

THE BIBLE VS. EVOLUTION

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LESSON 2. ALL RELIGIONS ARE NOT THE SAME

KEY SCRIPTURE: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." Eph. 5:11 (NKJV)

PREPARING TO TEACH THE LESSON:

We have seen that the creation/evolution controversy is at its heart a battle between two contradictory world views. One side, evolution, is based on the belief that absolutely everything can be explained by purely natural processes. The other side, creation, postulates that some things may require an influence that is not part of nature – God.

If there is a God, how can we know Him? Is the Bible really a communication from Him, or is it instead simply an inspiring book written by a group of old Jewish religious leaders? Recent studies have shown that even among regular churchgoers, the percent who believe the Bible is the Word of God has plummeted. Among the younger generations, the percent is shockingly low.

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- Many believe the Bible is on a par with the rest of the world's "holy books."
- Many think it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere.
- Many believe that Christianity is only one of many ways to get to God
- Many believe that the Bible has been copied and recopied so many times that we can't be sure that what we have today is what was originally written.
- Many believe that each person determines his or her own truth – that what is true for you may not be true for me,

and so on. When asked to give a reason why they are Christians, few are prepared to do so. They often appeal to what their parents or churches taught them, or simply rely on their feelings. None of these is a very solid foundation.

TODAY'S AIM:

At the conclusion of this and the following lesson, students should have a firm grasp why the Bible, out of all the so-called holy books in the world, is worth accepting as the revealed Word of Almighty God. They should be able to follow the admonition of 1 Peter 3:15: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." The Christian faith is not blind faith, but educated faith.

They should also recognize that the Bible makes clear claims about who Jesus is, and his authority over nature and every person – including themselves.

Introducing the Lesson:

Unfortunately, few of those who call themselves Christians are prepared to defend their faith to skeptics.

1. SOME COMMON FALSE IDEAS:

- a. The **Bible** is no better than any of the world's other holy books.
- b. It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are **sincere**.
- c. Christianity is just one of **many** ways to get to God.
- d. The Bible has been copied and recopied so many times that we can't be sure that what we have is what was originally written.

e. You don't need a book to show you the way to God anyway. You can just follow your **feelings**.

COMPARING THE BIBLE TO OTHER "HOLY BOOKS"

We might think that among the religions of the world, there would be hundreds of books claiming to be the word of God. This is not true.

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2. Only three of the world's so-called holy books specifically claim to be divinely **inspired**: the Bible, the Qur'an, and the Book of Mormon.

None of the books of other world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, Daoism, and all the other -isms) claim to be divine revelation. They claim nothing more than to be the wisdom of the "ascended masters" who founded those religions, e.g., Buddha, Zoroaster, Nanak, Confucius, and the like.

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We should realize that every one of these religions has no problem accepting evolution. According to their own beliefs, then, who are the "ascended masters"? Nothing more than highly evolved apes, thinking highly evolved ape thoughts. But if we evolved from apes, our brains evolved from ape brains. If our brains evolved from ape brains, our thoughts evolved from ape thoughts. How do we know they evolved right? We may not even be asking the right questions!

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Suppose two apes had developed the ability to communicate with each other about abstract concepts such as "*What is the meaning of bananas?*" While they might be proud of their intelligence, we humans would find their attempts at philosophy hilarious. They would not be intelligent enough to realize how stupid they were.

Those who follow the doctrines of these other world religions are basing their eternal destiny on nothing more than evolved ape wisdom. They have no way to be sure they are right. There is no way they can be sure about *anything*.

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3. All the "holy books" in the world **contradict** each other. If any of them is right, all the others must be wrong.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES.

For comparison to other books and religions, here are some of the most important Biblical beliefs most Christians share.

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4. Beliefs most Christians share:

- a. God is a personal being. He has revealed Himself in the persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- b. Jesus is the Son of God. He is not a **created** being; He created the universe.
- c. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal **force** but the third Person of the God-head.
- d. All humans have a **sin** nature. We cannot save ourselves from our sins.
- e. Jesus was born of a virgin and lived a **sinless** life. He became a human to die in payment for our sins. We can only be saved through faith in Him.
- f. Humans die once and then face **judgment** before God.

