

CULTS

Lesson 1 w/Answers

Jehovah's Witnesses

Beginning with this lesson, we are embarking on what is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to the Church today, confronting the cults and world religions that would rob our friends, co-workers and loved ones of the truth and keep from them the great gift of salvation God has to offer them through Christ.

As indicated in the introduction to this study, my primary reference for this study is a great book titled "The Kingdom of the Cults" by Walter Martin (Author) and Ravi Zacharias (Editor). There are also some excellent study aids available at Rose Publishing on the Web, as well as numerous other sources easily available to you via the internet. One from Rose that you may find particularly useful is entitled "Christianity and Jehovah's Witnesses Comparison Chart".

So let's begin, first with a quick look at what Christ has to say about cults etc., springing up within and around the church and then this week we'll look at the Jehovah's Witnesses.

1. Read the following verses and note why each would apply to our study?
 - a. Matthew 7:15-23
 - i. ANSWER: Just as Jesus warns us about watching out for false prophets, we need to carefully discern when a religion that looks like the truth is in-reality a lie. This is a primary way that Satan leads millions astray, looking like the truth, but revealed to be a lie upon closer examination. Just because someone says that they are a "Christian" or that they "believe in God" does not make it so. Jesus tells us that we can tell by their "fruit," i.e., their actions and their motivation, or intent. Many cult practices look like, or purport to be, "Christian," - but they are grounded in lies.
 - b. Matthew 24:5
 - i. ANSWER: Even today many come in Jesus name, but their motives are not pure. They are coming to keep you from God, to rob you or the opportunity to be saved, and to fool Christians into believing lies that look like the truth. They will say things that sound enticing, but beware—Satan is very good at this.
 - c. 1 John 2:19
 - i. ANSWER: John recognized that just because someone follows Christ, and attends church and a local Bible study, it doesn't make them a follower of Christ. In some cases, they participate in these groups because they have ulterior motives, and not because they want to advance the kingdom of God.
 - d. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
 - i. ANSWER: Many of those who pretend to be followers of Christ are actually Satan's servants. In the end, they will get what they deserve. So, be aware of them, and do not allow them to lead you astray, no matter how enticing they may sound.
2. Write a brief definition for a cult in the space below.
 - a. ANSWER 1: Differs significantly from the normative expression of the religion.
 - b. ANSWER 2: A group gathered about a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible.
3. Who are the following people?
 - a. Charles T. Russell and J.F. Rutherford
 - i. ANSWER: Jehovah's Witnesses founders.
 - b. Mary Baker Eddy
 - i. ANSWER: Founded Christian Science.
 - c. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young
 - i. ANSWER: Mormon founders/leaders.

4. Who founded the Jehovah's Witnesses, and when did they take that name?
 - a. ANSWER: Charles T Russell, Oct 1931, Columbus Ohio
5. What is the "Watchtower", how many copies per month are published and in how many countries?
 - a. ANSWER: A Jehovah's Witnesses propaganda publication. Published 17.8 million copies each month distributed in 106 languages.
6. How are they organized? In the space below define the roles of the following:
 - a. New Member
 - i. ANSWER: To study and commit to field work; to become a Publisher.
 - b. Publisher
 - i. ANSWER: 1200 hours per year commitment to field work.
 - c. Pioneer
 - i. ANSWER: Contributes "significantly" greater than 1,200 hours per year of field work.
 - d. Congregation
 - i. ANSWER: The local body.
 - e. Kingdom Hall
 - i. ANSWER: Where Jehovah's Witnesses meet - they don't believe in churches.
 - f. Overseer or Elder
 - i. ANSWER: Appointed by higher officials for leadership positions.
 - g. Presiding Overseer
 - i. ANSWER: Person who leads the Elder meetings.
 - h. Service Overseer
 - i. ANSWER: Handles the service business with the congregation.
 - i. Ministerial Servants
 - i. ANSWER: Administrative assistants to the Elders.
 - j. Circuits
 - i. ANSWER: Association of congregations (20 each).
 - k. Circuit Overseer
 - i. ANSWER: Supervises the Circuit.
 - l. Districts
 - i. ANSWER: Geographical collection of Circuits (22 districts in US).
 - m. District Overseer
 - i. ANSWER: Supervises the District.
 - n. Branches
 - i. ANSWER: Collection of Districts.
 - o. Zones
 - i. ANSWER: Collection of Branches.
 - p. Headquarters
 - i. ANSWER: Called the Brooklyn Society.
7. What one holiday or special religious day do they celebrate?
 - a. ANSWER: The Memorial of the Christ's Death at Passover.
8. What's their doctrinal position on celebrating Christmas, Easter, the Sabbath, and Sunday Worship?
 - a. ANSWER: All of these are seen as pagan idol worship and are prohibited.

9. When do they meet, how many times during the week?
 - a. ANSWER: Five times a week for various training and working meetings - all in addition to the 1,200 or more hours of field work in most cases.
 10. Who is the authority of the church for all spiritual matters including Bible interpretation and teaching?
 - a. ANSWER: Only the Governing Body has that authority.
 11. What is their belief about the Bible as The Word of God?
 - a. ANSWER: The Watchtower Society Version is the true word of God - no other. (It grossly distorts the Bible to fit their doctrine.)
 12. What is their teaching about Christ?
 - a. ANSWER: Created as a man by God.
 13. What do they teach about the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?
 - a. ANSWER: Denied and rejected completely.
 14. What do they teach about life after death?
 - a. ANSWER: There isn't any - you're dead until the New Kingdom.
 15. Related to the previous question, what do they teach about the wicked and eternal torment in hell?
 - a. ANSWER: For the wicked, there is no hell, no suffering, and no afterlife. When the wicked die, they die. Only Jehovah's Witnesses have access to the afterlife.
 16. What is their position on the doctrine of salvation by grace?
 - a. ANSWER: Denied and rejected; see below.
 17. How is one "saved" in the Jehovah's Witness?
 - a. ANSWER: Only through the Watchtower society and by work for the same. Salvation not assured until the resurrection.
 18. What do they believe about the 144,000 witnesses referenced in Revelation 7:4-8 and 14:1-3?
 - a. ANSWER: Special group that will rule with Christ.
 19. What do they believe about Armageddon and Christendom?
 - a. ANSWER: Christendom is destroyed in Armageddon. By the way, they have falsely predicted the date of Armageddon five times (1872, 1914, 1925, 1941 and 1975).
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As you can see from our first study it will be difficult to limit ourselves to just one study a week, but we'll try. You will begin to notice common themes running through these false religions. You will quickly see each follows the thoughts, interpretations and writing of a person or persons as the ultimate authority, not the Bible. You'll see works as a central figure along with the concept of earning your way up levels etc., and you'll see a common theme that man can become God, or like God, and so on.

But most importantly you will notice how subtle the lies and false teachings are. They will bend the truth just enough so that it perverts sound Bible doctrine, but to the untrained will sound like, and look like, the genuine article.

As Walter Martin wrote in his book "we must be able to recognize and reject false teaching." To do means we must know the truth – let's cling to Bible as God's Holy and inerrant word – that will be our source of truth as we examine these false religions masquerading as followers of Christ.

May God strengthen us in the days ahead with wisdom so that we may discern the truth and lead others to Him and away from these false teachers and prophets.

Thanks for studying with us. In Christ, Wes