

Jehovah’s Witnesses

- Opening comments
 - **Don’t forget to pray to open up the time!**
 - For today’s class, we’re largely going to be covering what JW’s believe. I’ll be explaining their arguments for these beliefs. They’re wrong on nearly every single red tag doctrine that you can come up with but we’re going to counter their arguments and put forth what the Bible actually says in next week’s class.
 - I’m also not going to be able to cover some other issues that they often get criticized for. These are going to be issues such as their abusive use of shunning as a form of ‘church discipline,’ dis-fellowshipping (which goes along with shunning), interrogations by a 3 member elder panel for suspected/known sin, the hiding of child abusers, and how they have changed the theology over time while denying any such changes have occurred.
 - It’s not that these issues aren’t important, because they are actually very important, it’s just that this is already a long and dense teaching and I won’t have time for it. Just know that it is bad and is why they are considered a cult in the normal, not theological, sense of the word to the general public.
 - So... who are Jehovah’s Witnesses? I mean, as individuals, not just as an organization
 - JW’s are normal people! Don’t allow the stereotype of JW’s dissuade you from engaging with them, whether it’s at your front door, at the park, or in your workplace. (The stereotype is that they are a ‘cult’ (not theological definition) of unblinking robots incapable of critical thinking.
 - Distrust of outsiders is what separates them from society, not the lack of critical thinking
 - I’ve been to a couple Kingdom Hall services and as I said, they’re normal people in the same way that people are here in this church or whatever church you’re in if you’re listening online
 - They are sincere in their faith (most anyways)
 - The front rows are empty and the back rows are loaded just like how you see anywhere else there is a gathering! I find this quite humorous
 - They tell jokes... for example an elder had to zoom into the meeting for a part of the service he was responsible for and made a joke about having to “zoom” through his message because he only had 5 minutes... people laughed
 - While chatting, a guy told a story about somebody had to always be helping him adjust his tie at services when he was a boy. Ironically, his tie was a little crooked and somebody standing next to him adjusted it for him... people laughed about it
 - They wear formal attire to their services by the way... when I showed up at their service I was wearing work pants and a Dunder

Mifflin T-shirt. Several of them had clearly seen The Office and commented on my shirt

- During the services, they also have somebody practice witnessing so that others can share feedback and help them improve. I watched a guy practicing witnessing to somebody who said that God isn’t real because of evil in the world. The guy was clearly nervous to be up in front of people... the same as most people in your church would be too. They are people and have thoughts, opinions, and feelings just like all of us
- Yes, they have false beliefs but they’re still people. People who God loves and wants to see saved. If they die as JW’s, they will go to hell. That’s real. That’s serious. I hope that this dive into what JW’s believe and how to engage with them will help you to see that and be willing to reach out to them when they come knocking on your door... cuz that’s one of the nice things about them, they come to you!
- There is a general paranoia about outside groups that is unhealthy that is very common
- You’re going to be hearing me saying a lot of nice things about JW’s and might be confused about that... it’s because I think that those things are true, of course, but it’s also because I’m trying to help you see the appeal of it and why people join their organization, stay, and find fulfillment in it. I am NOT endorsing their religion! They are a FALSE church whose teachings DO NOT lead to salvation! Believe me, I’ll have plenty of bad things to say about them as well.
- They have a real zeal for God but do not worship God according to the truth
 - They make some major doctrinal errors but desire God
 - I believe that they are sincere in their faith
 - Part of the stereotype for JW’s is that they don’t really care about talking with you because they’re just doing it to gain enough points to make it into heaven. I’m sure that this is true for some but largely I think that they’re sincere about it.
 - Undoubtedly, they are pushed into doing it by the organization but that does not make them unwilling participants! They are disciplined and will go out door knocking even if they don’t feel like it. This may seem odd to some of us because we generally live undisciplined lives. ☺ They’re kind of like people who join the military. You learn to do things that you may not want to do even though you may even enjoy it (such as PT (physical training) in the morning). I’m not trying to say that joining the JW’s is like joining the military.... Just trying to draw a specific analogy.
- I’ve been to a couple Kingdom Hall meetings and have personally chatted with several JW’s

