradiction of being on the one hand "God's channel" and on the other hand continually making "adjustments," the Governing Body teaches that "new light" is dispensed from heaven incrementally so that gradually, over time, God's people can be nudged towards Bible truth just in time for when they need it.

DID YOU KNOW?

Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Bible Student movement, promoted a range of peculiar teachings. He famously used the pages of *Zion's Watch Tower* to market "miracle wheat," making exaggerated claims about its exceptional yield. An enthusiastic proponent of pyramidology, Russell taught that the internal measurements of the Great Pyramid of Giza—which he called "God's Stone Witness"—encoded a divine timeline of human history.

Russell also expressed overtly racist views. He published articles suggesting that "the Ethiopian's skin" would be turned white in God's new world, citing cases of vitiligo as supposed evidence. (w1900 10/1 p. 2706; w1904 2/15 pp. 52-53) At the 1914 premiere of *The Photo-Drama of Creation*, black attendees were segregated and confined to the upper balcony. Responding to criticism, Russell wrote: "... explain it how we will, a majority of whites prefer not to intermingle closely with other races."—w1914 4/1 pp. 105-106.

These attitudes did not end with Russell's death. In 1929, *The Golden Age* (forerunner to *Awake!*) referred to black people as "a race of servants," adding: "There is no servant in the world as good as a good Colored servant."—g1929 7/24 p. 702.

To prop up this narrative the cited verses in Proverbs and 2 Peter are routinely referenced. But if you examine both scriptures carefully in context, do they describe a scenario in which God issues false wisdom to his people to act as a makeweight until he eventually permits them to know the truth?

Let's take another look:

- The scripture in **Proverbs chapter 4** simply contrasts the "path" or "way" of the righteous against that of the wicked. Nothing more.
- The scripture in **2 Peter chapter 1** describes Bible prophecy as a means of gleaning hope in a "dark place" of ignorance or despair until the hope is realized by the prophecy's fulfillment.
- Neither verse describes God temporarily allowing his people to indulge in false beliefs.

While it is true that the full understanding of prophecy is described as being sometimes withheld at God's discretion, (Dan. 12:9; Acts 1:7) the Bible tells us that Jehovah is the "God of truth." (Ps. 31:5) Elsewhere, the Scriptures reveal that God "cannot lie," and list "a lying tongue" as among the things He hates.—Titus 1:2; Prov. 6:17.



Does it seem reasonable to you that God would permit his organization to teach a falsehood over many decades?

THE TROUBLE WITH 1919

According to the current teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses, Joseph Rutherford and his associates were chosen to be God's "faithful and discreet slave" in 1919, charged with giving God's people spiritual "food at the proper time."—Matt. 24:45.

As it turns out, when read in full, the scripture in Matthew is clearly a parable contrasting good and faithful followers of Jesus with professed Christians (collectively an “evil slave”) who would be corrupt and cruel. The context shows that it’s not written as a prophecy.

Let’s assume though, for the sake of argument, that the verse in Matthew is somehow prophetic, and might be applicable to Watchtower and its leaders. If that were so, it would be reasonable to investigate what the group was teaching around this early period that made them so appealing as “faithful slave” candidates. That is, after all, their extraordinary claim.

In 1919, Jehovah’s Witnesses were busy printing and distributing a book called *The Finished Mystery* that was first published two years earlier in 1917. Though the book is a pivotal part of the organization’s history, and often referenced in Jehovah’s Witness literature in an almost reverential tone, copies are not available for ordinary believers to examine.

The reason is likely that, among many fanciful teachings, the book made the following assertions:

- The “leviathan” of Job chapter 41 was revealed to be the steam locomotive. (pp. 84-85)

- The earth was said to be 48,000 years old. (p. 139)
- England was denounced as having a “Satanic character.” (p. 202)
- Revelation 14:20 was claimed to predict the precise traveling distance between where *The Finished Mystery* was written and where it was printed. (p. 230)
- Europeans were declared “the most cruel, bloodthirsty, quarrelsome, rapacious people on earth.” (p. 307)



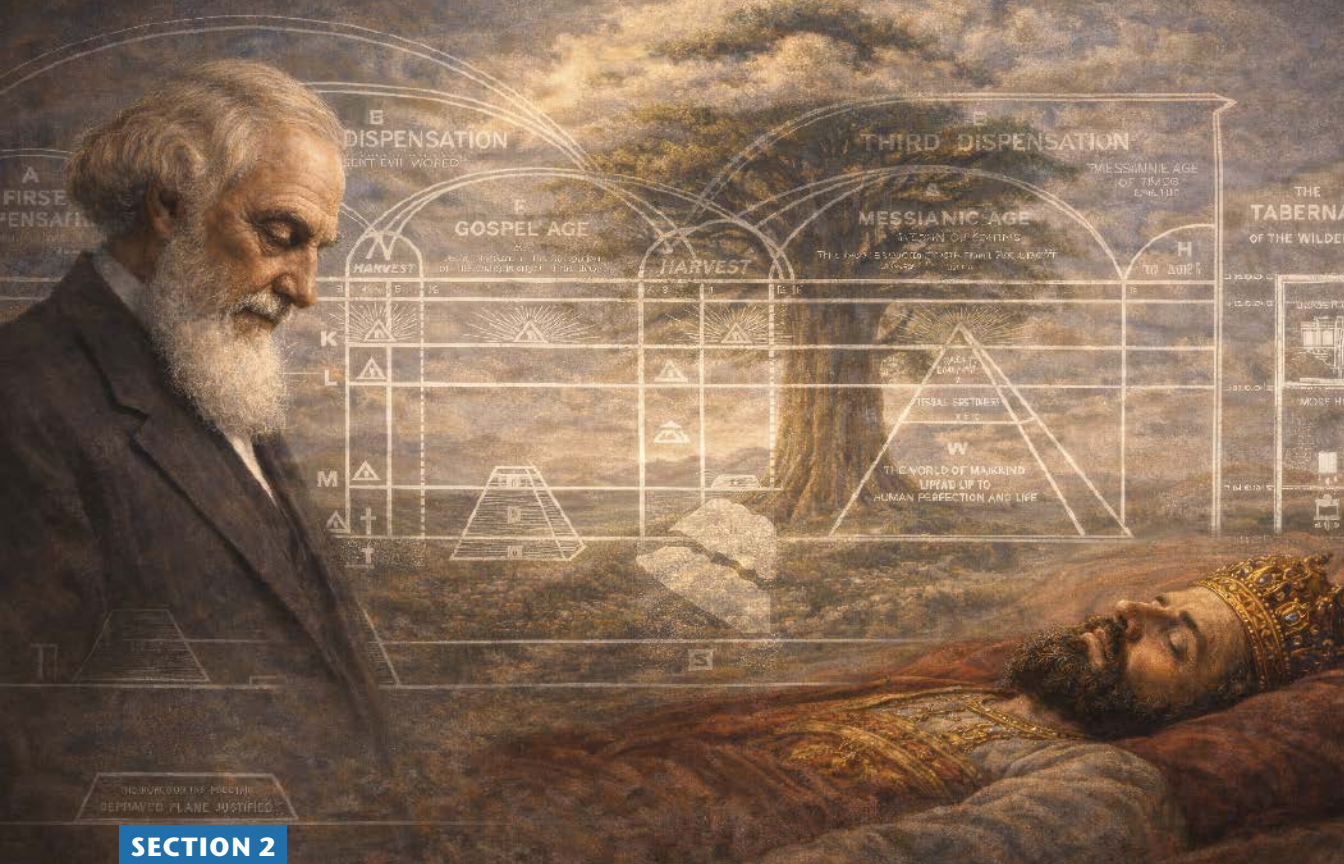
Does it seem likely that Rutherford and his associates would be handpicked by God and Christ in 1919 based on what they were preaching at that time?