BELIEFS OF ISLAM.

The Qur'an is accepted as the word of Allah (the Arabic name for God) by about a billion Muslims. (The religion is Islam; the members are Muslims.) Many public figures have claimed that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. This is utterly false.

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5. Some anti-Biblical Muslim doctrines:

a. Allah, the God of Islam, has no **son**. It would be blasphemy to say He does.

The God of the Bible has a Son, Jesus.

b. No one can have a personal relationship with **Allah**. Not even Muhammad did.

c. One is saved by following a system of works known as the **Pillars** of Islam.

The Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9)

d. The only way one can be assured of salvation is if he dies while fighting for Allah in **Jihad** , or holy war. (Sura 3:157)

e. The "holy spirit" is not God but the angel **Gabriel**, who delivered Allah's messages to the prophet Muhammad.

f. Jesus was a great prophet, but not **God**. He did his first miracle when he spoke from his cradle while still a newborn baby.

The Bible says that Jesus was eternally God (Jn. 1:1-14), but did not do His first miracle until he turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana when He was about 30 years old (Jn. 2:1-11).

g. Sura 4:157 says that **Jesus** did not actually die. However, in 19:33 he prophesied his own death, and 3:55 says he did die.

h. A man may have up to four wives, and many have sex with an unlimited number of slave girls. (4:3, 4:24, 33:52, 70:28).

Definitely not the same God!

ORIGIN OF THE QUR'AN.

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6. The Qur'an was written in the early 600's when **Muhammad**, whom Muslims believe was the greatest of the prophets, claimed to be receiving revelations from Allah.

His followers wrote what he dictated on whatever materials were available. None of the original fragments have survived to the present.

Besides the Qur'an, Muslims also have a collection of traditions known as Al Hadith. Shiites confirm only a few hundred sayings of the Hadith, but Sunnis confirm thousands. Interestingly, the Hadith (Vol. 1, no. 63; Vol. 4, no. 709; Vol. 6, no. 507 & 510) confirms that after Muhammad died (632 A.D.), there were several versions of the Qur'an until 651, when one of Muhammad's successors, the caliph Othman, compiled the official version of the Qur'an known as the Othmanic Recension. Muslims claim that one copy has survived to the present in Turkey, but they will not let non-Muslim scholars see it.

CREDENTIALS OF THE QUR'AN.

(Quotations are from N.J. Dawood's translation of the Qur'an, fifth revised edition published by Penguin Books, London, 1990.)

The Islamic religion has spread around the world by force. However, the Qur'an, on which it is based, does not have very good credentials to support its claims to be the word of God.

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7. The Qur'an has very few credentials.
 - a. It admits that though God could have furnished **signs** to confirm it (6:35), He did not (Sura 10:20, 13:7, 17:59, 29:50).
 - b. Muslims are not allowed to doubt the Qur'an because it says "This book is not to be **doubted**." (Sura 2:1).
 - c. The Qur'an claims to be of such quality that no one could produce even one chapter of literature like it (2:23, 10:38). Elsewhere (11:13) it challenges the unbeliever to produce ten such chapters. No **standard** is given by which one can determine whether his work is of the same quality as the Qur'an, so this is purely a matter of opinion.
 - d. Muslims believe Muhammad did not simply make up the Qur'an because it says, "Had he invented lies concerning Us, We would have seized him by the right hand and severed his heart's vein..." (69:45) And since no such **misfortune** befell Muhammad, the Qur'an must be what he said it is! (11:35, 52:30)

Yet the Qur'an says of evildoers that

"Had it been His will to scourge them for their sins, He would have hurried on their punishment; but He has set for them a predestined time they cannot evade." (18:58)

Many other Suras (7:99, 10:11, 10:69, 31:24, 35:45 et al.) confirm that evildoers are not always quickly punished for their transgressions. A Muslim cannot be sure that Muhammad was not a deceiver whose punishment God delayed. He must simply believe, and hope he is right.

