

Cults and Other “Gospels”

Recognizing and Understanding the Differences



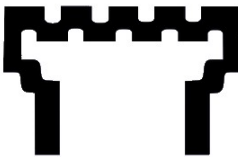
Cults and Other “Gospels”

- ♦ **Remember our definition of a “cult”**
 - ♦ **I've recommended six questions to ask yourself about any religious groups that seem at least potentially suspicious to you...**
 1. **Does the group have a prophet/founder who is revered by followers and claims to have *special* revelation from God or from angels?**
 2. **Are there authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to* or *instead of* the Bible?**
 3. **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 4. **What does the group believe regarding the Trinity? Is Jesus fully God, the second person of the Trinity? Is the Holy Spirit fully God, the third person of the Trinity?**
 5. **How does the group believe we are *saved*? By grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, or by faith plus good works?**
 6. **What belief does the group hold regarding life after death? What is its concept of Heaven and Hell?**



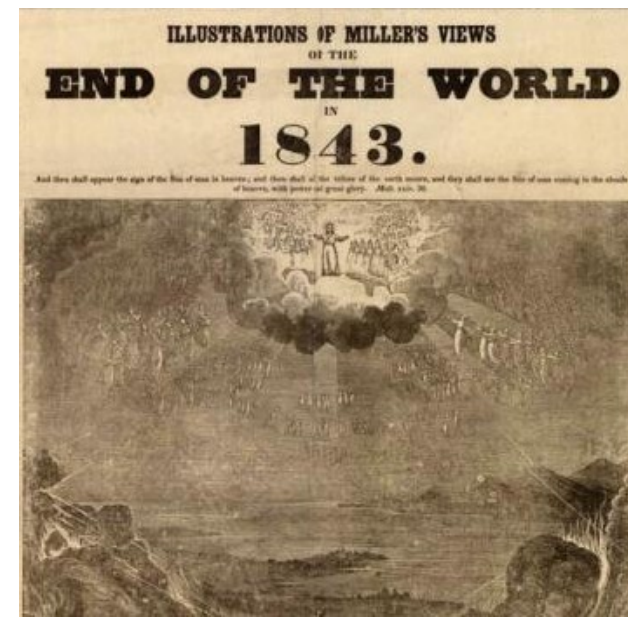
Cults and Other “Gospels”

- ◆ Introduction to Cults
- ◆ Peoples Temple
- ◆ Latter-Day Saints (“Mormons”)
- ◆ **Jehovah's Witnesses**



Jehovah's Witnesses

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Who is their founder?**
 - ◆ **Charles Taze Russell**
 - ◆ **“The two most prominent messengers are the first and the last—St. Paul and Pastor Russell.”**
 - Watchtower* (November 1, 1917), p. 323
 - ◆ **Born in Pennsylvania in 1852, Charles Taze Russell was raised in both the Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches, but was unsatisfied with what any of them taught**
 - ◆ **When he was 18, he became enamored with the teachings of the Millerites, who were preaching about the end of the world**

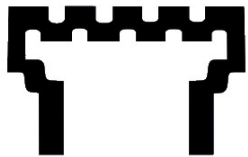
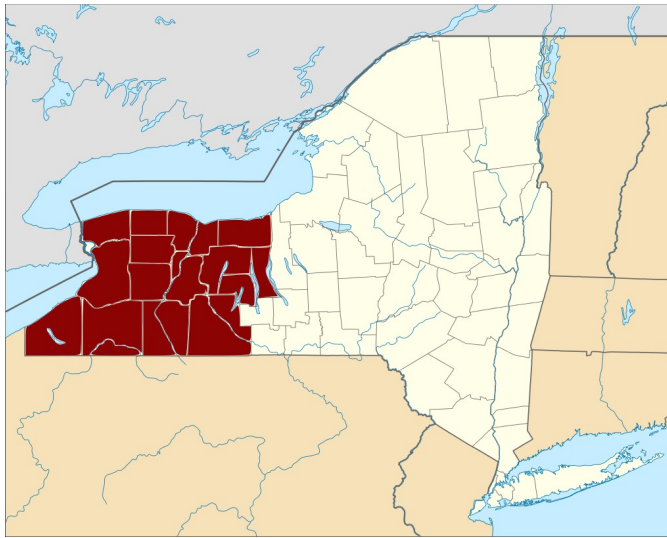


Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ The Millerites followed the teachings of William Miller who was born in Massachusetts but raised in the “burnt district” of western New York
 - ◆ Disillusioned after the War of 1812 and the deaths of several family members, Miller came to the conclusion that God would never judge people whom He loved—so the afterlife must be paradise for those who follow God, and a simple cessation of existence of those who don't (i.e.; no loving God would ever create a “hell”)
 - ◆ He began to study the Bible, looking for answers
 - ◆ In 1818, he read Daniel 8:14—
“Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed”

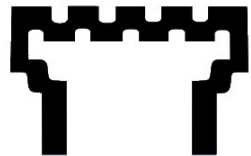
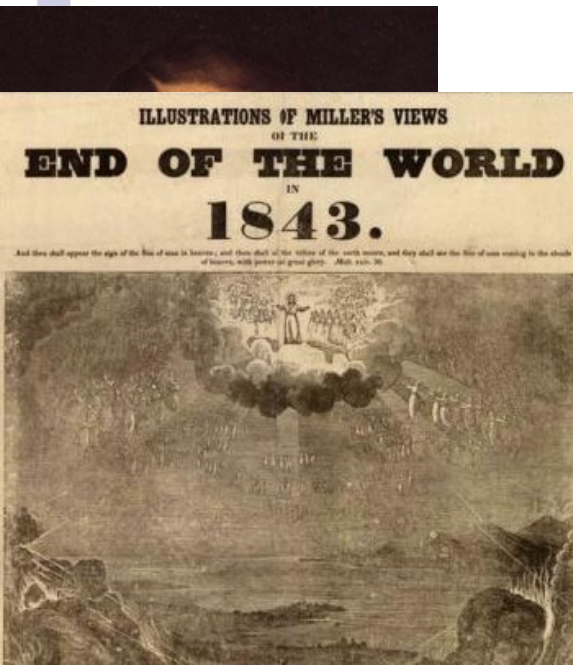