The Finished Mystery is one of hundreds of publications that are effectively hidden from Jehovah’s Witnesses. Only publications from the second half of the 20th century onwards are currently accessible on jw.org, even though the technology exists to make older books, magazines and brochures widely available for research.

CONCLUSION

Jehovah’s Witnesses are one of countless religions claiming to be exclusively used by God as his chosen channel of divine wisdom. However, their justification of “new light” to explain away past errors is unbiblical and demeans Jehovah, portraying him as a misleading deity who delights in keeping his people in ignorance and falsehood. And when the organization’s past teachings are closely examined, including its habit of reverting (or flip-flopping) back to beliefs or practices they temporarily rejected, it seems far more likely that the organization is man-made and making things up as they go along.



607 B.C.E., 1914 —Why These Dates Matter



“Let its heart be changed from that of a human, and let it be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over it. This is by the decree of watchers, and the request is by the word of the holy ones, so that people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that he gives it to whomever he wants, and he sets up over it even the lowliest of men. . . . All of this befell King Nebuchadnezzar.”

—DANIEL 4:16, 17, 28



“And all this land will be reduced to ruins and will become an object of horror, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.”

—JEREMIAH 25:11

If you're one of Jehovah's Witnesses, there are two dates that quietly shape almost everything you believe about the world you live in: **607 B.C.E.** and **1914 C.E.** You may not think about them every day, but without these two dates, there would be no "last days," no urgent preaching work, no mandate for the Governing Body to serve as God's channel, and no reason to believe that Armageddon is imminent.

Understanding how these dates are connected—and whether the claims made about them are valid—is therefore not a minor issue. It goes to the very foundation of the religion. So let's begin by unpacking the more recent of the two.

1914 C.E.

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that 1914 was the year Jesus Christ began ruling invisibly in heaven. At that time, Satan and his demons were supposedly cast down to the earth, effectively firing the starting gun for the last days—a "short period of time" during which there would be intense suffering for humanity.—Rev. 12:12.

This *short period* has now lasted more than a century.

According to the publications, the outbreak of World War I in 1914 marked the visible beginning of the last days, and everything since then—wars, earthquakes, disease, moral decline—is interpreted as evidence that we are living deep in the final part of that period.

Without 1914, several core beliefs collapse at once:

- There is no identifiable start to the "last days."

- There is no timetable for Armageddon.
- There is no prophetic link between Bible chronology and modern history.
- There is no basis for claiming that the Watchtower leadership was selected as the "faithful and discreet slave" in 1919.

In short, 1914 is the cornerstone of Watchtower authority. But where does that date come from?

607 B.C.E.

The answer lies in 607 B.C.E., which Watchtower publications insist was the year Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylonian forces under King Nebuchadnezzar. From this date, the organization counts forward **2,520 years**, arriving at 1914.

This 2,520-year period is derived from an interpretation of a dream recorded in Daniel chapter 4, which speaks of "seven times" passing while a great tree is cut down and restrained with iron and copper bands.

The organization teaches that:

- Each "time" equals 360 years. Seven times therefore equal 2,520 years.
- The cutting down of the tree represents the interruption of God's rulership on earth.
- That interruption began in 607 B.C.E. and ended in 1914 C.E.

This interpretation may sound convincing when presented as established truth, but there are serious problems with it—beginning with the Bible passage itself.

Daniel chapter 4 describes a dream experienced by King Nebuchadnezzar of

Babylon. In the dream, an immense tree is cut down, and a decree is issued that “seven times” will pass over it while it’s given the heart of a beast. The meaning of the dream is explained clearly later in the same chapter: Nebuchadnezzar himself would temporarily lose his sanity and live like an animal for a period of time before being restored to his throne. Daniel 4:28 states plainly: “All of this befell King Nebuchadnezzar.”

The Bible gives **one fulfillment** of the dream—and only one. There’s no indication in the text that the dream has a second, greater meaning involving thousands of years of human history or a countdown to Armageddon. If such an extraordinary second fulfillment were intended, it would be reasonable to expect the Bible to state this clearly rather than making it a puzzle requiring a calculator. It does not.



Would a wise and loving God conceal important messages regarding His future plans in riddles and puzzles, or would He state them plainly?

2,520 YEARS—THE TRUE ORIGIN

The idea that the “seven times” represent 2,520 years did not originate with Charles Taze Russell or the Bible Students. It comes from 19th-century Christian writers who became obsessed with predicting the end of the world.

As early as 1823, writers were suggesting that the “seven times” should be understood as 2,520 years based on numbers plucked from chapter 12 of Revelation. Those theories circulated widely among Adventist groups and repeatedly

DID YOU KNOW?

Early Watchtower publications actually used **606 B.C.E.**, not 607 B.C.E., as the date for Jerusalem’s destruction. The change occurred later, when it was realized that there is no “year zero” between 1 B.C.E. and 1 C.E.

Rather than question the calculation itself, the date in the ancient past was adjusted to preserve **1914**, which had gained immense importance after the First World War. In other words, the date was **reverse-engineered**.

produced failed predictions for the return of Christ—including the infamous “Great Disappointment” of 1844.

Several writers before Charles Taze Russell, including his one-time colleague Nelson Barbour, had already pointed to 1914 (or nearby dates) using the same 2,520-year calculation. Russell simply took those ideas and framed them as his personal discovery.

This historical background matters, because it shows that the chronology behind 1914 was *borrowed*, not divinely revealed.

WHAT ABOUT THE “SEVENTY YEARS”?

Watchtower also uses another date—**539 B.C.E.**, the year Babylon fell to the Persians—in support of 607 B.C.E. That argument relies on the Bible’s mention of a seventy-year period in chapter 25 of Jeremiah, as quoted at the start of this section.

However, Jeremiah does not say Jerusalem would lie desolate for seventy years. It says that Judah and surrounding nations would **serve the king of Babylon** for seventy years. Jerusalem was under Babylonian control before it was destroyed—which historians confirm.

Furthermore, counting back from the year of Babylon's fall in 539 B.C.E. by seventy years leads to **609 B.C.E.**, not 607 B.C.E. This date, however, does not lead to 1914—and is therefore ignored.

WHAT HISTORIANS ACTUALLY KNOW

The destruction of Jerusalem did not occur in a vague or poorly documented period of history. The Neo-Babylonian era happens to be one of the best-documented periods in the ancient world. If anything, we have *too much* information about it.

Tens of thousands of cuneiform (clay) tablets record events year by year in almost tedious detail, right down to financial transactions and receipts for the sale of goods. These documents are often dated



VAT 4956

according to who was ruling at the time, in what year of their rulership something occurred, and—crucially—astronomical observations.

Checking the astronomical observations using modern technology allows historians to date Nebuchadnezzar's reign with extraordinary precision. One clay tablet, known as **VAT 4956**, records detailed astronomical data from Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year—data that can only correspond to **568/567 B.C.E.**

Once that year is fixed, counting back shows that Jerusalem could *only* have been destroyed in **587/586 B.C.E.**—not 607 B.C.E. There is no room in the historical record to insert an extra twenty years. The date is not disputed among historians and Bible scholars. Only Jehovah's Witnesses and their apologists insist on 607 B.C.E. as the date for Jerusalem's destruction.

CONCLUSION

To put it bluntly, the 1914/607 B.C.E. teaching is an obsolete relic of 19th century quackery and end times hysteria that collapses under any serious historical or archeological scrutiny. It's derived from a dream vision in the book of Daniel that already explains itself in the text. Layering on additional meanings is "going beyond the things that are written," which Christians are warned against.—1 Cor. 4:6.