- The whole session is mostly dedicated to studying the Bible (albeit, shallowly and entirely from the Watchtower perspective) and very heavily focused on application
 - This harkens back to the way they were founded. We’ll talk about this in a little bit.
- They’re honest about their beliefs up front—they’re not trying to deceive you to get you into the door and then reveal their true doctrines after they’ve gotten you in deep enough (like MORMONS!—we’ll talk about this next time when we talk about Mormonism)
 - For example, they specifically invited me to attend a meeting where they knew the Trinity was going to be discussed
 - You can find a clear list of what they believe and what “classical” doctrines they deny on their website, JW.org
- They’ve never watered down a service or their message when talking with me. I REALLY appreciated this. They show real conviction in their beliefs and, frankly, it is appealing.
 - CAVEAT: They do hide how some of their doctrines have changed over time. They just don’t hide their current beliefs, which generally have held true since the beginning.
- JW’s actually do use the Bible for a lot of their doctrines. They generally start out really well on almost every doctrine.... But then manage to fall off the rails at the end. Every. Single. Time. We’ll see this over and over again as we go through their beliefs.
 - In fact, I could take whole articles written by JW’s on a variety of issues and share them with this whole church and they would likely be considered relevant and even helpful. There will always be plenty of Bible verses quoted (in proper context even). Go ahead and look up their articles on abortion or school shootings for reference. I might even consider them to be good, Christian articles. However...
 - Let me add a caveat to that statement. Yes, these articles are good and “biblical” but unfortunately, are devoid of the Gospel.
 - They also always end up pointing to their unique eschatology... which is a Frankenstein monster of amillennialism and premillennialism dressed up in bad Christology
- If you ever attend a JW meeting, you will typically see that it really is a Bible study of sorts. The thrust of the meeting is that you sing some worship songs, somebody teaches from the Bible, they practice witnessing, and they offer prayers to God (Jehovah).
- They have fairly conservative values such as believing in family, are against abortion, homosexuality, etc. But don’t participate in some aspects of society such as voting and military service and don’t celebrate holidays. Ironically, they are actually very good citizens in whatever country they are in.
- I had a friend who was a JW in high school (still is as far as I know). Once it was discovered that he was a JW, his parents pulled him out of school and began home

- schooling him. I saw him quite rarely after that. He invited me to an Easter service about a year or so after I became a believer, which I attended. I spoke with one of the elders there, at my friend’s request. That was the last time I saw him, though I do think about him often.
- They work hard at evangelism. I saw them all the time in Phoenix. They would often hang out at the libraries handing out Watch Tower magazines. They go door-to-door several times a week. They walk through parks and engage with people. You’ve probably been approached by one yourself actually.
 - There are MILLIONS of them. And, like I just mentioned, they knock on your door. What do you say when this happens? That is what we’re going to learn in this class!
- They are an insulated social community
- This makes them a bit more like our general conceptions of a cult as opposed to the definition I gave you last week
 - This also makes them more difficult to reach out too. They are very paranoid, or wary, of outside groups and influences
 - They are told to never google Jehovah’s Witnesses by their leaders
 - They are going to be looking at you with a TON of suspicion when you’re trying to witness to them
 - We’ll go into more detail as we go along, but for now know that they believe the Church went apostate shortly after the time of the Apostles until they recovered or fixed the Bible with their new translation
 - So they’re going to automatically distrust any other Bible translations
 - You need to call God Jehovah
 - They believe the Trinity is pagan as well as the cross
 - Birthdays, and other holidays are all Pagan which we all celebrate
 - Participating in government on any level is pagan
 - Hopefully you can see why it’s going to be hard for them to trust you
 - You are going to really need to go out of your way to make sure they know you’re not there to attack them but rather to share something good and true with them. It’s going to take time to build up the goodwill between you and them to get them to where they’re going to listen to you
 - The biggest thing you’re going to need to do is get them to question the governing body of the JW organization. We’ll talk in depth about that in a little bit as well
 - In order to do that, it’s going to be much easier for you to use as many JW sources as possible when witnessing to them
 - Another aspect about them being an insulated social community is that it makes it difficult to leave. They are going to have family members and friends who they are no longer going to be allowed to see or even talk to if they leave the organization
 - This is because of the practice of shunning and dis-fellowshipping that I mentioned earlier
 - If you’re going to witness to somebody coming out of the organization, you’re probably going to need to commit yourself to helping them a lot