Jehovah's Witnesses



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 - ◆ He began to study the Bible, looking for answers
 - ◆ In 1818, he read Daniel 8:14, and he decided that in Biblical prophecy, God often said “day” when He meant “year”
 - ◆ So that meant that if the “sanctuary” Daniel wrote of was this world, and if the “days” were years, and if Daniel's prophecy started in 457 BC with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem by King Artaxerxes then that clearly meant that Jesus would return to cleanse the world in 1843 AD—how could everyone have missed that?

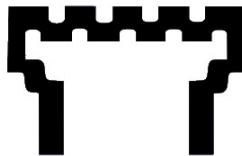
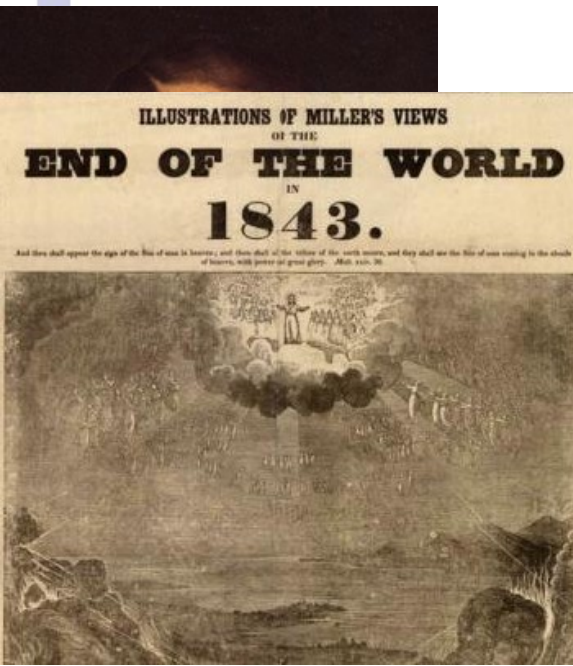


Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ The Millerites followed the teachings of William Miller who was born in Massachusetts but raised in the “burnt district” of western New York
- ♦ In 1831, he began publicly lecturing on his findings, explaining to people why they had only twelve more years to get their lives right before God came back and destroyed the sinful world
 - ♦ By the time 1843 came around, he had upwards of 50,000 “Millerite” followers
 - ♦ Miller began teaching that somewhere between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844, Jesus would clearly return to cleanse the earth once and for all... or maybe it'd be on *April 18, 1844—that's when...* or definitely, absolutely, on *October 22, 1844...*
 - ♦ Eventually, most people just kind of gave up and went home, disgusted with the “Great Disappointment”

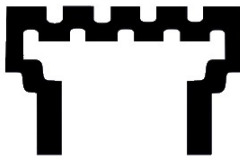


Jehovah's Witnesses



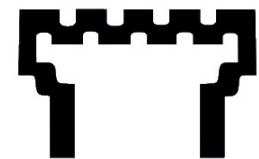
Funky little teaching moment...

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- ♦ In 1831, he began publicly lecturing on his findings, explaining to people why they had only twelve more years to get their lives right before God came back and destroyed the sinful world
- ♦ Others formed the Adventist Church, focused on trying to predict Christ's clearly imminent return
 - ♦ Maybe Miller was off on his dates, but the concept was still sound
 - ♦ Or maybe that's when God only *began* to cleanse this place—maybe it would be a *centuries*-long process, instead of a single, spectacular appearing in the sky...
 - ♦ Others decided that maybe this earth wasn't the “sanctuary” Daniel had been talking about
 - ♦ According to the *Seventh-Day* Adventists, 1844 is when Jesus entered into His Heavenly process of “investigative judgment,” examining the world from Heaven to see just how bad it has become and to decide who in it actually *deserves* to be saved



Jehovah's Witnesses

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 - Watchtower* (November 1, 1917), p. 323
 - ◆ **Born in Pennsylvania in 1852, Charles Taze Russell was raised in both the Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches, but was unsatisfied**
 - ◆ **When he was 18, he became enamored with the teachings of the Millerites, who were preaching about the end of the world**
 - ◆ **Russell embraced the Millerite idea that everyone had totally missed what the Bible has been saying and he began his own Bible study, building on the real **T** Truth rather than on Christianity's errors —especially its errors about the nature of God, the Divinity of Jesus, the fact that only 144,000 people would get to Heaven, and the immanent return of Christ to finally judge the world**