Based on their extensive knowledge of the Neo-Babylonian era gleaned from many thousands of cuneiform documents, including precise astronomical observations, historians are unanimous in identifying 587/586 B.C.E.—not 607 B.C.E.—as the date for Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. Despite the overwhelming evidence, the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses rigidly cling to the 1914/607 B.C.E. teaching because without it the entire foundation of their theology collapses.



SECTION 3

Armageddon —Always Just Around the Corner



*“In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that **the final end of the kingdoms of this world**, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished **by the end of A. D. 1914.**”*

—THE TIME IS AT HAND (1889), p. 99, bold ours.



*“Our thought is, that **1925 is definitely settled by the Scriptures**, marking the end of the typical jubilees. Just exactly what will happen at that time no one can tell to a certainty; but we expect such a climax in the affairs of the world that the people will begin to realize the presence of the Lord and his kingdom power.”*

—THE WATCHTOWER, 4/1/1923, p. 106, bold ours.



*“In what year, then, would the first 6,000 years of man’s existence and also the first 6,000 years of God’s rest day come to an end? **The year 1975.** ... It means that within a relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies that have to do with the ‘time of the end.’”*

—AWAKE!, 10/8/1966, pp. 19-20, bold ours.



*“[Jehovah’s Witnesses] believe that we are living now, since 1914, in the last days of this wicked system of things; that **some who saw the events of 1914 will also see the complete destruction of the present wicked world; that lovers of righteousness will survive into a cleansed earth.**”*

—REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES, p. 200, bold ours.

In 1988, author and mental health professional Dr. Steven Hassan published a book titled *Combating Cult Mind Control* featuring his “BITE” model. BITE is an acronym for the four key methods most commonly deployed by high control groups to influence people—especially toxic political and religious groups.

- **Behavior** Control: The group tightly regulates members’ actions, time, relationships, and resources so daily life is shaped by obedience rather than personal choice.
- **Information** Control: The group filters, withholds, or distorts information so members rely on approved sources and distrust outside perspectives.
- **Thought** Control: The group trains members to think in rigid, black-and-white terms using loaded language and mental shortcuts that suppress doubt and independent reasoning.
- **Emotion** Control: The group manipulates feelings—especially fear, guilt, and shame—so emotional discomfort reinforces loyalty and dissent feels dangerous.

Today we see countless examples of groups and charismatic individuals who use various components of the BITE model very effectively in amassing a following and furthering their agenda, often to the detriment of their followers. One such example is the use of apocalyptic doomsday ideology, wielded by some groups to establish conformity by inducing existential dread.

After all, few emotions can stir people to action quite so easily as **fear**.

Throughout their history, Jehovah’s Witnesses have promoted the idea that the current system of things will soon end in the fiery battle of Armageddon in which the wicked, including non-believers, will be annihilated by heavenly armies to make way for a new paradise earth.

As you can see from the quotes at the beginning of this section, a number of dates and deadlines for this calamitous event have been promoted in the pages of Watchtower publications, all of which have been proven false by the passage of time.

Today, Jehovah’s Witnesses are not given a fixed date for Armageddon. Rather, Armageddon is described as being imminent, or just around the corner. The only way to survive it, we are told, is to remain loyal as a baptized Witness of Jehovah.



Do any elements of Dr. Hassan’s BITE model sound familiar in your experience with Jehovah’s Witnesses?



“We need to help people understand how important it is for them to take

*their stand for Jehovah and his Kingdom. This means trying to motivate people to make the truth their own by applying what they learn, dedicating their life to Jehovah, and getting baptized. **Only then will they survive Jehovah's day.***”—w19.10 pp. 11-12, bold ours.

Baptism alone, however, is no guarantee of escaping Jehovah's wrath. In a 2013 *Watchtower* study article, Jehovah's Witnesses were reminded of the extent to which they must submit to the control of the organization in the final days before Armageddon.



*“At that time, the **life-saving** direction that we receive from Jehovah's organization may not appear practical from a human standpoint. **All of us must be ready to obey any instructions we may receive, whether these appear sound from a strategic or human standpoint or not.**”—w13 11/15 p. 20, bold ours.*

With the above quotes in mind, think back to Dr. Hassan's BITE model. We can now objectively say that Jehovah's Witness teachings tick a number of boxes:

- **Behavior Control:** Nearly all areas of life, including medical decisions and personal relationships, are regulated by the faithful slave; obedience to “any instructions,” no matter how seemingly unsound or impractical, is critical to survival.
- **Information Control:** Only “spiritual food” from the faithful slave is to be trusted; any negative information in the media or from former members is to be rejected.

- **Thought Control:** Skepticism and independent thinking is discouraged; members are urged to put on a “new personality” conforming to divine standards as prescribed by the faithful slave.
- **Emotion Control:** Fear of Armageddon, or of being ostracized by family and friends, is used as a tool of control; loyalty is key to surviving an impending violent act of divine execution that somehow never materializes.



If a group relies on manipulation and control tactics to wield authority, can it rightly be considered a legitimate channel of divine wisdom?

CONCLUSION

Jehovah's Witnesses have a long track record of nearly 150 years of getting it wrong on Armageddon. 1914, 1925 and 1975—and other dates—have all been tantalizingly dangled as carrots to stir past followers to action.

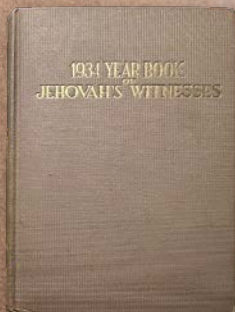
Fear of annihilation is used as a tool to maintain control, with entire generations expending their lives in service of an organization that constantly moves the goalposts while bearing no accountability. When recalling the scripture quoted at the beginning of the brochure, we do well to remember that a prophet who “speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word is not fulfilled or does not come true” is not to be feared.—Deut. 18:22.

DID YOU KNOW?