- once they finally leave! They’re literally going to be totally alone unless you managed to get their spouse and/or child out with them.
- Make sure you bring them to Church and get them connected with the body!
- Tips
 - Stick to one issue. Study it well. Don’t let them jump around from topic to topic
 - Say: “Can we come back to this later? Let’s finish this first.”
 - Use Watch Tower literature whenever possible
 - Show them love and goodwill
 - They’re used to being treated poorly by outsiders!
 - Share the gospel
 - The goal is to bring them to Jesus, not get them to leave JW organization
 - Don’t ever make them question the Bible’s validity! There is going to be a fine line between getting them away from their translation and the Bible itself! Focus on getting them to question the Governing Body, NOT the Bible!!
 - The NWT is generally going to be plenty good enough to use with them for study! So use it whenever possible.
 - If they question whether they can leave the organization because of their family, show them in the Bible where Jesus says that a man cannot bury his father and then follow him and that a worker who takes his hand from the plow is not worthy of him. Or even verses that show how precious God’s kingdom is!
 - This will generally hit home for them. After all, they’ve been part of a group that takes the Bible seriously! This is what they’ve been doing to others in their ministry as a JW!
- Famous JWs
 - Michael Jackson (was disassociated by JW but he said he was still a member)
 - He put a disclaimer on one of his music videos about rejecting the occult in order to stave off discipline from the JW organization
 - Serena and Venus Williams
 - Prince (clearly had trouble fully integrating it into his life, but remained one nonetheless)
 - President Eisenhower was raised a JW but left as an adult
 - Lou Whittaker. Probably should be in the Hall of Fame but isn’t. That actually might be due to his faith as a JW. He refused to stand for the national anthem because JWs believe it is a sin to give allegiance to anything other than God’s Kingdom. His number was retired by the Tigers just his year.
- How they were founded
 - Charles Taze Russell
 - Russell is the man who started the Bible study movement, a large branch of which eventually became the Jehovah’s Witnesses organization.

- Don’t let the name fool you. It’s not really a Bible study. It’s a walk through the Bible, as interpreted by Russell.
- He was strongly influenced by Adventist preaching at the time
- JW don’t necessarily regard him as being especially important in the same way a Mormon would consider Joseph Smith
 - They don’t make claims about him being a prophet, getting special revelation, or anything like that
 - They give him credit for starting a Bible study that eventually turned into the organization known today as Jehovah’s Witnesses
 - They would regard him similar to the way we regard people like Martin Luther or John Calvin – Important historical figures who studied the Bible and developed their Theology from it
 - They seem to walk a fine line between these two notions (prophet vs Bible student)
 - They claim they don’t regard him as a prophet or as a man with special revelation but that is not entirely true. Russell definitely made claims about his interpretations that are much stronger than any that any of the Reformers made. Their teachings and methods reflect this
- Russell wrote a series of books called “Studies in the Scriptures” and also started publishing a magazine called The Watchtower where he came up with his own interpretations of the Bible.
 - He claimed that the Church became corrupted shortly after the Apostles died (which he also says the Bible prophesied would happen)
 - He claims to have studied the Bible and used it to restore the true church
 - I attended a JW meeting recently where they had the audacity to claim Wycliffe, Martin Luther, and John Calvin as forerunners of the restoration of the Church
 - They just didn’t take it far enough
 - He claimed that his interpretations were completely correct, contrary to historical Christian interpretations
 - According to him, his published works were meant to be Bible study aids
 - In “The Watchtower,” September 15, 1910, p297, he said this about his so called Bible study aids: “The six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are not intended to supplant the Bible. There are various methods to be pursued in the study of the Bible and these aids to Bible study are in such form that they, of themselves, contain the important elements of the Bible as well as the comments or elucidations of those Bible statements, on exactly the same principle that our Lord and the Apostles quote from the Old Testament, and then gave elucidations of those Old Testament

passages. Many of the elucidations were such that if we had not had them, had not had specific interpretations, we might never have been able to discern the proper application of them.”