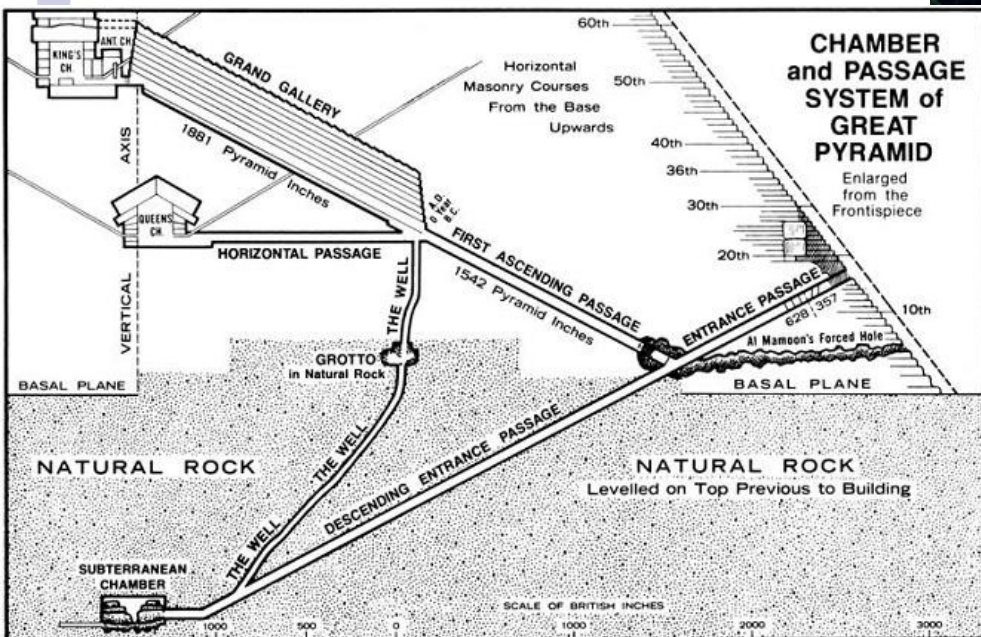
Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ Luckily, Russell could figure all that out *definitively*, because God left “the Bible in stone” for us to study so that we can know the exact day and the hour of His return—the Great Pyramid of Giza
(NOTE: There's good reason why Russell's tombstone is... unusual in its shape)

The Bible in Stone



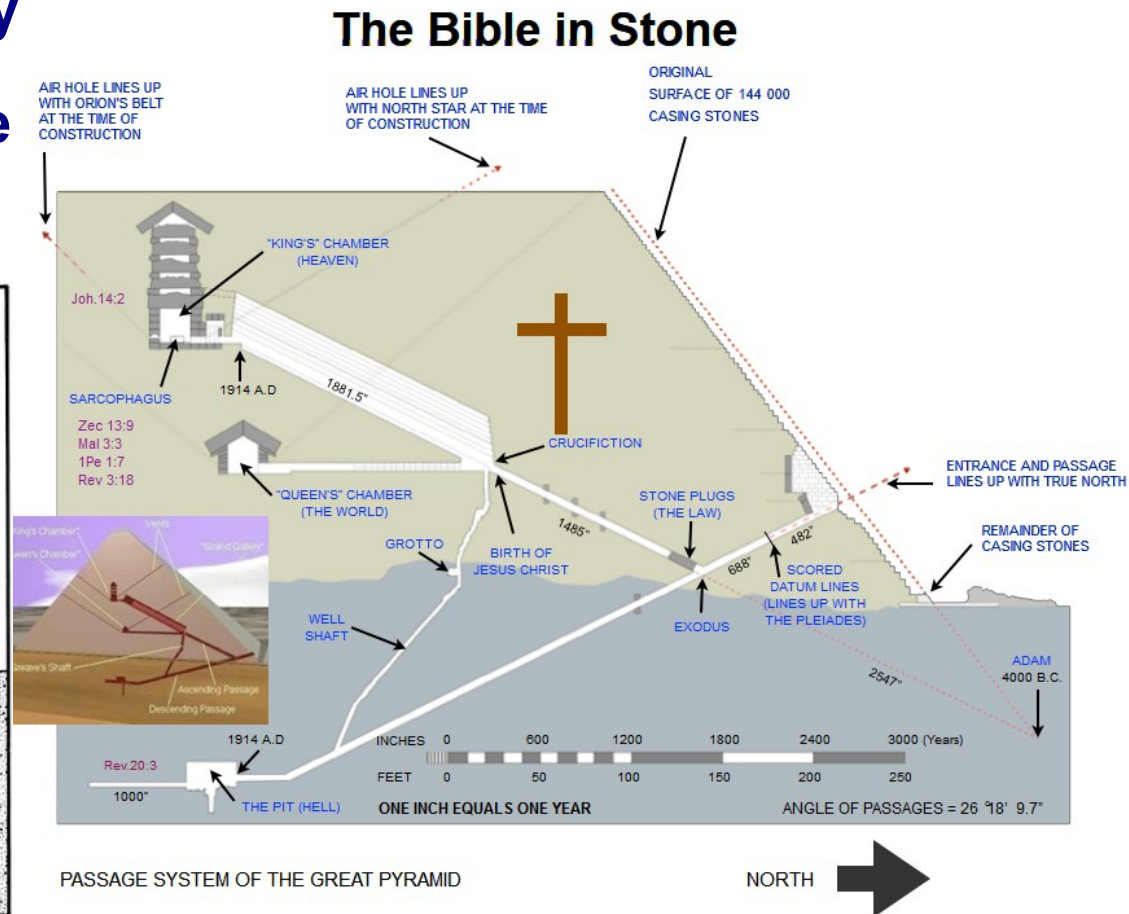
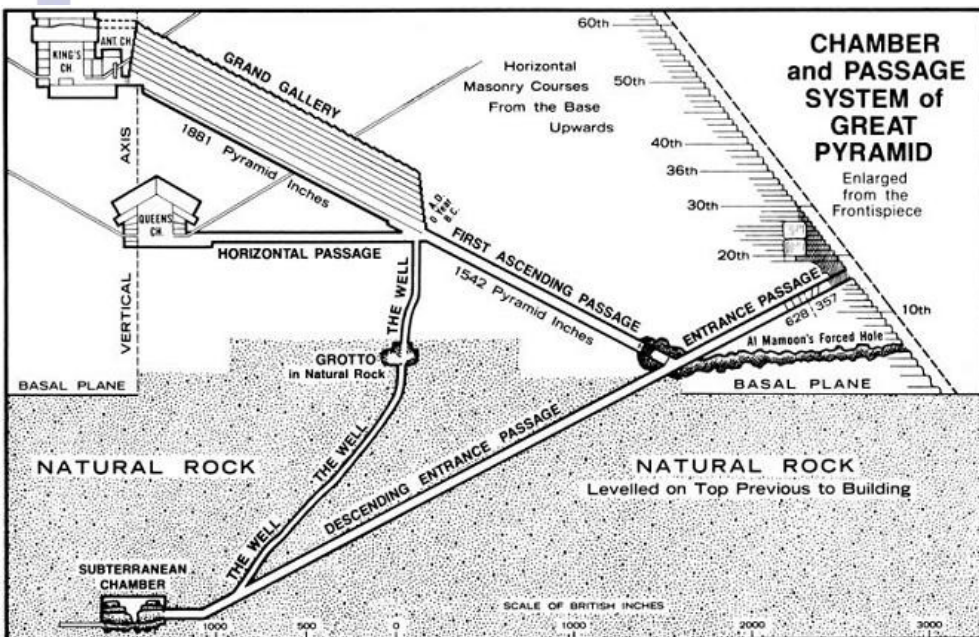
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- ◆ If we break down its basic measurements into special “pyramid inches,”