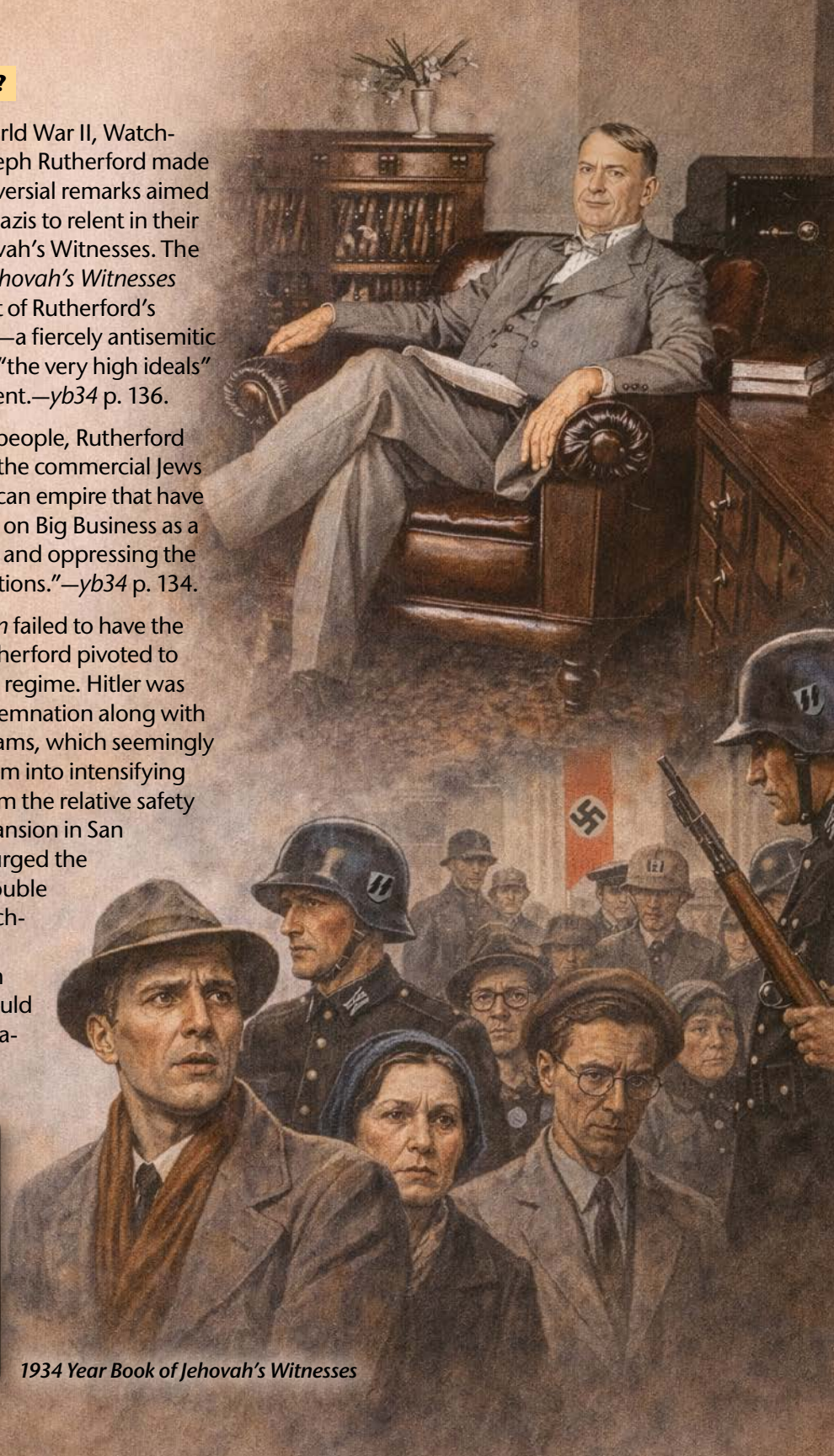
In the run-up to World War II, Watchtower president Joseph Rutherford made some highly controversial remarks aimed at persuading the Nazis to relent in their persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses. The *1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses* contains the full text of Rutherford's *Declaration of Facts*—a fiercely antisemitic document praising “the very high ideals” of Hitler's government.—yb34 p. 136.

Concerning Jewish people, Rutherford wrote: “It has been the commercial Jews of the British-American empire that have built up and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations.”—yb34 p. 134.

After the *Declaration* failed to have the desired impact, Rutherford pivoted to denouncing Hitler's regime. Hitler was sent a letter of condemnation along with a deluge of cablegrams, which seemingly only antagonized him into intensifying his persecution. From the relative safety of his Beth Sarim mansion in San Diego, Rutherford urged the Bible Students to double down on their preaching in lands under Nazi occupation. An estimated 1,200 would later die in concentration camps.



1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses





SECTION 4

Shunning —Love or Coercion?



“While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and embraced him and tenderly kissed him.”

—LUKE 15:20

Jehovah’s Witnesses are taught that shunning is a loving arrangement designed to help a wrongdoer return to Jehovah. Yet for countless families, it functions very differently. It’s not simply the withdrawal of religious association, but the deliberate severing of normal human relationships, often including close family bonds.

Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son provides a powerful contrast. We read of a father who sees his wayward son “a long way off” and immediately runs to him. There is no waiting period while he is vetted for repentance by elders, no social quarantine, no emotional withholding.

The message is powerful and undeniable: compassion precedes repentance, not the other way around. The writer chose this imagery intentionally. It reflects warmth, initiative, and unconditional love—qualities that sit uneasily beside institutionalized shunning.



“But now I am writing you to stop keeping company with anyone called a brother who is sexually immoral or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man. For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Do you not judge those

inside, while God judges those outside? ‘Remove the wicked person from among yourselves.’”—1 Cor. 5:11-13.

Jehovah’s Witness publications routinely point to the above words of the apostle Paul in justifying their practice of shunning wrongdoers. While it may seem like an iron-clad mandate to withdraw all social contact from someone who commits sin, on closer inspection there are a few things worthy of note:

- The context shows that **Paul is writing to a congregation in Corinth, not a family.** He is addressing a group of Christians “gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus.” (verse 4) The direction to limit social interaction, i.e. “not even eating with such a man” therefore applies to congregation members. Extending such a strong edict even into the family circle is excessive, and contradicts other Bible verses, including Paul’s own follow-up words on the same situation. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he instructs them to extend more mercy to the wrongdoer in question, saying, “This rebuke given **by the majority** is sufficient for such a man.”—2 Cor. 2:6, bold ours.
- **Even the organization acknowledges that excluding all social contact with a wrongdoer is unfeasible in certain situations.** For example, a Christian husband or wife is not to shun their sinful spouse, and Christian parents are not to shun children who are too young to leave home. The organization understands that nuance is needed in interpreting Paul’s words—they just don’t go far enough.

- Notice that Paul emphasizes six characteristics that would make someone worthy of removal from the congregation: sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness and extortion. Jehovah’s Witnesses who are elders will know that the *Shepherd the Flock of God* manual (which ordinary members are barred from reading) devotes many pages to codifying what behavior constitutes sexual immorality (or *por-nei’a*). By contrast, as of 2025 the rules on the actual *crime* of stealing (of which extortion is a form) are limited to a single sentence: “Though all stealing is wrong, the body of elders should use discernment in weighing the circumstances and the extent of the wrongdoing to determine whether a committee is needed.” (sfg, Appendix A) So **Paul’s six sinful acts warranting removal do not receive equal scrutiny or censure among Jehovah’s Witnesses.**



Where there is ambiguity in how a scripture offering guidance on dealing with wrongdoers should be interpreted, is it more Christ-like to lean towards mercy or harsher discipline?



“Go, then, and learn what this means: ‘I want mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners.”—Matt. 9:13.

When we look beyond Paul’s counsel to the Corinthians, we find the Greek Scriptures consistently emphasize forgiveness and redemption rather than punishment. Elsewhere, the apostle Paul urges those with spiritual qualifications

to “try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness,” while reminding Christians to “carry the burdens of one another.”—Gal. 6:1, 2.

When revisiting the case of the wrongdoer in Corinth, Paul expresses some regret (“For I have made up my mind not to come to you again in sadness.”) and warns that discipline should not go so far that the removed brother is “overwhelmed by excessive sadness,” urging the congregation instead to “kindly forgive and comfort him” and to “confirm” their love. (2 Cor. 2:1, 7, 8) Those passages describe a corrective process rooted in empathy and care, not mandatory ostracism.

EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL

Jehovah’s Witness publications openly acknowledge that the emotional turmoil caused by shunning is part of how it functions. *Watchtower* study articles routinely emphasize that the severing of family bonds may “motivate” removed ones to change their course.



“Robert was disfellowshipped for nearly 16 years, during which time his parents and siblings firmly and loyally applied the direction in God’s Word to quit mixing in company with wrongdoers, not even greeting such ones. . . . When asked what moved him to return to Jehovah and His people after such a long time, he replied that the stand that his family took affected him. ‘Had my family associated with me even a little, say to check up on me, that small dose of association would have satisfied me and likely not allowed my desire for association to

be a motivating factor to return to God.’”—w13 6/15 p. 28, bold ours.

In practical terms, this means that the pain caused by lost relationships is not an unfortunate side effect, but an intended mechanism. When emotional suffering is deliberately weaponized to compel conformity, it becomes difficult to explain away the practice as purely loving.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

The psychological effects of shunning are well documented. We humans are social creatures for whom family bonds are more than simply a convenience—they are part of our identity. Even momentary ostracism by someone we barely know can spark feelings of deep unease, because it triggers our primal instincts to nurture or reestablish bonds as a survival necessity.