- On page 298 of the same magazine he says this, “If the six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are practically the Bible topically arranged, with Bible proof-texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes—the Bible in an arranged form. That is to say, they are not merely comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself, since there is no desire to build any doctrine or thought on any individual preference or on any individual wisdom, but to present the entire matter on the lines of the Word of God. We therefore think it safe to follow this kind of reading, this kind of instruction, this kind of Bible study.”
- Continuing in the next paragraph, “Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the Divine Plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the SCRIPTURE STUDIES aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.”
- JWs used to be known as Russellites, though that is a label that applied to a broader movement that included JWs who are the largest group within that movement by far
 - As such, there is a question as to who really is the founder of the JW organization
 - Charles Russell is absolutely the guy who started the movement and the Watchtower magazine, both of which continue to this day, but his friend and successor also had a massive impact on the group, Joseph Franklin Rutherford
 - Rutherford became the president of the organization after the death of Russell in 1916
 - While Russell laid down the theological foundation in his publications and teachings, it was Rutherford who formed the structure of the organization.
 - He centralized the administration of the movement, required adherents to go door-to-door with their literature (while providing regular reports of their activity), gave the name JW in 1931 to the group, and also the name “Kingdom Hall” to their houses of worship in 1935

- He is also the one who established the doctrine that Jesus died on a torture stake as opposed to a cross and established 1914 as the official date of Christ’s invisible, spiritual return
- In many ways, Rutherford was more of a founder of the modern JW organization than Russell
- **What they believe**
 - Alright, so that is where they came from. That is important information to know because their founding is absolutely reflected in everything they do today
- Just an FYI for all of the information I am going to go over today, nearly all of it comes straight from their own website, JW.org.
- Also, this is going to be an explanation about their beliefs. We will examine these beliefs for Biblical accuracy afterwards
 - I want to convey their beliefs as one block so as not to confuse you about what they believe vs what the Bible teaches
- Let’s start with their attitudes and beliefs about **God**:
 - They believe in one, almighty God whose name is Jehovah. They believe he is the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus as revealed in the Bible
 - They deny the doctrine of the Trinity
 - There is one God, the Father, whose name is Jehovah
 - Jesus is God’s “first born of creation” who in turn created everything else
 - We’ll talk more in depth about their views on Jesus next
 - The Holy Spirit is an active force, NOT God nor even a person at all
 - They liken the Spirit to electricity: “a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.”
 - About the name of Jehovah
 - Where does this name come from? It is a little bit complicated
 - The original Hebrew that the OT was written in did not contain any vowels. Everything was written with consonants only and the reader would insert the vowels themselves
 - God’s name in Hebrew is “YHWH” (This is called the Tetragrammaton if you really wanted to know)
 - Since ancient Jews feared using God’s name in vain, they began substituting the word *Adonai* in place of God’s name when reading Scripture publicly. *Adonai* simply means “lord.”
 - Because the name was not pronounced for so long, the pronunciation was forgotten
 - Most scholars believe the correct pronunciation is “Yahweh” (I agree)
 - Over time, the vowels from *Adonai* were inserted in between the 4 consonants of God’s name (a-o-a), giving the NEW name, “Yahowah,” which when Latinized, becomes Jehovah (There is no

letter Y in Latin—this is why names like Yeshua become “Joshua” for example)

- The name Jehovah is therefore a manmade term, not a Biblical term
 - While this name for God is definitively not from the Bible, it has been used in the English language for quite some time now. It was used in some English translations of the Bible including the ASV (consistent) and the KJV (only 4 times).
 - Therefore it’s really not worth criticizing JW’s for using it. You’ll hear many Christians use the name as well. While I think that this is wrong and it shouldn’t be done, I place it in the Blue Tag category. I’m not going to make an issue about it but I cringe inside when I hear it used 😊
 - The main issue is their hyper focus on this name. They claim that it is the only correct name for God and the one you need to call upon to be saved.
 - They will use this as a means of trying to get you to doubt the veracity of your translation by telling you that it tries to hide the name of God but their translation has faithfully restored God’s name to its rightful place in the Scriptures
 - I’ve experienced this. I simply agreed with him that the name of God shouldn’t be obscured in English translations and completely disarmed him.
 - Don’t fall for this trick. There are other points that they’ll try to trip you up like this, as you’ll soon see.
- Even if we accept “Jehovah” as the correct translation of the divine name, is it really the only name acceptable to God?
 - No! God uses many names in the Bible
 - God (obviously)
 - The Most High God
 - Lord or Master
 - The God Who Sees Me
 - Lord God Almighty
 - The Everlasting God
 - The Lord of Hosts (Used 261+ times)
 - Father (Believers are uniquely privileged to call God “Father”—Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:15)
- Salvation is not dependent on adhering to the name Jehovah (or even Yahweh)
 - Romans 8:13 “For ‘everyone who calls on the name of **Jehovah** will be saved’” (NWT) is NOT what the verse says in the Greek
 - They erroneously inserted that name into the verse. The original Greek says *Kurios*, which is not the cereal you had for breakfast. It means Lord in English.