(NOTE: Nobody else has ever heard of these “pyramid inches”)

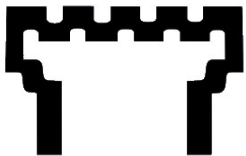


Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

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- ♦ If we break down its basic measurements into special “pyramid inches,” and measure specific passages against other passages, then apply that to our calendar, then we can clearly see that Jesus Christ was scheduled to return to Earth in 1874
- ♦ When nothing happened in 1874, Russell declared that Jesus clearly must have come *invisibly* and begun His time of what Miller had called an “investigative judgment,” spending the next 40 years judging the world to see if it's ready to be *ultimately* judged... in 1914...

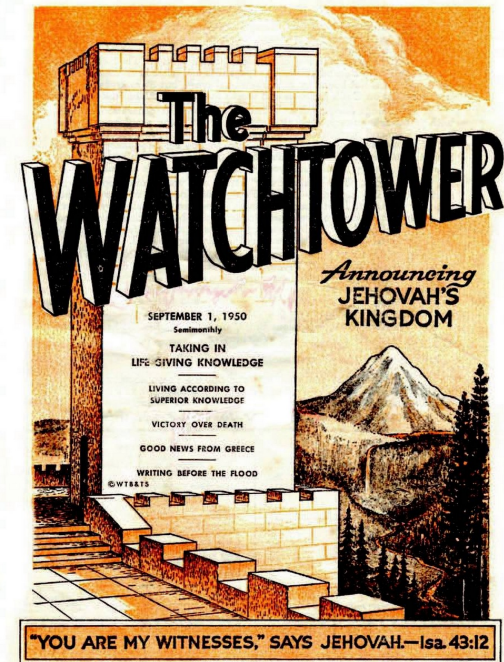


Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ Luckily, Russell could figure all that out *definitively*, because God left “the Bible in stone” for us to study so that we can know the exact day and the hour of His return—the Great Pyramid of Giza
- ♦ To wait and watch and make sure that the true, restored church would be ready for Jesus, Russell founded the Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society, dedicated to getting the truth out there



Jehovah's Witnesses

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Who is their founder?**
 - ◆ **Charles Taze Russell, Judge Joseph Rutherford**
 - ◆ **When Russell died in 1916, his position was taken over by Joseph Rutherford—a former special judge in the 14th Judicial District of Missouri**
 - ◆ **Judge Rutherford almost immediately began downplaying the whole “Great Pyramid” stuff and—though he kept all of the prophecies and theology that Russell came up with—he bumped all of the dates back when things hadn't happened**
 - ◆ **He also officially changed the name of the Society to the “Jehovah's Witnesses” in 1931...**



Jehovah's Witnesses

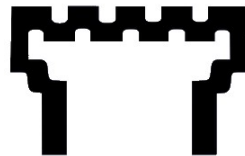
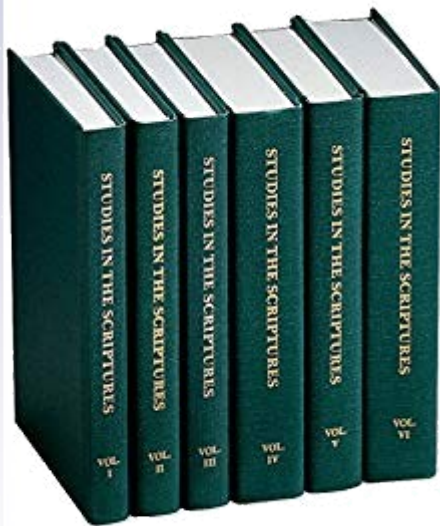
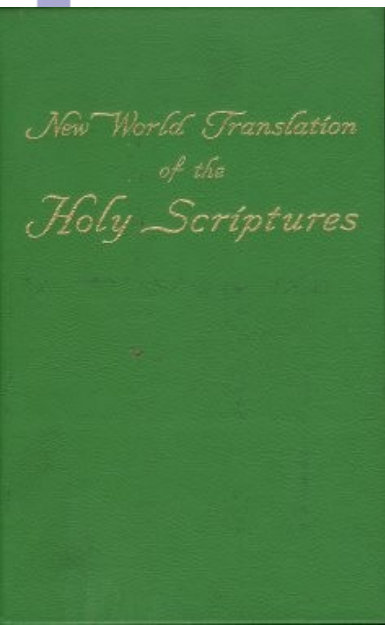
◆ Let's go through our six questions...