Being suddenly cut off from family, friends, and an entire social identity can result in profound isolation, anxiety, depression, and a sense of worthlessness. For some, the stress has contributed to suicidal thoughts, which in a number of instances has led to lives being tragically cut short. While not every case can be attributed to a single cause, it is undeniable that **mandatory shunning is a serious threat to mental health and therefore an abusive practice.**

HAVEN’T THINGS IMPROVED RECENTLY?

In 2024, the organization introduced modest adjustments to its language and procedures surrounding disfellowshipping, which is now referred to as “removal.” Reinstatement periods are now shorter (months instead of years). The bar for mea-

sureing “repentance” in wrongdoers has been lowered. And Jehovah’s Witnesses are now permitted to invite former members to congregation meetings and say a “brief greeting” to them when they step inside the Kingdom Hall.

Those changes have been presented as evidence of increased mercy and compassion. Yet for those who leave on conscientious grounds, the real-world impact has been minimal.

Normal family relationships remain conditional and meaningful social contact is still largely prohibited. The underlying message remains unchanged: compliance restores relationships; non-compliance with the faithful slave’s authority will sever them.

WHAT HAPPENED IN NORWAY?

Most governments remain oblivious to the psychological cruelty of mandatory shunning by religious groups like Jehovah’s Witnesses, but that indifference is slowly yielding to closer legal scrutiny.

In Norway, government authorities concluded that Jehovah’s Witnesses’ exclusion practices conflicted with national laws protecting individual rights, particularly those of children. As a result, the organization was denied state funding for the 2021 subsidy year (reported at approximately 16 million Norwegian kroner, or roughly \$1.5 million [U.S.]), and its registration as a religious community was subsequently challenged. Those decisions became the subject of extensive legal proceedings, moving through multiple levels of Norway’s court system.

By late 2025, the dispute had reached the country’s Supreme Court with hear-

ings in February 2026, ensuring that the final outcome would be determined at the highest judicial level. Regardless of how the case ultimately concludes, one fact remains clear: **shunning was considered sufficiently harmful to warrant government intervention.** That intervention was not an attack on religious belief, but a response to practices objectively viewed as coercive and damaging to family life.



“By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves.”—John 13:35.



Can it honestly be said that the words of Jesus in John 13:35 apply to Jehovah’s Witnesses if government authorities feel compelled to intervene over cruel, unloving teachings and practices?

CONCLUSION

Mandatory shunning as practiced by Jehovah’s Witnesses is not just unbiblical, flying in the face of repeated calls for mercy and compassion towards sinners—it constitutes a form of psychological abuse. Even worldly governments are beginning to realize this.

A religion grounded in love does not need to threaten abandonment. It does not rely on emotional blackmail to sustain loyalty. And it does not turn family bonds into instruments of punishment.

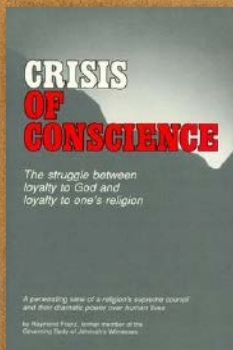
If a practice depends on fear of loss to function, it is worth asking whether it reflects divine wisdom—or human control.

DID YOU KNOW?

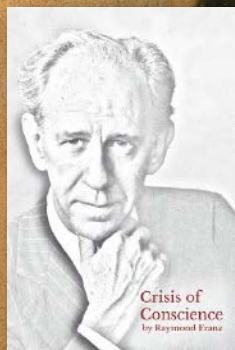
In the early 1980's, following the publication of *Crisis of Conscience* by former Governing Body member Raymond Franz, it emerged that the Watchtower headquarters had approved different standards of political neutrality depending on geography.

Internal correspondence showed that in Mexico, male Witnesses were permitted to obtain military identity cards through falsified declarations, claiming to have completed service in order to avoid legal penalties—a practice that also placed them in the country's military reserve.

At the same time in Malawi, Witnesses were forbidden from purchasing a mandatory political party card in a one-party, authoritarian state. Their refusal, enforced by organizational policy, resulted in beatings, rape, imprisonment, and led to thousands of Witnesses seeking refugee status. The contrast revealed a troubling double standard shaped not by Scripture, but by organizational expediency.



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SECTION 5

Blood —When Doctrine Costs Lives



“But the people flew greedily upon the spoil and took sheep and cattle and calves and slaughtered them on the ground, and the people ate them with the blood.”

—1 SAMUEL 14:32

In this account, King Saul’s soldiers violate the Mosaic Law by eating meat with the blood still in it. They do so not out of rebellion, but because they are exhausted and starving after battle.

Remarkably, Watchtower literature has long acknowledged that Jehovah did not

condemn those men for their actions. A *Watchtower* article explained that Saul’s soldiers acted under “a desperate situation,” and therefore their conduct was excused.—w94 4/15 p. 31.

This raises an obvious and troubling question: why does the same mercy not

apply today when Jehovah's Witnesses face a truly desperate situation—one involving life-saving medical treatment?

THE REASONING BEHIND THE RULE

Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that receiving someone else's blood for medical reasons violates God's law. The basis for that belief is the Bible's repeated prohibition against eating blood, particularly in Leviticus chapter 17, and the instruction given to first-century Christians to "keep abstaining from blood."—Acts 15:29.

However, the Bible writers could not possibly have had blood transfusions in mind. The medical use of blood did not exist until the nineteenth century. To equate a modern intravenous procedure with the ancient practice of eating blood requires an interpretation that goes far beyond anything stated in Scripture.

Even so, Watchtower insists that accepting blood from others is a serious sin—one that can result in disassociation from the congregation and shunning if the person does not express repentance.

LOYALTY ABOVE LIFE

Jehovah's Witnesses are repeatedly told that loyalty to God takes priority over life itself. That message has been reinforced through talks, articles, and dramatizations portraying those who refuse blood as courageous examples of faith.

Yet the organization's own publications reveal an unsettling inconsistency. When Biblical figures broke the Law under pressure, mercy was shown. When modern Witnesses face pressure far greater—the imminent loss of life—mercy is withheld.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Jewish law, there is a long-established principle known as *pikuach nefesh*, which holds that the preservation of human life overrides almost all other religious commandments.

That principle was already recognized in Jesus' time. When criticized by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath, Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of valuing rules over life, asking whether it was lawful to save a life on the Sabbath rather than let it be lost. (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17) His argument was clear: God's law was never meant to cause preventable harm.

Because of that principle, observant Jewish communities today—who take the Mosaic Law very seriously—accept blood transfusions when they are medically necessary, viewing them as life-saving treatment rather than a violation of dietary law.

This raises an important question: If preserving life can override dietary restrictions in both Jewish law and according to Jesus' own reasoning, why is no such allowance made for Jehovah's Witnesses facing life-threatening medical emergencies today?

The result is a system in which obedience is prized more highly than survival, and where dying for doctrine is framed as a spiritual victory.

CHILDREN AND COERCION

The blood doctrine becomes especially disturbing when applied to children. For

decades, Watchtower publications have celebrated young Jehovah's Witnesses who died refusing blood transfusions.

An entire issue of the *Awake!* magazine, dated May 22, 1994, was devoted to such cases, presenting them as heroic examples of faith. In those accounts, children were praised for choosing death over treatment, ignoring the fact that they were doing so under intense pressure from parents, elders, the fear of losing God's approval, and the dread of being punished for unfaithfulness at Armageddon.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to religious coercion. They trust their parents and accept what they are told, particularly when instructions carry the potential penalty of future execution. To place a child in a position where refusing medical care is framed as the only faithful option is not an expression of free choice—it's indoctrination with lethal consequences.