PROPHECY IN THE QUR'AN.

The Qur'an makes many predictions about the future day of judgment, but there is no way to determine if these are correct.

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8. In the entire Qur'an, there are a total of **two** prophecies predicting events that were still in the future when they were written.
 - a. The first had to do with a war that had been going on for many years. Sura 30:1 says that "The **Greeks** have been defeated in a neighbouring land. But in a few years they shall themselves gain victory..."
The Persians had defeated the Greeks in 615 A.D. but the two had been fighting for years. It was not dangerous to predict that the Greeks would eventually win a battle, especially since Muhammad did not say when it would happen.
 - b. The second passage we could consider a prophecy was written after Muham-

mad was driven away from Mecca. He said that he would return. It came true when he returned to enter the city with a great band of armed followers.

This was a safe prediction: before he wrote it, he had already signed a **treaty** saying that he would be allowed to return to Mecca in peace.

If this had not come true, hardly anyone would have ever heard of Islam.

These are the only two testable predictions in the entire Qur'an. All in all, there is not much reason to accept it as the word of God.

MORMONISM.

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The only other book that specifically claims to be divinely inspired is the Book of Mormon. This claims to tell the history of the North, Central, and South American Indians over about a thousand year period. It begins in about 600 B.C. when God is supposed to have told an Israelite named Lehi to leave the Middle East and sail to a new promised land. He and his two sons Laman and Nephi sailed with their families across the Indian Ocean, around Australia, and across the Pacific for about 8,000 miles. They finally landed on a narrow strip of land (presumably around Panama) in the Americas, finding that the new land was completely uninhabited. From there they began to multiply and eventually populated all of the Americas.

Lehi's son Nephi loved and followed the God of his father, but Laman did not. As the years passed their descendants found themselves in frequent battles. They became easy to distinguish, because God caused the Lamanites to become much darker than the fair-skinned Nephites. The conflict was interrupted by the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in the Americas, which led many on both sides to repentance and faith. However, after about 300 years the Lamanites reverted to their ungodly state and eventually wiped out all the godly Nephites. The dark-skinned victors became the ancestors of the Native Americans. The record of the events was preserved by Nephite men such as Moroni and Mormon, who became angels after their death.

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9. Many Mormon doctrines do not come from the Bible but from two other books Mormons accept as inspired: *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*.

These books do not make the specific claim to be inspired, but Mormons accept them as such.

10. Some anti-Biblical Mormon doctrines:

- a. God the Father used to be a **man**. He had a father, grandfather, and so on.
- b. Any man (not woman) has the potential to some day become the "Heavenly **Father**" in his own spiritual kingdom.
- c. God became the biological father of **Jesus** through sexual relations with Mary.
- d. Jesus and Lucifer are **brothers**.
- e. In order to achieve maximum exaltation to godhood, each man should have as many **wives** as possible.

Because of conflicts with U.S. laws, not many Mormons openly practice polygamy. However, because it was a revelation to their early leaders such as Brigham Young, they will not renounce it as sin.

- f. When they die, men can become **angels** or else disembodied spirits who can eventually come back into a body and become human again.
- g. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. However, it is not the blood of Jesus but of the **sinner** himself.

Clearly, the Mormon religion is also very different from Christianity.

ORIGIN AND CREDENTIALS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

In 1827, Joseph Smith of Manchester, New York, claimed that he had been visited by an angel named Moroni. He said the angel had given him some metal plates written in “Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics,” which he translated into the Book Of Mormon. (This location was significant because it was the site of the final battle between the Lamanites and Nephites.) The Mormon religion began when the Book of Mormon was published in 1830.