◆ Do they have any authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?

◆ *Studies in Scripture, The Watchtower, the New World Translation of the Bible*, and several small books

◆ “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 mere comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself. 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.”

—Charles Taze Russell, *The Watchtower* (1910)

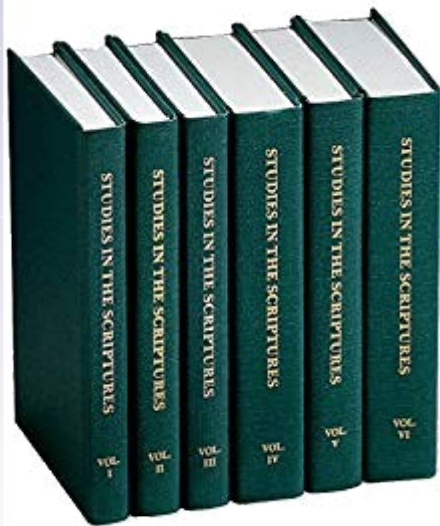


Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ Then again, perhaps Russell wasn't the best scholar out there to explain your Bible to you...
- ◆ In *Russell v. Ross* (1913)
(in which Russell lost a civil suit against the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, when they accused him and the church of defrauding people by selling a false "Miracle Wheat" at a greatly inflated cost)



MIRACLE WHEAT FAKE SAYS COURT

New York, May 10.—The verdict of a jury dismissing Pastor Charles T. Russell's suit to recover \$100,000 damages from the Brooklyn Eagle for alleged libel has been sustained by the appellate division in Brooklyn.

Pastor Russell claimed he was entitled to damages because the Eagle published accounts of the sale by his Bible society of "Miracle Wheat" at \$1 a pound. In defending the suit, the Eagle claimed the "Miracle Wheat" was no better than ordinary wheat, and that the price of \$1 a pound, for which it was sold, was exorbitant.

Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ Then again, perhaps Russell wasn't the best scholar out there to explain your Bible to you...
- ◆ In *Russell v. Ross* (1913), an attorney questioned him:

Q: Do you know the Greek alphabet?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Can you tell me the correct letters if you see them?

A: Some of them. I might make a mistake on some of them.

Q: Would you tell me the names of those on top of the page—page 447 I have got here?

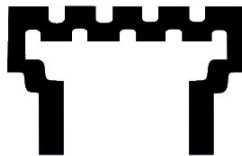
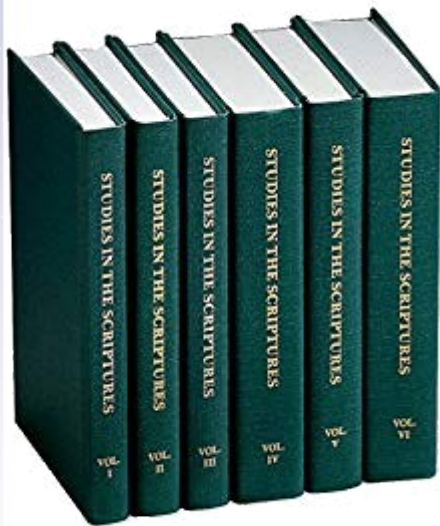
A: Well, I don't know that I would be able to.

Q: You can't tell what those letters are, look at them and see if you know?

A: My way... *[he is interrupted at this point]*

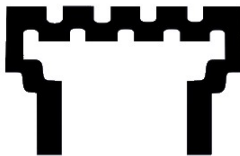
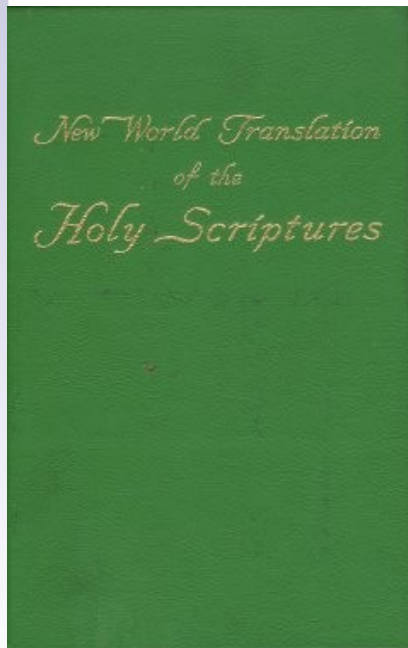
Q: Are you familiar with the Greek language?

A: No.