A HISTORY OF MEDICAL ERROR

The blood prohibition did not emerge from careful Biblical scholarship. It arose during a period when Watchtower leadership routinely promoted medical misinformation.

At various times, Jehovah's Witnesses were forbidden from receiving vaccinations. Organ transplants were once condemned as cannibalism. Those bans were later reversed, but only after almost inevitable suffering and death.

The situation with blood is different. The organization cannot abandon the doctrine outright without taking responsibility for lives lost over many decades. Instead, it has gradually modified the rules to grant

some wiggle room without any sound moral or Biblical arguments.

FRACTIONS AND THE USE OF STORED BLOOD

In the year 2000, Watchtower introduced a distinction between the four "major components" of blood (red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and plasma) and smaller "fractions." While whole blood and its primary components remained forbidden, certain derivatives were permitted as a matter of personal conscience.

This change, though potentially life-saving, highlighted inconsistencies. If blood is sacred and belongs exclusively to God, why is it acceptable to use parts of

DID YOU KNOW?

Hemoglobin is the protein in red blood cells responsible for transporting oxygen throughout the body. It accounts for over 15% of total blood volume and performs the blood's most vital function. It is the reason blood is red.

Under current Watchtower policy, Jehovah's Witnesses are forbidden from receiving red blood cells—yet they may accept hemoglobin-based products if these are sufficiently processed and classified as "fractions."

In other words, the main substance that makes blood work is permitted, while the natural structure that safely carries it through the body is not. That distinction has no basis in Scripture. It's like forbidding candy, but allowing it if the candy is first taken out of its wrapper.

it but not the whole? How does dividing blood into smaller components change its moral significance?

More recently, in 2026, Jehovah's Witnesses were permitted to use their own blood if it is collected and stored for later medical use. Presented as a "clarification," this adjustment introduces significant practical limitations. Blood components have a short shelf life, and modern health-care systems are not designed to maintain personal reserves of blood for unpredictable emergencies. In reality, such provisions are only useful in limited, planned medical situations.

As with the earlier change regarding fractions, this adjustment has been framed as a matter of personal conscience. Yet for many Witnesses, such ambiguity does not feel like freedom—it feels like danger. When eternal life is believed to be at stake, uncertainty encourages caution. As a result, many continue to refuse all blood-based treatments, even those that are technically permitted.

THE DEATH TOLL

Reliable global statistics are difficult to obtain, but independent medical studies

have shown that Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse blood face significantly higher mortality rates in certain emergencies.

Behind every statistic is a human story: parents, siblings, children, and spouses left to grapple with the knowledge that a life might have been saved if only for a simple procedure—but wasn't.

Doctors and medical workers frequently report deep distress when treating Witness patients whose deaths they believe were preventable. Families are often praised for their "faith," even as they absorb irreversible and unfathomable loss.

A QUESTION OF CONSCIENCE

It is often said that adult Jehovah's Witnesses have the right to refuse medical treatment, and do so out of personal choice. That may be true, but meaningful choice requires full information, freedom from threats or coercion, and the absence of catastrophic social penalties.

When refusal is tied to fear of shunning, loss of family, and potential future divine execution, the line between conscience and compulsion disappears.

CONCLUSION

The Bible condemns cruelty, not compassion. It values mercy over sacrifice and life over ritual. Yet the blood doctrine demands absolute obedience, even when it leads to avoidable death—a standard stricter than that applied to Biblical figures themselves.



If a desperate situation once excused breaking a dietary law, why does an even more desperate situation today condemn someone to lose their life?

That question deserves an honest answer, especially when lives are at stake.



DID YOU KNOW?

For nearly a decade (1992-2001), the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was registered as an official non-governmental organization (NGO) associated with the United Nations—an organization it had long condemned in its literature as part of the prophesied “wild beast” of Revelation. NGO association required formal support for UN principles and the dissemination of positive information about its activities. During this period, a number of favorable articles about the UN appeared in Watchtower publications.

When the relationship was exposed publicly by the *Guardian* newspaper, Watchtower abruptly withdrew its NGO status, later claiming it had been obtained solely for library access—an explanation directly contradicted by the UN itself. Rank-and-file Witnesses, who continue to face discipline for far lesser breaches of so-called “Christian neutrality,” were never informed of the affiliation at the time.

Jehovah's Witnesses link to UN queried

Sect accused of hypocrisy over association with organisation it has demonised

Stephen Bates Religious affairs correspondent

The United Nations is being asked to investigate why it has granted associate status to the Jehovah's Witnesses, the fundamentalist US-based Christian sect, which regards it as the scarier beast predicted in the Book of Revelation.

Disaffected members of the 6m strong group, which has 120,000 followers in the UK, have accused the Witnesses' elderly governing body of hypocrisy in secretly accepting links with an organisation that they continue to denounce in apocalyptic terms.

The UN itself admitted yesterday that it was surprised that the sect, whose formal name is the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, had been accepted on its list of non-governmental organisations for the last 10 years.

A former member said:

"There is a glaring inconsistency which has emerged between the WITNESS's frequent portrayal of the UN as an evil organisation and its behind-the-scenes attempts to curry favour with that organisation. Were individual members to be aware of any formal link they would be devastated."

"By no stretch of the imagination could the WITNESS be considered to share the ideals of the UN charter unless you suppose that destruction of the UN by God is consistent with that charter."

The Witnesses, most frequently encountered by non-members when they attempt to make doorstep conversions, have faced accusations of bad faith before.

These have been most notably over the hierarchy's insistence that members should not accept blood transfusions and over accusations that sexual abuse of children by Witnesses' ministers in the US have been covered up.

Followers who criticise the Witnesses' leaders or question their decisions are routinely "disfellowshipped" — which means fellow members including their families must shun them.

An obscure and ill-publicised decision by the hierarchy

in New York last year modifying the prohibition on transfusions by deeming that God had revealed to them that transfusions of some blood components might be acceptable, providing there was later repentance, have been too late for many hundreds of followers known to have died because they refused blood.

In child abuse cases, the hierarchy insists there must be two independent witnesses — an almost impossible stipulation — before accusations are investigated.

The Watchtower Society has been denouncing the UN and its predecessor the League of Nations for 80 years, believing them to be a world empire of false religion, predicted in the Book of Revelation.

A recent publication since the organisation obtained its recognition describes the UN as "a disgusting thing in the sight of God and his people".

In an internal document, the WITNESS describes its policy as a "theocratic war strategy". It claims: "In time of spiritual warfare it is proper to misdirect the enemy by hiding the truth. It is done unselfishly; it does not harm anyone; on the contrary it does much good."

Being a recognised NGO with the United Nations — as

more than 1,500 organisations are — gives status though not grants.

To qualify, organisations must show that they share the ideals of the charter, operate on a non-profit basis, "demonstrate interest in UN issues and proven ability to reach large or specialised audiences" and have the commitment and means to conduct effective information programmes about UN activities.

Disaffected Witnesses believe that the association, which has not been publicised to followers, is intended to increase the cult's respectability to sceptical governments, such as France's, which have refused to recognise it.

Paul Gillies, the Witnesses' spokesman in Britain, said: "We do not have hostile attitudes to governing bodies and if we are making representations on issues to the UN we will do so."

"There are good and bad bodies just as there are good and bad politicians. We believe what the Book of Revelation tells us but we do not actively try to change the political system."

A spokeswoman for the UN said: "I think we may not be aware of their attitude, which seems to be really strange."

The article was published in the October 8, 2001, issue of "The Guardian"



SECTION 6

Child Abuse —Why They Keep Getting It Wrong



“No single witness should rise up against a man respecting any error or any sin . . . At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses the matter should stand good.”