- Romans 8:13 “For ‘everyone who calls on the name of **the Lord** will be saved” (ESV) is the literal translation of this verse.
- Additionally, verse 9 establishes JESUS as the Lord that verse 13 is referring to, “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (ESV).
- Furthermore, verse 13 is actually a quote from Joel 2:32a, “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of [Yahweh] shall be saved” (ESV – Yahweh inserted in place of ‘the LORD’).
- Paul is actually declaring that Jesus IS Yahweh and that only by calling upon his name, JESUS, can we be saved.
- Another note, the name Jehovah (or even Yahweh) is NEVER used even one time in the NT.
 - Jesus himself never refers to God using this name, instead calling him Father or Lord.
- The NT consistently uplifts the name of JESUS CHRIST
 - Their attempt to uplift the name Jehovah obscures this reality!!
 - Here is a list of questions I pulled from Ron Rhodes’ book “The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Jehovah’s Witness”
 - In whose name should we meet together? (Matt 18:20, 1 Cor 5:4)
 - Demons are subject to whose name? (Luke 10:17, Acts 16:18)
 - Repentance and forgiveness should be preached in whose name? (Luke 24:47)
 - In whose name are you to believe and receive the forgiveness of sins? (John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 10:43; 1 John 3:23, 5:13)
 - Whose name should be invoked as we bring our petitions to God in prayer? (John 14:13-14)
 - In whose name is the Holy Spirit sent? (John 14:26)
 - Whose name is above every name? (Eph 1:20-21, Phil 2:9-11)
 - The answer to every single one of these is JESUS!
 - You can use their own translation for all of these verses and get the same answer.
 - Ask yourself, and your JW friend, after reading all of these verses whose name should God’s true followers identify with?

- Since the answer to that question is very apparent, let’s move on to their beliefs about who **JESUS** is
 - They believe they follow the teachings of Jesus and honor him as their savior and as the Son of God (sounds good so far). As such, they claim to be Christians (*true* Christians actually).
 - However, they do not believe Jesus is “Almighty God” from all eternity
 - They cite John 14:28 for this, “You heard that I said to you, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you,’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I am.”
 - They think that Jesus is a created being but in a different way than what the Mormons believe
 - They believe that Jesus was created first by God and then God used him to create everything else
 - They use two Bible verses to prove this. The verses quoted here are from their translation, the NWT. You will likely notice that it doesn’t say what your Bible says. We’ll go in depth into this (including looking at their own Greek-Interlinear translation) when I present the Biblical response to their beliefs. For now, here are the verses they use to prove that Jesus is not God but rather a created spirit creature.
 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **A** god. This one was in the beginning with God. All things came into existence through him, and part from him not even one thing came into existence.” John 1:1-3 (NWT emphasis added)
 - They argue from these verses that Jesus was created as a spirit creature (“a god”) and that God then used him to create all other things.
 - “He is the image of the invisible God the first-born of all creation; because **by means of him** all **other** things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, 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 1:15-17 (NWT emphasis added)
 - They argue that the Bible teaches that Jesus was created first and that all other things were created through him

- They are basically Arians—an ancient Heresy that was viciously opposed by the early Church (show Orthodox views of Jesus chart) (Think Augustine debating Arius, or if you prefer, Nicholas decking the heretic!—JWs unfortunately haven’t had somebody like him around to slap some sense into them haha)
- Unfortunately, they don’t stop there when it comes to destroying the person of Christ (The very image of the invisible God!)
- They further claim that Jesus is actually the Archangel, Michael. And that it was Michael who became a human, lived a perfect life, and died in our place for our sins
 - Now, you are probably asking yourself “where do they get this from?” After all, they make strong claims to have a scriptural basis for all of their beliefs
 - “But when Michael the archangel had a difference with the Devil and was disputing about Moses’ body, he did not dare to bring a judgement against him in abusive terms, but said: ‘May Jehovah rebuke you.’” Jude 9 (NWT)
 - The title “archangel” is held by Michael. This translates to “*chief* of the angels”
 - The title appears only twice in the Bible and in both cases it is singular, implying that only one angel holds the title
 - “because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice and with God’s trumpet and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first.” 1 Thess 4:16 (NWT)
 - Jesus has an archangel’s voice because he *is* the archangel, Michael
 - Michael commands an angelic army (Revelation 12:7) where he and his angels battle the dragon, Satan
 - Jesus is in command of the angels. “He is at God’s right hand, for he went to heaven, and angels and authorities and powers were made subject to him.” 1 Peter 3:22 (NWT)
 - Therefore, Jesus is Michael the Archangel since it is easier to assume they are the same person and not two rivals for the same position