Jehovah's Witnesses

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Do they have any authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?**
 - ◆ ***Studies in Scripture, The Watchtower, the New World Translation of the Bible, and several small books***
 - ◆ “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'...”
—Charles Taze Russell, *The Watchtower* (1910)
 - ◆ “Honesty compels us to remark that, while each of them (other translations) has its points of merit, they have fallen victim to the power of human traditionalism in varying degrees, consequently, religious traditions, hoary with age, have been taken for granted and gone unchallenged and uninvestigated. These have been interwoven into the translations to color the thought. In support of a preferred religious view, an inconsistency and unreasonableness have been insinuated into the teachings of the inspired writings. The Son of God taught that the traditions of creed-bound men made the commandments and teachings of God of no power and effect. The endeavor of the *New World Bible Translation* committee has been to avoid this snare of religious traditionalism.”
—Charles Taze Russell, *The Watchtower* (1910)



Jehovah's Witnesses

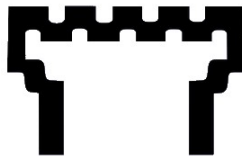


Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ Then again, perhaps these guys weren't the best scholars out there to translate your Bible for you...
- ◆ Attorney questioning Fred W. Franz, from the *NWT* translating committee (1954):
 - Q: Have you also made yourself familiar with Hebrew?
 - A: Yes.
 - Q: So that you have a substantial linguistic apparatus at your command?
 - A: Yes, for use in my biblical work.
 - Q: I think you are able to read and follow the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and French?
 - A: Yes.

 - Q: You, yourself, read and speak Hebrew, do you?
 - A: I do not *speak* Hebrew.
 - Q: You do not?
 - A: No.
 - Q: Can you, yourself, translate that into Hebrew?
 - A: Which?
 - Q: That fourth verse of the second chapter of Genesis?
 - A: You mean here?
 - Q: Yes.
 - A: No.

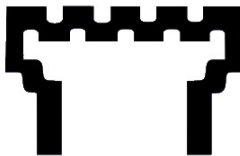
*New World Translation
of the
Holy Scriptures*



Jehovah's Witnesses

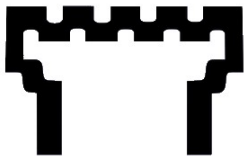
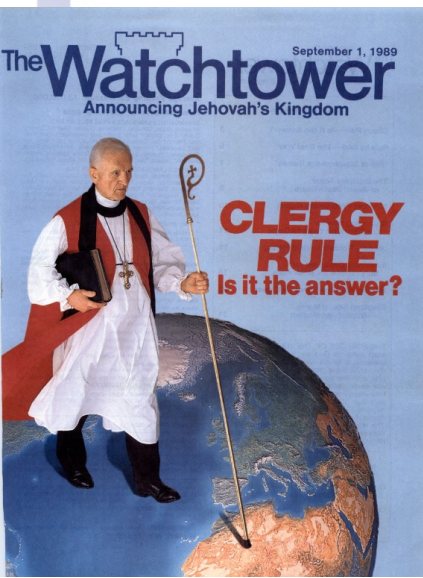
- ◆ Let's go through our six questions...
 - ◆ Do they have any authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?
 - ◆ *Studies in Scripture, The Watchtower, the New World Translation of the Bible*, and several small books
 - ◆ To a large degree, most of the changes that the *NWT* made to the Bible were to undermine the Divinity of Jesus, and to insert the name “Jehovah” for God
 - ◆ These are the common English Bible translations:
 - ◆ יהוה = *Yahweh* = “LORD”
 - ◆ אֲדֹנָי = *Adonai* = “Lord”
 - ◆ אֱלֹהִים = *Elohim* = “God”
 - ◆ κυριος = *Kurios* = “Lord”
 - ◆ θεος = *Theos* = “God”
 - ◆ The *NWT* re-translates יהוה, אֲדֹנָי, κυριος (and even אֱלֹהִים and θεος) as “Jehovah” 7,210 times
 - ◆ “Considering it a sacrilege to use some substitute such as κυριος or θεος, the scribes inserted the [Hebrew] tetragrammaton at its proper place in the Greek version text”
—from the *Foreward to the NWT*

*New World Translation
of the
Holy Scriptures*



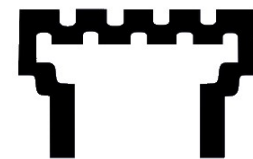
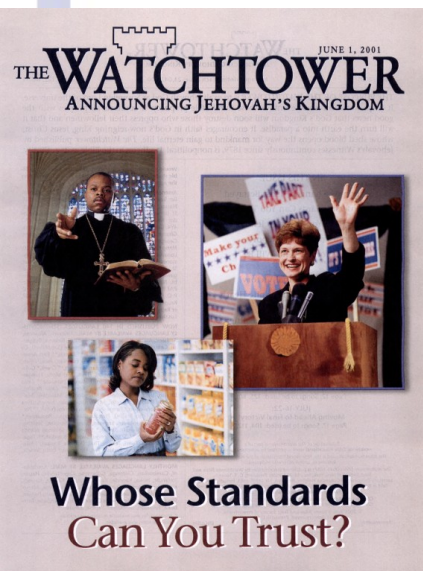
Jehovah's Witnesses

- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ◆ **“Christendom betrays itself as clearly not representing Bible Christianity. It claims to be the Bible's friend, but it has been a false friend.”**
—*The Bible: God's Word or Man's?*
 - ◆ **“The true religion must... honor God's name. Jesus made God's name, Jehovah, known to others. True Christians must do the same. Who are the people in your community that tell others about God's name?”**
—*Lessons for Seekers*
 - ◆ **“Only Jehovah's Witnesses, those of the anointed remnant and the "great crowd," as a united organization under the protection of the Supreme Organizer, have any Scriptural hope of surviving the impending end of this doomed system dominated by Satan the Devil.”**
—*Watchtower* (September 1, 1989) p. 19