—DEUTERONOMY 19:15

The above scripture lies at the heart of Jehovah’s Witnesses’ handling of child sexual abuse. Known widely as the “two-witness rule,” it’s presented as a timeless safeguard against false accusation. In practice, however, it has proved catastrophically ill-suited to cases of child abuse.

Sexual abuse of children is almost never committed in front of eye witnesses. It happens behind closed doors under a veil of se-

crecy and intimidation. A policy demanding third-party corroboration beyond the testimony of the child therefore functions not as a protection, but as a barrier—one that systematically impedes action, allowing harm to spread.

This suits sexual predators exceptionally well, giving them multiple loopholes to exploit if discovered. A large group with a significant number of children and young

people that enforces a culture of secrecy with a high bar for determining guilt is their perfect hunting ground.

Over time, mounting legal defeats and sustained media scrutiny have forced Jehovah's Witnesses to modify how they describe their approach to child protection. Some modest changes have been made. What has not changed is the underlying structure.

Despite public assurances that the organization "abhors child abuse" and "recognizes it as a crime," elders are still required to contact the legal department for permission to report abuse to authorities, effectively making lawyers the gatekeepers of whether crimes against children are investigated or prosecuted. This alone places institutional self-interest in direct conflict with child safety.

The existence of a confidential internal database of alleged abusers is no longer disputed. Elders are instructed to carefully document allegations, confessions, and disciplinary outcomes, yet this sensitive criminal information is routinely withheld from police unless reporting is explicitly mandated by law.

In 2019, Jehovah's Witnesses went so far as to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States to preserve their right to keep such records confidential rather than disclose them in litigation. Their appeal was unsuccessful.



Why would an organization dedicated to truth and upholding moral cleanness fight so aggressively to keep records of child abuse secret?

Publicly, Jehovah's Witnesses now emphasize that victims or parents are "free

to report" abuse themselves. This wording appears repeatedly in official statements such as *Jehovah's Witnesses' Scripturally Based Position on Child Protection*. But privately, on a congregation level, there are numerous cultural roadblocks to parents acting on this freedom, such as:

The portrayal of elders as divinely appointed shepherds tasked with handling wrongdoing.

The suspicion and distrust with which secular authorities, supposedly under Satanic influence, are viewed.

The repeated counsel against insisting on one's personal rights, as highlighted in a 2003 *Awake!* article: "On the other hand, loyal Christians would not insist on their **personal rights** to the detriment of the consciences of others or at the expense of **congregation unity**."—*g03* 5/8 p. 27, bold ours.

The framing of loyalty to the organization as loyalty to God, regardless of what may "appear practical from a human standpoint"—*w13* 11/15 p. 20.

Telling parents they "may" report abuse in this cultural context is therefore not a neutral act. It concedes that involving police is optional while subtly keeping reporting a potentially "worldly" overreaction, or spiritually undesirable. As with the blood teaching and its "fractions" allowance, a parent or victim placed in such a situation will often choose to err on the side of caution.

The organization's position becomes even more troubling in jurisdictions without mandatory reporting laws, or where

clergy-penitent exemptions apply. In such cases, Jehovah's Witnesses make no commitment to report abuse proactively. Reporting occurs only when legally unavoidable. The moral obligation to protect children is thus reduced to a question of **legal** exposure rather than **ethical** responsibility. Despite multiple opportunities to dispense with it in cases involving child abuse, as of now the two-witness rule remains firmly in place.

Some defenders point to a so-called "two-victim rule," but this merely allows testimony from multiple victims of the same abuser to be combined. In practical terms, it means that a second child must be abused before action can be taken—reducing their pain and trauma to part of an evidence-gathering process. No modern safeguarding framework would tolerate such a standard. Yet Jehovah's Witnesses continue to insist that this approach is Biblically required—even though child abuse, by its nature, defies such evidentiary demands.

ELDERS USED AS PROBATION OFFICERS

Even when the two-witness rule is satisfied and abusers are disciplined internally, elders are then tasked with monitoring their interaction with minors after reinstatement. This places untrained volunteers in the role of informal probation officers, responsible for policing the movements of known or confessed abusers within congregations that include children.

Whether parents are informed is at the discretion of the elders or the branch. Restrictions may or may not be enforced by elders who are often already stretched with

DID YOU KNOW?

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse examined Jehovah's Witnesses as Case Studies 29 and 54. It revealed that the organization had maintained records on **1,006 alleged perpetrators** of child sexual abuse in Australia alone between 1950 and 2014—and not one had been reported to police by the branch or elders. Governing Body member **Geoffrey Jackson**, testifying under oath, gave vague and misleading answers on organizational policy and admitted it would be "presumptuous" to claim Jehovah's Witnesses are the only organization used by God (the footage can be found easily on YouTube).

various other tasks and assignments. What is certain is that responsibility for safeguarding is shifted away from professionals and onto men whose primary training is religious, not clinical or legal.

SIN FIRST—CRIME SECOND

Underlying all of this is the organization's persistent framing of child sexual abuse primarily as a **sin**. Crimes are filtered through a spiritual lens. Repentance, forgiveness, and redemption are emphasized alongside—or sometimes above—legal and criminal justice and accountability.

While Jehovah's Witnesses insist that forgiveness does not erase consequences, their policies repeatedly allow abusers to regain standing within the congregation. The message conveyed to victims is deeply conflicted: the harm they suffered is ac-

knowledge, but the person who caused it should be welcomed back as their spiritual brother.

MULTIPLE POLICIES FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

A careful reading of the May 2019 *Watchtower* reveals how language is used to manage perception rather than convey policy. Articles speak of compassion, education, and abhorrence of abuse, yet stop short of instructing elders to report all allegations directly to authorities. Instead, responsibility is subtly displaced onto parents, victims, or legal institutions. Members are fed a skillfully crafted message intended to reassure them while preserving internal control.

The resulting ambiguity is not accidental. There appears to be not one unified child abuse policy, but several:

For the media and courts, there is the *Scripturally Based Position* document, emphasizing compliance and concern.

For ordinary publishers, there are articles like the May 2019 *Watchtower*, carefully worded to avoid uncomfortable details.

For elders, there is the *Shepherd the Flock of God* book and confidential branch correspondence, where legal consultation and discretion are stressed.

Each audience receives a different version of the truth.



If the Jehovah's Witness policy on handling child sexual abuse is Bible-based, why are there multiple versions of it for different audiences, some of which are concealed from ordinary members?

CONCLUSION

Jehovah's Witnesses often respond to criticism by pointing out that policies have changed over time. That is true—but only in response to sustained external pressure. Legal judgments, government inquiries, and investigative journalism have forced gradual shifts in tone and presentation. What has not changed is the organization's rigid devotion to the two-witness rule and refusal to relinquish control over reporting, evidence, and narrative.

Child abuse is not just a theological problem. It is not purely a matter of doctrinal interpretation or congregational discipline. It is a **serious crime** requiring immediate reporting, professional investigation, and survivor-focused care. Any system that prioritizes institutional reputation, internal process, or religious authority over child safety is not merely unloving and flawed—it is dangerous.

Until Jehovah's Witnesses abandon the two-witness rule in abuse cases, remove legal departments from the reporting process, open their records to authorities, and unequivocally treat child sexual abuse as a crime first and foremost, their assurances and statements of abhorrence will remain hollow. Policies written to protect children must be judged not by their wording, but by their outcomes. And the outcomes, as documented across multiple countries and decades, speak for themselves.



SECTION 7

Thought Stoppers



“When wisdom enters your heart and knowledge becomes pleasant to your soul, thinking ability will keep watch over you, and discernment will safeguard you.”

