

Why I Left The Jehovah's Witnesses Organization

by Leon Kennedy

I have left a human religious organization, but I have not left Jesus Christ. I am just a Christian now, a member of Christ's church. Jesus is my Savior, who is the only Savior of mankind (Luke 2:11). I would like to sincerely say that I have no personal hard feelings against the Jehovah's Witnesses. Many are very dedicated to their religion. Yet, several of them teach one way and live another! As a child of God (Eph. 5:1), I respect their right to believe in the Bible as they choose and to work out their own salvation. God respects the right of our own free will.

However, I realize we will be held accountable for what we believe and practice, according to God's Word. We must be honest and earnest enough to make our calling and election sure (2Pet. 1:10). This means we must be willing to change when we see we are wrong, in light of God's truth. I hope this article might help those who have been lead astray by their erroneous teaching.

Some Things I Saw Wrong With The Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses

1. Wrong Source of Authority. The greatest contributor to religious division, I think, is the lack of complete respect for God's Word. It must be the only religious authority by which men should live to please God. We can go to heaven only if we abide in Christ's pure Word (John8:31-32), which means we must only obey God's will as revealed in the Bible (Matt. 7:21). Lawlessness (going outside God's law) is condemned, even by seemingly sincere religious folk (Matt. 7:22-23). At a dedication baptism of the Jehovah's Witnesses, I wondered why the Witnesses seem to put more trust in humanly written Watchtower publications of tracts, pamphlets and books, than in God's Word. The Word alone is powerful enough to convict and convert the sinner. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12 NASB). God's Word alone is sufficient to guide and sanctify the Christian. Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:17 NASB). The Witnesses believe in the Watchtower because they erroneously think that it is the faithful servant who gives food to the other servants in Matthew 24:45-47: "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions." Jesus had been speaking about His return, which would be unexpected. To illustrate the need to be ready and busy doing your duty in the meantime, Jesus uses an illustration of two servants, one faithful and the other one evil and lazy. All Jesus is teaching here is that each servant of His should be busy doing his assigned work. Faithful discharge of your duty is rewarded with a higher place of responsibility. The evil servant is unconcerned and slothful in view of His master's return. He is caught unawares and is punished for slacking off. So, there is no religious organization over others in this verse. That is reading too much into the Bible.

2. Denial of the New Birth. The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe what the Bible says about being born again. "Jesus answered and said to him, `Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3 NASB). The new birth is "of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). It is a spiritual birth of a spiritual seed (1 Pet. 1:23) revealed by the Spirit, which happens when a penitent believer is immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. In spite of what the Bible says at Acts 22:16, they do not believe baptism washes away sins (Make All Things Sure, p. 30). The old man of sin is buried in a watery grave, and the new babe in Christ emerges from the water (Romans 6:4). We must be born again, or regenerated by God, to live above a life of habitual sin. The apostle John tells Christians, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God "(1John 3:9) This applies to all who would be true Christians.

3. Denial of the Godhead. They deny the full Deity of Jesus, as well as the personality and Deity of the Spirit. "Never was there a more deceptive doctrine advanced than that of the trinity. It could only have originated in one mind and that of the mind of Satan" (Reconciliation, p.101). Concerning the Son of God, they say, "When Jesus was on the earth, he was a perfect man, nothing more and nothing less.... Jesus was not God the Son" (Reconciliation, p.111, 113). Although I know that the Bible says Jesus was fully human like us (Heb. 2:17), I also read Paul's statement that He was also fully God: "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). Jesus was the agent that brought all created things into being, so He could not have been a created being (Col. 1:15-17; Jn. 1:2-3). Jesus accepted worship, which a mere man should not do, because such is reserved for Deity alone (Matt.14:23; Jn. 5:23; Rev.22:8-9). Jesus claimed the divine designation, I AM, from Exodus 3:14 of Jehovah God for Himself (Jn. 8:58). He also claimed to be one in essence and nature with the Father (John10:30). The Jews understood the meaning of this claim to Deity. They accused Jesus of blasphemy and said, "You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God" (Jn.10:33). Thomas, when he saw Jesus in His resurrected glory, exclaimed, "My Lord and My God!" (Jn. 20:28). Jesus is part of the Godhead or one divine family, because we are baptized into the Name (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). The Jehovah's Witnesses also say that the Holy Spirit is merely "God's active force" (The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life, p. 24). "The holy spirit is not a person and is therefore not one of the gods of the trinity" (Reconciliation, p. 115). Yet, I read in my Bible that Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit by the masculine personal pronoun "he," not "it" (Jn.16:13-16). He has the traits of personality because He has a mind (1 Cor. 2:10-11), and He can be lied to (Acts 5:3), blasphemed against (Mt. 12:31), grieved (Eph. 4:30) and insulted (Heb. 10:29). He also shows He is a person because He speaks (Jn. 15:26), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), wills (1 Cor.12:11) and loves (Rom. 15:30). The Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), all knowing (1 Cor. 2:10-11), all present (Psa. 139:7), all wise (Isa. 40:13) and all-powerful (Gen.1:2; Lk. 1:35). He is equally associated with the Father and the Son in the Godhead (1 Cor. 12:13; Matt. 28:19).