11. Some problems with Mormonism: ¹

- a. No one knows where the plates are today because Smith said he returned them to Moroni.
- b. The “Three Witnesses” who Mormons claim saw the plates actually said they saw a **vision** of the plates. All three were later **excommunicated** from the church.
- c. There were another “Eight Witnesses” who claimed they had encountered the plates. One said the plates were in a covered box. Of the eight, five later left the church. The only three who remained were Joseph Smith’s **father** and two **brothers**.
- d. Archaeologists have never found any trace of a system of **writing** called “Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics.”
- e. When the first edition of the Book of Mormon was published, Joseph Smith said it was “the most correct of any book on earth.” However, when the second edition was released, it had at least 3913 **corrections**.
- f. Mormon missionaries have claimed that the Book of Mormon is used as a guidebook for archaeology in the Americas. In response, the **Smithsonian** Institution in 1982 issued a letter saying that it had never used the Book of Mormon for any such purpose. In 1998, the Smithsonian reissued the letter to reiterate its earlier statement. ²
- g. The fundamental premise of the Book of Mormon has been falsified. **DNA** studies have shown that American Indians are not closely related to Israelites, but are much closer to East Asians. ³

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There is not a single ancient document to confirm that the Book of Mormon existed any time before 1830. When Mormons claim that it contains fulfilled prophecies of future events, they are referring to events in the Americas described nowhere else but in the Book of Mormon. Not a single one of these alleged events has ever been confirmed by any other source.

h. There is only one statement in the Book of Mormon that can be considered a predictive prophecy: Alma 7:10, allegedly written before the birth of Jesus, says

“... the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth. And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers...”

Joseph Smith wrote this more than 1800 years after Jesus was born. But Jesus was born in **Bethlehem**, NOT Jerusalem!

Why do people follow Mormonism despite such flimsy support? Perhaps it is because Mormonism uses the devil's lie from the Garden of Eden: “You shall be as gods.”

THE WATCHTOWER (JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES)

In 1884, Charles Taze Russell, who believed there was no hell, founded the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (better known as Jehovah's Witnesses). The organization claims to believe the Bible, but it teaches that the Bible can only be understood by following its teachings such as those found in Russell's *The Studies in the Scriptures*, *Watchtower*, *Awake* and *Kingdom Ministry* magazines, and its many books published each year.

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12. Some key Watchtower doctrines:

- a. One can only please Jehovah by belonging to the Watchtower and following its instructions.
- b. Jesus is not Almighty God, but is a **lesser** god created by Jehovah.

But Isa. 43:10, from which Jehovah's Witnesses get their name, says “ “You are My witnesses,” says the Lord,” “And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me.” (NKJV)

The Watchtower makes a distinction between Jesus, the “Mighty God,” and Jehovah, the “Almighty God.” Isaiah 9:6 identifies Jesus by the former title. But Jeremiah 32:18, using exactly the same Hebrew words, says that *Jehovah* is the “Mighty God.” The identical title refers to both Jesus and Jehovah. They are one and the same.

c. Jesus was known as the archangel **Michael** until he took on a human form.

- This is an ancient heresy known as Arianism. The Scriptures show that it is wrong.
- For example, In Acts 20:28, Paul instructs the elders to “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (NKJV) The blood of Jesus is identified as the blood of God.
 - 2 Cor. 13:5 instructs those who profess to be Christians to “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.” (NKJV)

The King James Version uses the word “reprobates.” Witnesses have a problem with this verse. Since they do not claim that Jesus Christ lives in them, they must be reprobates! In order to avoid this conclusion, their *New World Translation* deliberately adds words so as to alter the verse to say “Jesus Christ in union with you” rather than “Jesus Christ in you” as the Greek text reads. (What in the world does “Christ in union with you” mean anyway? Does he have

to obey your wishes?) But note that the passage does not say that any sort of “Christ spirit” is to be in us, but Jesus Christ personally. Only God could be in more than one place at a time. If Jesus can dwell in billions of believers at the same time, He has to be God.

- Witnesses have a problem understanding how Jesus could be Jehovah, because that would mean that Jehovah sent Jehovah to earth. However, Zechariah 2:8-11 says this is precisely what happened. Remember that every time we see “LORD” in all capital letters in the King James version, it means that the Hebrew text uses the name Jehovah. If we reinsert the name Jehovah in place of “LORD” in this passage, the meaning becomes plain as day.