- They do teach that Jesus suffered and died but **NOT** on a cross. They say he died on a torture stake.
 - The Greek word (stauros) means an upright pole used for execution
 - Let’s think about this for more than one second... is a cross an upright pole used for execution? Yes. It most certainly meets the definition of the word.
 - This may sound like a trivial thing to us (because it is) but they make a big deal out of it. If you spend time talking with a JW about Jesus this issue WILL come up eventually.
 - Why do they make a big deal out of it? As with many things in life, there is the stated reason and then there is the real reason
 - The stated reason is that they claim that the cross is a pagan symbol that pagans used to co-opt Christianity and bring more people into the faith and that they are simply restoring Christianity to correct doctrine
 - The real reason is two-fold
 - 1) They want to shock you into doubting your faith and your Bible so that they can hook you into their organization
 - It’s basically meant to be a one-two punch. “Your Bible is wrong and now you must doubt your whole faith but don’t worry because we fixed it. By the way, we also fixed a few other verses about Jesus. Come and join us! Our governing body knows how to properly interpret Scripture.”
 - 2) They use it as a means of maintaining control over their members
 - By dogmatically teaching that Jesus died on a torture stake and that the cross is pagan, they are keeping their followers under their influence. They are using it as a means of proving their fidelity to God and validating their authority over them.
 - Remember: The person you’re talking with almost certainly truly believes the stated reason... he or she as an individual is not trying to intentionally deceive you. My “real” reasons I offer here are the reasons from the organization itself, not the follows who repeat what they’re taught
 - This is also a reminder of one of the reasons why this class is important. You need to be armed with the knowledge that your faith is sound so that you don’t get derailed and spiral into doubt over trivial things. This has happened to many many many people! Peruse the large number of ex-Christian atheists on YouTube for a sample of people who abandoned their faith because of trivial things like this. Make sure that you are the good soil and not one of the bad (Mark 4:1-9).

- I became a Christian about two weeks before my sophomore year of college where I was a Philosophy major. My faith was continuously shaken by attacks on my new found faith. It didn’t get any better when I switched to a Theology major either by the way. Fortunately for me, God was very good to me. A retired pastor drove over two hours every Tuesday to disciple me for my final three years of college. There is no way I would have made it through as a Christian without being provided that strong Biblical teaching each week. Knowing what the attack is before it comes will be of immense benefit to you!
 - Ultimately, it doesn’t really matter whether Jesus died on a torture stake or a cross. It has no real consequence whatsoever that I can think of. Regardless, there is an overwhelming body of evidence to support that Jesus did indeed die on a cross (for example a common thing for the Romans to do was make the criminal carry his own crossbeam to the site before a crucifixion. This is what we see in scripture (John 19:17). Also, Thomas mentions “nails” in John 20:25. This is evidence that there were two nails, one for each hand, not just one. If a pole was used, only one nail would be needed). The overall evidence is very strong but it can be tedious to look at (trust me, I did it) and I don’t think it’s worth taking the time to get into it during this class. We already have too much info to cover! If you’re really interested in knowing, you can ask me after class.
 - If they bring it up you can easily disarm them by just agreeing with them... yes I believe Jesus died on a “stauros” regardless of whether that was a stake or a cross.
- Let’s move onto an aspect of Jesus that DOES matter: How Jesus saves
- They sound good at first but it is a deception
 - Directly from website:
 - Why was “a ransom for many” needed?
The first man, Adam, was created perfect, or without sin. He had the prospect of living forever but lost it by choosing to disobey God (Genesis 3: 17-19). When he had children, he passed on to them the defect of sin (Romans 5:12). For this reason, the Bible indicates that Adam “sold” himself and his children into slavery to sin and death (Romans 7:14). Being imperfect, none of them could buy back what Adam lost—Psalm 49:7, 8. God felt compassion for Adam’s descendants in their hopeless situation (John 3:16). However, God’s standard of justice required that he not simply overlook or excuse their sins without a valid basis (Psalm 89:14; Romans 3: 23-26). God loves mankind, so he provided the necessary legal means for their sins to be not only forgiven but also eliminated (Romans 5:6-8). The ransom is that legal basis.