—PROVERBS 2:10, 11

As we have seen, Jehovah’s Witness teachings and policies do not hold up to Biblical or logical scrutiny on closer inspection. Well-meaning believers will therefore commonly give a number of thought-stopping defensive remarks to bypass or shut down any criticism or “negative speech.” Here are a few examples:

DEFENSE	ANSWER
“Jehovah’s Witnesses are the only group that (1) is preaching in all the inhabited earth, (2) doesn’t go to war, and (3) uses Jehovah’s name in worship.”	Firstly, the claim itself is misleading. (1) Jehovah’s Witnesses are present in North and South America, Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa, but statistically almost absent in North Africa, the Middle East and large parts of Asia (apparently Jehovah favors certain regions and continents in deciding who survives Armageddon). (2) Jehovah’s Witnesses are certainly not the only group promoting pacifism. For example, Jainism teaches non-violence to such an extreme that even insects are not to be harmed. (3) The name “Jehovah” is used by other Christian denominations, although admittedly not as prolifically because the scholarly consensus is that “Yahweh” is the most accurate rendering of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton (YHWH).

DEFENSE	ANSWER
	Secondly, the claim presupposes that only by satisfying a set of parameters determined by Jehovah’s Witnesses based on their preexisting teachings can any group lay claim to be God’s exclusive channel with mankind. This is known as “circular reasoning” and is tantamount to a student grading their own homework. Thirdly, even if all the stated claims were true, that would not make Jehovah’s Witnesses God’s sole channel with mankind by default. As Jesus reportedly said, “Many will say to me in that day: ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?’ And then I will declare to them: ‘I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!’”—Matt. 7:22, 23.
“Even if JW beliefs aren’t true, it’s still the best way of life.”	By making this defense, the person is accepting that (1) their beliefs may not be true, at least hypothetically, and (2) whether their beliefs are <i>actually true</i> is less important to them than living optimally. This alone should invite some introspection. Nobody can objectively claim that theirs is “the best way of life” since nobody has lived all possible lives. It’s inevitable that a religion will promote itself as the best way of life just as a car manufacturer will promote their latest car as the best car. What matters most is <i>evidence</i>, not hyperbole. When factoring in the track record of Jehovah’s Witnesses (i.e. the dismantling of families through shunning, the systemic mishandling of child abuse, the blood prohibition, etc.) the so-called “best life ever” can very quickly become a life of tight control, misery or (in certain medical situations) a life that is tragically cut short.
“I’d probably be dead if I weren’t one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.”	We all make decisions, large and small, on a daily basis according to “unexpected events” befalling us. (Eccl. 9:11) Nobody can say for sure how their lives would have turned out if they had or hadn’t made a certain decision, or followed a certain path. The very fact that so many people we encounter daily are not just alive but leading <i>healthy, moral lives</i>, despite not being Jehovah’s Witnesses, makes it obvious that failure to follow the teachings of the “faithful slave” does not mean one’s life will end prematurely—nor does it condemn a person to a life of debauchery and destitution.

DEFENSE	ANSWER
“Apostates are just angry and bitter. They want to ruin my faith in Jehovah.”	It’s true that many apostates (people who leave Jehovah’s Witnesses) <i>are</i> angry and bitter. In most cases this is because they continue to be traumatized by their experiences in the organization for the reasons outlined in this brochure. Anger is a normal, healthy response to being hurt, or having one’s trust betrayed. It compels us to avoid getting hurt again. Though sometimes manifested in unhealthy ways, anger alone is not a valid reason to dismiss someone’s lived experiences or efforts to warn others, especially if these can be backed up by hard evidence. Ask yourself: “If Jehovah’s Witnesses were a harmful group, how would I know?” It’s reasonable to assume that some would escape such a group and then be anxious to reach out to those still inside. We can also expect any such “apostates” to be demonized by the organization as bitter, dishonest, or even “mentally diseased.”—<i>w11 7/15</i> p. 16 While some apostates do, unfortunately, live up to the ranting, unhinged stereotype promoted by the organization, not all do. Some are content to simply walk away and never say a word to their former brothers. Others, motivated by love and compassion for their believing friends and family members, cannot help but offer tactful guidance and support. Ultimately, whether you are ready or willing to challenge your beliefs is for you to decide. Nobody should pressure you <i>either way</i>, whether through threats, anger, or any form of coercion.
“The Governing Body has never claimed to be perfect.”	It’s certainly true that the Governing Body has insisted they are “neither inspired nor infallible.” (<i>w17.02</i> p. 26) This should give us even more reason to scrutinize their lofty claim to being Jehovah’s “channel for guiding his worshippers today” (<i>w23.01</i> p. 7), since any group of flawed, fallible religious leaders can make such a claim. If we were to follow any charismatic leader or movement claiming to have God’s backing <i>while admitting they are imperfect</i> we would be overwhelmed with options, since there is a vast number from which to choose. The only real way to know for sure is through fair and honest scrutiny of their words and actions. If any leader or group dissuades such scrutiny, or tries to shut down criticism, that should tell us something.



What Do I Do Now?



“Simon Peter answered him: ‘Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.’”

—JOHN 6:68

The above verse is often recited as a thought-stopping statement; a rhetorical dead end. You’ve likely heard it used to suggest that outside the organization there’s only spiritual darkness—nowhere else to go, nothing else to believe, no meaning in life. The implication is subtle but powerful: *stay, or lose everything.*

But notice what the verse actually says—and to whom it is addressed.

Peter is speaking directly to **Jesus**—not to an organization, not to a publishing cor-

poration, and not to one of the countless Christian movements throughout history that have boldly claimed to speak exclusively in his name. The verse does not say, “Where else shall we go?” It says, “*Whom shall we go away to?*” The focus is on a *person*, not an institution.

Over time, that distinction has often been blurred. Loyalty to Christ has been quietly redefined as loyalty to an organization, and doubt or curiosity has been framed as moral failure, pride, or spiritual

decay. This is where fear is introduced: fear of isolation, fear of meaninglessness, fear of becoming a dreaded “apostate.”

But rejecting coercion is not a sin. Honestly questioning claims is not bitterness. Bravely walking away on conscientious grounds is not proof of wickedness or moral collapse. The caricature of the wicked “apostate” exists to shut down thought, not to protect truth.

You are allowed to examine ideas. **You are allowed to change your mind.** You are allowed to believe differently—or not believe at all—without surrendering your integrity, principles, compassion, or capacity for goodness.

There is no spiritual rule that says your worth is measured by adherence to a single group’s interpretation of reality. There is no divine requirement to outsource your decision-making. And there is no mandate—

Biblical or otherwise—to remain where fear is the primary tool of persuasion.

What you do next is for you to decide.

No one is stopping you from staying as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and no one *should* stop you from leaving. You may decide to explore faith in a new way, revisit old questions, or set religious belief aside entirely. None of those paths make you broken, dangerous, or lost. You have not strayed just by asking questions. You are enough.



“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”—John 8:32.

If there is truth, it should not rely on intimidation to survive. If there is meaning, it cannot be monopolized. You are (and always have been) free to choose—without pressure, without labels, and without fear.

Dedicated to Jessica and Julia

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Give yourself permission to challenge your beliefs

Truth matters. Most of us prefer to embrace as many true beliefs as possible while rejecting as many untrue beliefs as possible.

The only way to overcome nagging doubts and have confidence that your beliefs are really true is to subject them to honest scrutiny. This can feel daunting, perhaps even terrifying. But remember: truth has nothing to hide. It does not fear scrutiny or criticism—it welcomes it.

This brochure will help you examine your beliefs objectively using only the facts, and reach an informed decision as to whether you really have “the truth.”



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