8 For **thus saith Jehovah** of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that **Jehovah of hosts hath sent me**.

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, **saith Jehovah**.

11 And many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that **Jehovah of hosts hath sent me** unto thee.

Who is the speaker? Jehovah. Who sent Him? Jehovah. Though our human understanding cannot grasp how such a thing could be, the conclusion is inescapable: Jehovah sent Jehovah. Jesus and Jehovah are one.

In order to get around the obvious message that Jesus and the Father are one not just in purpose but also in being, the Watchtower’s *New World Translation* inserts strategically placed quotation marks to make it seem as if Zechariah is the one who was sent, not Jehovah. It practices similar insertions and distortions every time a passage indicates the deity of Christ. Why? Because the Bible disagrees with the Watchtower’s doctrine. In case of disagreement, the Bible loses.

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d. The Holy Spirit is not a person but instead an impersonal **force**.

In John 14:13-14 Jesus twice refers to the Holy Spirit by the masculine pronoun *ekeinos* rather than the neuter form *ekeino*. His words indicate that He considered the Holy Spirit “he” rather than “it.” Besides, Jesus told us in John 16:13 that the Holy Spirit would speak whatever He hears. How can an impersonal force hear anything?

e. Jesus died on a torture stake rather than a **cross**.

The Watchtower maintains that Jesus died as a result of being impaled on a torture stake rather than being hung on a cross. Rather than the most common meaning of the word, skewering, the organization uses a less common meaning, nailing to a single stake. Every time the Bible refers to a cross, their *New World Translation* substitutes “torture stake;” every it refers to the crucifixion of Jesus, the *New World Translation* changes it to “impalement” instead. As justification, the organization says that the original meaning of the Greek word for “cross,” *stauros*, was a stake. However, by the time of Christ the word *stauros* could mean either a stake or a cross.

Any time a word can have more than one meaning, the context determines the correct understanding. How does the New Testament use the word *stauros*?

- First, historians tell us that the standard Roman method of execution was cruci-

fixion on a cross, not nailing to a stake. Throughout the centuries, Christians and non-Christians alike agreed that this was how Jesus died. Even the Qur'an, written about 600 A.D., says He was crucified. Yet the Watchtower (not founded until the late 1800s) says everybody else has been wrong for almost 2000 years.

- Second, in John 19:31-33 the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and the others with Him broken so that they would die quickly. This is sufficient to show that He was crucified, not impaled.

Crucifixion was designed to bring about an agonizing death that might stretch out over days. The victim was suspended by his hands and feet with the arms extended and attached to the crossbeam (the *patibulum*). This posture compressed the rib cage and made it difficult to breathe. The subject could only do so by pushing up with his legs. In case the authorities wanted to speed up death for some reason, the soldiers would break his legs so he would quickly suffocate. Try this experiment. Stretch out your arms to the side as far as possible, slightly above head level, and try to breathe. It's very difficult. Now stretch your arms directly over your head as far as you can. Though it's not very comfortable, it's still easier to breathe that way.

One of the goals of crucifixion was to intimidate onlookers so that they would be too afraid to defy Rome. The Romans made sure the spectators knew how much the victims suffered. They deliberately maximized the agony by stretching the hands out to the side rather than ease the victim's suffering by stretching them overhead.

- Third, in John 20:25 Thomas demanded to see the print of the nails -- plural -- in Jesus' hands. The only reason more than one nail was needed is that His hands were stretched out on the cross. Only one nail would be required to fasten the hands together above the head.

Jesus confirmed the stretching out of the hands during crucifixion when He told of Peter's future execution:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, *thou shalt stretch forth thy hands*, and another shall gird thee, and carry [thee] whither thou wouldest not." (Jn. 21:18)

- Fourth, in Matthew 27:37 we read explicitly that Pilate's inscription reading "The King of the Jews" was placed over Jesus' *head*. If he were nailed to a single stake, then His *hands* would have been the highest point on His body and the passage should read that the inscription was over his hands. It does not. He was crucified in the standard Roman manner.