4. Denial of Christ's Bodily Resurrection. They say, "Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected an invisible spirit creature" (Let God Be True, p. 138); and also, "Somewhere Jehovah miraculously preserved that body" (Deliverance, p. 170). They compare Jesus' body with the body of Moses, whose body was buried no man knows where (The Truth Shall Make You Free, p. 264). Yet, I read Jesus' promise concerning His physical body: "Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.... He was speaking of the temple of His body" (Jn. 2:19,21). The Jehovah's Witnesses make Jesus a liar concerning His prophecy about His bodily resurrection. The angel at the empty tomb told the women disciples, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you'" (Mk. 16:6-7). Jesus appeared in His physical body, which had been transformed, to His disciples (Lk. 24:37-43). His body bore the physical marks of crucifixion (Jn. 20:25,27). The disciples were qualified to be eyewitnesses to the resurrection (Acts 10:40-41). Denial of Jesus' bodily resurrection is denying a fundamental fact of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-6).

5. Denial of Hell. They also deny the reality of hell as a place of eternal punishment, because they say such a place would make God too cruel. "The doctrine of eternal torment in hell is another one of Satan's vicious lies" (Enemies, p. 127). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned us about the danger of hell, if we take God's place of judgment in angrily calling a brother a fool (Matt. 5:22). He spoke of the coming baptism of fire, which is the fate of those who reject Him (Luke 3:16). He also says, "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him [Jehovah God] who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). This punishment will exist just as long as the reward of the faithful, which is eternal (Matt. 25:46). Impenitent wrong doers and the self-righteous will be cast into hell, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt 8:12; 13:42).

6. Confusion of Physical and Spiritual Death. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the apostle Paul is talking about a physical, not spiritual, death in Romans 6:7:"for he who has died is freed from sin." They think that when you physically die as a sinner, you have paid the penalty for your sins. Therefore, you will not be judged by the sins you have committed in this life, but you will only be judged by what you do during the millennium. However, this verse is talking about a new Christian who has died (has been separated from) the old, sinful life. Jesus taught that dying in your sins carries the penalty of spiritual death in hell. In Matthew's account of the Judgment Day, Jesus condemns those who failed to help others (Matt. 25:41-46). He sentences them with these words: "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'...And these will go away into eternal punishment" (Matt.25:41, 46). The spiritual punishment of Hell is called "the second death" (Rev. 20:14).

7. A Lack of Benevolence. In my experience, they are not benevolent to help others. Practically all their money goes to support the Watchtower. This is one main reason I left that organization, because of their lack of benevolence, even towards a fellow member. Such goes against clear Bible teaching. The apostle John asks an extremely important question, "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). All people who claim to be in Christ must put on Christ. Paul states, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:20). This is probably one of the most difficult verses in the Bible for a Christian to live by, but we must try! Jesus taught us, in the parable of the Good Samaritan that our neighbor is anyone that I can help at his point of need (Luke 10:30-37). We should never grow weary of doing good, helpful things for others. This includes our enemies and even our brethren! If the Bible commands us to love and help an enemy, how much more we should love and help our brethren. We should be filled with love and mercy, especially toward each other. Each of us has our individual obligation to fulfill, and not pay lip-service to, Galatians 6:10: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

8. Binding Human Rules. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that when a member of that organization is dating, they should always have a chaperon on the date, no matter how spiritually mature he or she may be. I was told that I could not sit next to another single woman in the assembly, unless we were dating. Another told me that I had to be married to the woman I wanted to sit by at assembly! When Christians are mature, other Christians should trust them. Paul had been entrusted with the gospel (Titus 1:3). What does dating have to do with being entrusted with the gospel? If God trusted Paul enough with such a precious thing as the gospel, should we not be trusting enough of other mature Christians that they will behave as such in private or public? Happily, as true Christians, we know that God and His word never changes (Mal. 3:6; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23). Because of the opinions of men, there are too many errors and contradictions in this organization. Instead of looking to the teachings and traditions of men, we must look to our unchanging God who bestows every good gift to us (Ja. 1:17). The truth of Christ is the only standard of faith and practice (Jn. 12:48). It alone can make us free from sin and error. Human doctrines cannot make us free (Jn. 8:31-32). We must look to and be faithful to Jesus, and not to the movements of men. "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).