- We need to be delivered from sin and death. This is possible through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus
 - To benefit, you must have faith in Jesus and change your behavior and get baptized
 - They give lip service to salvation by grace alone and will even quote Eph 2:8-10 to you saying that salvation is not by works but they’re just not telling you the full truth.
 - While they believe that the death of Jesus is necessary to be saved, it is not good enough by itself. Jesus just removes the sin of Adam from you. You then have to do good works to be saved.
 - Jehovah’s Witness are not assured of their salvation!
 - “Studies in the Scriptures” pg 150, vol 1 says, “The ransom for all given by the man Christ Jesus does not give or guarantee everlasting life or blessing to any man.”
 - 4 things are needed for salvation (according to them)
 - 1 – you have to take in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ
 - But what they mean is that Jesus was a created being, Michael, body who dissolved, resurrected as a spirit creature, etc.
 - 2 – You have to obey God’s law. They are laboring under a works system.
 - 3 – you have to belong to JW organization
 - 4 – loyalty
 - You’re promoting the JW organization by going door to door or handing our magazines or other JW material
 - You must be an active baptized publisher (1 hour/month)
- So, continuing with the death of Jesus, while they agree with us that Jesus died a **physical** death, they deny that he had a physical resurrection
 - They posit instead that Jesus had a spiritual resurrection
 - “For Christ died once for all time for sins, a righteous person for unrighteous ones, in order to lead you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” 1 Peter 3:18 (NWT)
 - “So from now on we know no man from a fleshly viewpoint. Even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, we certainly no longer know him in that way.” 2 Corinthians 5:16
 - God disintegrated Jesus’ body
 - The best they can come up with is Acts 2:31, “he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he forsaken in the Grave nor did his flesh see corruption.” (NWT)
 - Note the lack of Scripture references. They don’t really have any.
 - Studies in the Scriptures, vol 5, page 454 says, “the man Jesus is dead, forever dead.”

- The JW’s don’t print Russell’s “Studies in the Scriptures” anymore but their theology without question is rooted in these works
- Going hand-in-hand with a spiritual resurrection, they also teach that Jesus’ return will be spiritual and invisible
 - Furthermore, they teach that Jesus has already returned (albeit, invisibly) in October 1914
 - Where in the world does that date come from?
 - They calculate it based on a few scriptures that they put together (it’s going to be quite the daisy-chain of Scriptures, so pay attention)
 - Luke 21:24, “And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled” (NWT)
 - Daniel 4 (Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the tree being chopped down and Daniel’s interpretation that it meant The King would be cut down for 7 years and then restored)
 - They say this dream has a partial and full fulfillment
 - Partial – Nebuchadnezzar
 - Full – Jesus being restored to the throne after the Davidic Kingly line was dethroned (2 Kings 25:1-26)
 - Daniel 4:16b says “let seven times pass over it.”
 - Revelation 12:6 indicates that three and a half times equals 1,260 days. Double that to get to seven and you get 2,520 days
 - They then use Numbers 14:34 (a day for a year as punishment to Israel) and Ezekiel 4:6 (a day for a year as a prophesy) to determine that these days are years
 - The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 607 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1-26)
 - 2,520 years from this date gets you October 1914
 - I did not make this up. Here is a chart (see PowerPoint) that they have on their website showing this.
 - Now you’re probably wondering what that even means... so Jesus returned “invisibly” in 1914. What is he doing? What impact is that having?
 - He is ruling from Heaven of course!
 - They believe that Jesus began ruling from Heaven over the Earth and cast Satan down to the earth.
 - Jesus gave the JW organization the authority to lead his people on earth at this time, so only they can speak for God
 - A special anointed class of people who are really good will get to go to Heaven when they die. This number has to reach 144,000 before Armageddon happens
 - Things will continue to get worse and worse until this happens (WWI, WWII, 9/11, and COVID are examples they cite for this)
 - Jesus is gathering Jehovah’s people until eventually Armageddon happens, in which Jesus will judge the whole world.