Why is it so important to the leadership of the Watchtower to deny that Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, and insist that He was impaled on a torture stake instead?

Perhaps it is because "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18).

f. After Jesus rose from the dead, he had a new "**spirit** body" rather than one of flesh and bones.

However, He still had the scars from His crucifixion, and He ate with His disciples to prove that He still had flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39). Besides, He had already said that He was going to raise up the same body (Jn. 2:19-21), not a different one. Was He telling the truth or not?

Witnesses should think carefully about denying that Jesus came back in the flesh, for John writes

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1 John 4:3)

John identifies one of their main doctrines as the spirit of antichrist!

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g. There is no such thing as an eternal **hell**. Evildoers (and Jehovah’s Witnesses who are not good enough) will simply go out of existence.

Those who die before the Battle of Armageddon but merit eternal life will cease to exist until Jehovah recreates them with their personalities and memories intact.

What does the Bible say? Jesus preached more on hell than anyone else. Even Witnesses admit that He created everything. He must have known what He was talking about, since He made it. Hell is a real place.

Do we cease to exist when our bodies die? The Bible says that for believers, at least, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

Whether or not we are conscious until Jesus returns to earth, Acts 24:15 and John 5:28 - 29 tell us that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous, the former into eternal life and the latter into judgment.

“Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, and those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.”
(John 5:28-29, New World Translation)

Even in the Watchtower’s own translation, Rev. 14:9-11 says that for those who receive the mark of the beast,

“the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and day and night they have no rest” (*New World Translation*).

The Bible makes it plain that those who receive the mark of the beast will not quickly go out of existence, but instead be tormented forever. Are they the only ones who will suffer eternal punishment, or could it be that many other sinners will experience the same thing after they are resurrected to judgment?

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h. Heaven is unavailable to most people who please Jehovah. 144,000 Jehovah’s witnesses went there, but the rest will live forever in an earthly **paradise**.

The number 144,000 comes from Rev. 7:5-8, which tells how many from the tribes of Israel were to be sealed on their foreheads. Witnesses apply this number to their organization (which has nothing to do with the twelve tribes of Israel). The number also occurs in Rev. 14:1-4, where we read that all in that number are virgins. This rules out the ancestors of today’s Jehovah’s Witnesses who lived in the past. Virgins do not become anybody’s ancestor!

The organization teaches that just about all of the 144,000 have already died and gone to heaven. Thus, the best a Jehovah’s Witness can hope for is to live forever in an earthly paradise.

To support the idea that throughout eternity there will be two distinct classes of Christians, those in heaven and those on earth, Witnesses cite the first part of John 10:16:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.”

They fail to read the rest of the verse. Jesus continues,

“... them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd.”

He was making the point that at that time not all of His followers were yet united, but we will be some day. When that happens,

“we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:17)

- i. Jehovah’s Witnesses have an annual “Memorial Service” (the equivalent of Communion or the Lord’s Supper), but only the 144,000 early Witnesses can partake. Since most or all of them have died, the rest can only **watch**.
- j. Holiday and birthday celebrations are considered “creature worship” and are **forbidden**. So are military service and patriotic activities.
- k. **Blood** transfusions are absolutely forbidden, even if the patient is going to die without one.

It is obvious to anyone but a Jehovah’s Witness that the Watchtower does not speak for God. A Witness who comes to your door believes that he cannot possibly get to heaven, but if he does enough good works (obeying the Watchtower without question, selling books and magazines, reporting weekly how he spent his time, etc.), he will be able to live forever on earth. Even if he is right, he can never know if his works are sufficient. If they are not, he will be no better or worse off than the worst criminals in history. Like them, he will simply go out of existence.

If you are wrong and he is right you will cease to exist at the end of your earthly life and it won’t matter anyway. If you are right and he is wrong you will go to heaven to be with God, but he will go to an everlasting hell. You should not wish him well on his mission of deception (2 Jn. 10-11), but instead of turning him away, you can witness to the Witness who comes to your door about the love, grace, and forgiveness available through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Many books available in Christian bookstores can tell you how to go about this labor of love.