Jehovah's Witnesses

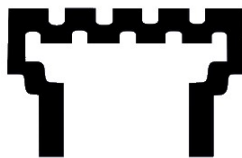
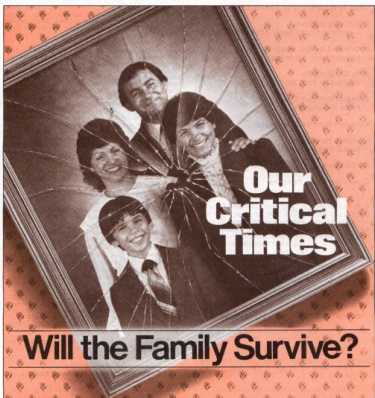
- ◆ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ◆ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ◆ **“Is it presumptuous of Jehovah's Witnesses to point out that they alone have God's backing? Actually, no more so than when the Israelites in Egypt claimed to have God's backing in spite of the Egyptians' belief, or when the first-century Christians claimed to have God's backing to the exclusion of Jewish religionists.”**
 - Watchtower* (June 1, 2001) p. 16
 - ◆ **“Just as Noah and his God-fearing family were preserved in the ark, survival of individuals today depends on their faith and their loyal association with the earthly part of Jehovah's universal organization.”**
 - Watchtower* (May 15, 2016) p. 22
 - ◆ **“Similarly, Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.”**
 - Watchtower* (February 15, 1983) p. 12



Jehovah's Witnesses

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 - ◆ **Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?**
 - ◆ **“Without question the execution of divine judgment upon apostate Christendom and the rest of Satan's world is imminent.”**
 - Watchtower* (October 1, 1984) p. 11
 - ◆ **“Let us recognize that Christendom is doomed, along with all the rest of Babylon the Great. She has refused to repent of her religiously immoral or adulterous course of action, her friendship with this world. She is like the rest of the ungodly world, even after Jehovah's Christian witnesses have plainly declared God's impending judgment to her.”**
 - Watchtower* (December 15, 1975) p. 755

October 1, 1984
The Watchtower
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ Let's look at the timeline of JW prophecies...

1889 "In this volume we offer a chain of testimony on the subject of God's appointed times and seasons, each link of which we consider Scripturally strong... it is beyond the breadth and depth of human thought, and therefore cannot be of human origin."

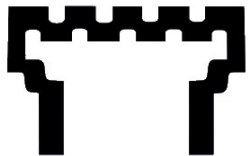
—*The Time is at Hand* (1889), p. 15

"The 'battle of the great day of God Almighty' (Rev. 16:14), which will end in A.D. 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced."

—*The Time is at Hand* (1889), p. 101

1891 "Measuring down the 'Entrance Passage' [of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh] from that point, to find the distance to the entrance of the 'Pit,' representing the great trouble and destruction with which this age is to close, when evil will be overthrown from power, we find it to be 3416 ["pyramid"] inches, symbolizing 3416 years from the above date, B.C. 1542. This calculation shows A.D. 1874 as marking the *beginning* of the period of trouble."

—*Studies in the Scriptures* (1891), p. 342



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

Let's look at the timeline of JW prophecies...

1892 "The date of the close of that 'battle' is definitely marked in Scripture as October, 1914. It is already in progress, its *beginning* dating from October, 1874."
—*Watchtower Reprints* (January 15, 1892), p. 1355

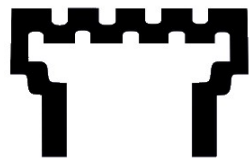
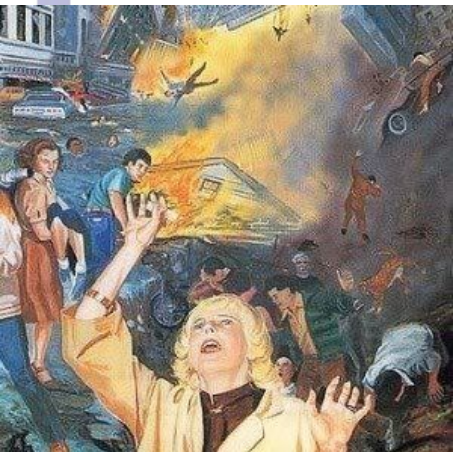
1894 "We see no reason for changing the figures--nor could we change them if we would. They are, we believe, God's dates, not ours. But bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the *beginning*, but for the *end* of the time of trouble. We see no reason for changing from our opinion expressed in the view presented in the *WATCHTOWER* of January 15, '92. We advise that it be read again."
—*Zion's Watch Tower* (July 15, 1894) p. 226

1897 "Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present, since October 1874, A.D., according to the testimony of the prophets, to those who have ears to hear it."
—*The Battle of Armageddon* (1897), p. 621

1913 "The 'battle of the great day of God Almighty' (Rev. 16:14), which will end in A.D. 1915 with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced."
—*The Time is at Hand* (1913 edition), p. 101

1914 Nothing happens.

1915 Nothing happens.



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

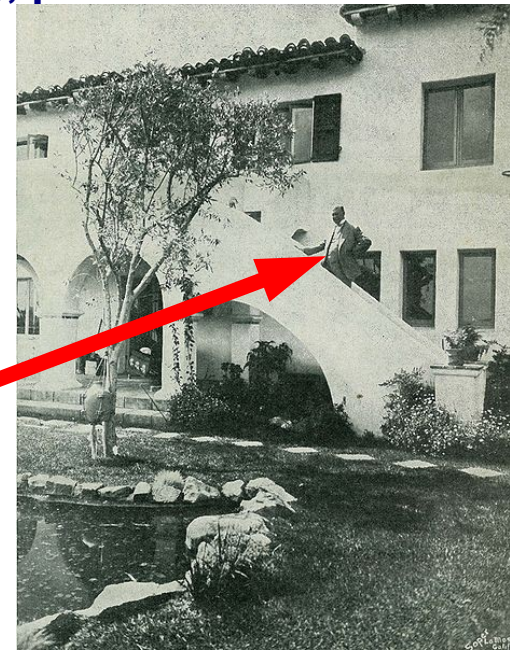
- Let's look at the timeline of JW prophecies...