- The remaining JW’s will survive the tribulation because they will be protected by Jehovah and will get to live on paradise earth for 1,000 years
- Most people will be resurrected and given the chance to worship Jehovah during this thousand year reign where Christ is ruling from heaven with his 144,000 chosen people
 - Everybody else is annihilated because Hell is not a real place
 - Everybody who lives on paradise earth is not assured of making it through. You have to live perfect lives or else you will be annihilated.
- After 1,000 years Jesus will step down as king of the earth and allow Jehovah to rule forever and everybody who made it through will continue to live there forever with him
- This leads me to the next thing, which is The Governing Body of the JW organization that supposedly speaks for Jehovah
- Governing Body’s Authority & The Bible
 - They say the Bible is their authority. They will say this a lot actually. Remember what I said about their history and that they came out of the Bible Study Movement in the decades that came after the Civil War.
 - There is a big problem with this and that is that they have their own translation that really butches some key verses surrounding the person of Jesus, some of which we’ve covered
 - They don’t trust any other Bible translations
 - We’ll talk more about their translation in a little bit, for now let’s talk about who their true authority is... The Governing Body
 - It consists of 8 men who live in NY City
 - They formulate doctrine and they oversee publishing; they send out 2 magazines (Awake! And Watchtower)
 - When judgement comes, your survival is going to depend on whether you follow instructions from these 8 men in NY
 - They believe that Jesus is leading them from heaven to do his will
 - From Watchtower, 2013, July 15, pg20
 - “The Faithful Slave [the Governing Body] is the channel through which Jesus is feeding his true followers...”
 - Obedience to these men determines your salvation
 - From an annual meeting report on JW.org posted on Nov 10, 2012 “‘The Faithful and discrete slave’ was appointed over Jesus’ domestics in 1919. The slave is the small composite group of anointed brothers serving at world headquarters during Christ’s presence who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food. When this group work together as the governing body they act as the faithful and discrete slave”¹

¹ <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/activities/events/annual-meeting-report-2012/>

- This has evolved slowly over time (similar to the papacy with Catholicism) to where this group has more power and authority. The faithful slave used to be a everybody, then general leadership, and then these 8 men
- As a way of maintaining control over their members, shoring up the “biblical” basis for their doctrines, and as a way of tricking unwary Christians, they developed their own translation of the Bible
- It was translated anonymously (they know, they just don’t reveal who)
- New World Translation
 - This is the first ever translation of the ENTIRE Bible with the express intention of making the text fit to the group’s theology.
 - I’ll add as a side note, a fringe Charismatic Brian Simmons, is currently in the process of doing the same thing for groups like Bethel out in Redding, CA. It’s called the Passion Translation.
 - This is also different than Mormonism, which didn’t change the Bible, it just added a “second revelation” that supersedes the Bible where it contradicts.
 - Actually, it’s not that bad of a translation.... when it’s translating and not changing or adding words which is only in a few places
 - I would compare it to something like the NIV as far as translation philosophy goes
 - I’m not saying that the NIV changed the Bible... just comparing translation philosophy
 - The majority of the changes revolve around the deity of Jesus
 - Fortunately for us (and them) they didn’t change them all
 - This would be impossible because the Bible declares the majesty of Jesus and proclaims him as God Almighty in thousands of subtle and direct ways
 - Exploit this using the questions I mentioned earlier!
 - It has A LOT of cross references connecting the reader to other parts of scripture and most of these are actually quite helpful for doing a Bible study
 - They erroneously inserted the name Jehovah into the NT over 200 times whenever they thought it was talking about God. There are no Greek manuscripts anywhere that have Jehovah written in them
 - For some reason, they’re generally okay with the KJV of the Bible but reject the rest
- They believe the Bible is God’s inspired message to humans. They believe in the same 66 books that we do, from both the Old and New Testaments. They believe, however, that they get their interpretation of Scripture without predetermining what it says (kind of true... they just hid the interpretation in the translation itself)
 - They are not “fundamentalists” (that’s how they phrase it). To them, this means that read the Bible as it was intended to be written (figures of speech, symbolism, poetry, etc.)

- If you ever attend a JW meeting (which I have), you’ll find that it’s very much structured like a Bible Study. Various elders share a message from the NWT. The messages are essentially all the same in Kingdom Halls across the world
- If you visit their website or get their magazines you’ll always see some current topic (i.e. Soaring Inflation) along with the tag line “What does the Bible say?”
 - These will contain relevant insights from the Bible on that issue. These often will actually be pretty good. I actually wish more churches would do things like this for their congregations! They do, however, get things (very) wrong due to their use of the NWT and their aberrant theology.