NON-REVELATION RELIGIONS: HINDUISM.

Hinduism and Buddhism include well over a billion people around the world. There is no centralized authority, so not all Hindus believe exactly the same things. Many of their beliefs come from books known as the Vedas, written by various Hindu sages over many centuries.

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13. Some common beliefs of Hinduism.
 - a. There are hundreds of millions of **gods**.
 - b. There is no such thing as sin, only **ignorance**.
 - c. You will go through repeated **reincarnations** in which you may come back as a higher or lower being, anywhere from an insect to a member of the highest caste.

Unlike the Western idea of reincarnation that says you will come back in a better and better condition each time, Hinduism says there is a good chance you will come back as a lower life form such as an insect.

- d. Your status in the next life depends on ***karma***, which is determined by how good you were in this life.
- e. You do not need a **savior**; you save yourself by good works.

In order to be reincarnated at a higher level, each person must work out his own bad karma. Thus, if someone is suffering in this life, it is because of bad actions in their previous life. This means that if you see someone suffering, you must not help them. By doing so you are interfering with their karma and actually doing harm rather than good.

- f. Your sense of personhood is an illusion. You are not really a personal being, but a part of a **dream** in the mind of one of the highest gods such as Vishnu.

If you are nothing more than part of Vishnu's dream, how can he judge you for not being good enough?

- g. There is no such thing as heaven. If you attain high enough spiritual wisdom, you may be able to achieve *nirvana*, in which you will lose your sense of **personhood** and merge with the impersonal essence of the universe.

The highest hope for a Hindu is to one day go out of existence and escape the endless cycle of reincarnation. Ironically, the Jehovah's Witness substitute for hell is the same as the Hindu substitute for heaven.

BUDDHISM.

Centuries after Hinduism started, a wealthy young Hindu prince named Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha, or "Enlightened One") was troubled by the suffering in the world. He left his palace and traveled for several years until he came up with "Four Noble Truths" which he believed were the answer to suffering. These were:

- (1) Suffering is universal.
- (2) The cause of suffering is selfish desire.
- (3) The cure is to rid oneself of cravings.
- (4) The method is to follow the "Noble Eightfold Path."

The Noble Eightfold Path was:

- (1) Right knowledge, (2) Right intention, (3) Right speech, (4) Right conduct, (5) Right means of livelihood, (6) Right effort, (7) Right mindfulness, and (8) Right concentration.

There are several fundamental problems with Buddha's beliefs and those of his followers.

14. Fundamental Problems with Buddhism.

- a. Buddha started with the Hindu belief that there is no such thing as right and wrong, only ignorance. How, then, could there be "right" anything?
- b. Unlike many Hindus, Buddha was an atheist. Rather than millions of gods, he (and many of his Buddhist followers) believed in **none**.
- c. Buddhists try to do good works such as meditating in order to work out their karma and eventually reach nirvana. If there is no **god**, though, who decides they have done enough to be reincarnated at a higher level?

OTHER NON-REVELATION RELIGIONS.

Most other religions do not have many formally defined doctrines. Each person decides what to believe.

Visual
#2-24

15. Some other religions (e.g., Freemasonry) follow books they believe to be holy, but these books do not claim to be **revealed** by an all-knowing God. Believers can only hope they are right.
16. Many religions (Voodoo, Santeria, spiritism, etc.) do not even have holy books to follow, but depend only on what they believe are revelations from **spirits**. Christians believe these spirits are actually demons.

WHY LEARN ABOUT OTHER RELIGIONS?

The world is moving faster and faster toward a one-world system as implied in the Book of Revelation. Many people uncritically accept claims that all religions are basically just different paths to the same God. Jesus did not leave us that option.

Visual
#2-25

Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through **Me**. (NKJV)

Unfortunately, for many people

Unless you stand for something, you'll **fall** for anything.

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