1916 "Our eyes of understanding should discern clearly the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty now in progress; and our faith, guiding our eyes of understanding through the Word, should enable us to see the glorious outcome—Messiah's Kingdom."
—*Watchtower Reprints* (September 1, 1916), p. 5951

1920 "The great jubilee cycle is due to *begin* in 1925. At that time the earthly phase of the kingdom shall be recognized... Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old."
—*Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (1920), p. 89-90

(NOTE: The JWs believed this so strongly that they built a luxurious mansion for the "princes" of God to live in once they came to Earth to rule—called "Beth Sarim," or the "House of Princes," it is still in existence today in San Diego—

but it wasn't unused, since Judge Rutherford lived in it until the "princes" came to take possession...)



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

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—*Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (1920), p. 89-90

1922 "Lo, our King is here, and the year 1925 marks the date when all shall see His mighty power demonstrated in the resurrection of the ancient worthies, and the time when 'millions now living will never die'."
—*Golden Age* (March 1, 1922), p. 350

1925 Nothing happens.

1935 "There is no attempt on the part of *The Watchtower* to interpret prophecy, for the reason that no human creature can interpret prophecy."
—*1935 Yearbook of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, p. 52



HEAR
Judge Rutherford
Sunday, Feb. 15, 3 p.m.

OAKLAND AUDITORIUM

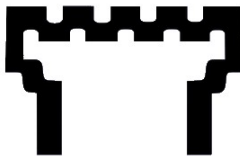
Civilization Doomed
but—"millions now living will never die"

IN A FREE LECTURE at the Oakland Municipal Auditorium Sunday, February 15, at 3 p. m., Judge Rutherford will tell the people why the greatest crisis of the ages is upon the world; why all nations are mustering their forces for the greatest conflict of all times, as foretold by the prophets of God, how that great trouble will be cut short by the Lord, and why millions now living will never die. A huge Western Electric voice amplifier now being installed will enable all to hear plainly in every part of the Auditorium.

The Message
of the
Hour
from the
Bible

Sunday, February 15, 3 p. m.
Seats Free! Come Early! No Collection!

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

♦ Let's look at the timeline of JW prophecies...

1941 "The German people are awakening to their horrible predicament. They no longer laugh as decent men and women were made to laugh, but their faces are white, pinched and filled with forebodings of what the near future will bring and is already hastening to bring to them—Armageddon, the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

—*Consolation* (October 29, 1941), p. 11

1942 "Proof is now being submitted that we are now living at 'the end of the days' and we may expect to see Daniel and the other mentioned princes any day now!"

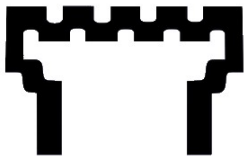
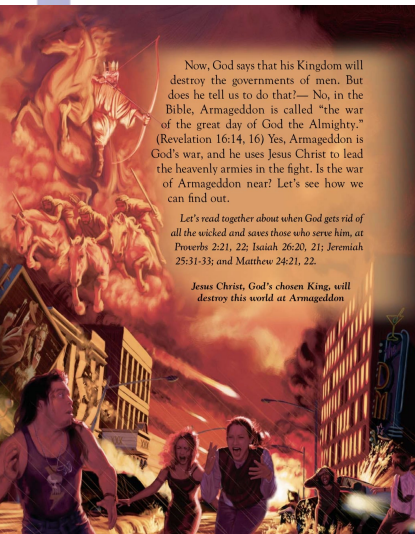
—*Consolation* (May 27, 1942), p. 13

1959 "Someone will ask, Rather than perfect government, did not 1914 mark the *start* of world woes? That is exactly the point! There is a close connection between the coming of God's kingdom and the catastrophic events"

—*Look! I Am Making All Things New* (1959), p. 23

1966 "The seventh period of a thousand years of human history will *begin* in the fall of 1975 CE (Christian Era)"

—*Life Everlasting in the Freedom of the Sons of God* (1966), p. 29



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's look at the timeline of JW prophecies...

1968 "During World War I God's people expected it to lead directly into Armageddon, but Jehovah prevented such a climax at that time. We didn't succumb to such an expectation during World War II."

—*Kingdom Ministry* (January, 1968), p. 5

"Just think, brothers, there are only about ninety months left before 6,000 years of man's existence on earth is completed... The majority of people living today will probably be alive when Armageddon breaks out."

—*Kingdom Ministry* (March, 1968), p. 4

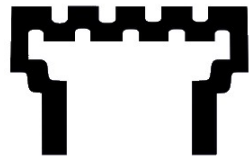
1974 "Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their lives in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end."

—*Kingdom Ministry* (May, 1974), p. 3

1975 Nothing happens.

1986 "Some, at least, of the generation that saw the 'beginning of pangs and distress' in 1914 will live to see Paradise restored on earth... There is little time left for them to change."

—*Look! I Am Making All Things New* (1986 edition), p. 27



Jehovah's Witnesses



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ Let's look at the timeline of JW prophecies...
- ◆ Let's read Deuteronomy 18:20-22 (*New World Translation*):
 - ◆ “The prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. And in case you should say in your heart: “How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not spoken?” when the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true, that is the word that Jehovah did not speak. With presumptuousness the prophet spoke it.”

(NOTE: *Reasoning from the Scriptures* cites 119 verses in its section on how to judge whether or not a word of prophecy is from Jehovah—but these verses from Deuteronomy are never cited)

*New World Translation
of the
Holy Scriptures*

