

“Milk and Meat” – Answering Questions on Christianity
Life Bible-Presbyterian Church Adult Sunday School

DOCTRINE OF CHRIST – part 3

D. Jesus is God-man.

1. Ancient heresies on the person of Christ: Gnosticism, Monarchianism; Arianism (Council of Nicaea AD 325); Apollinarianism (Council of Constantinople AD 381); Nestorianism (Council of Ephesus AD 431); Eutychianism (Council of Chalcedon AD 451).
2. Modern day heresies: Jehovah’s Witnesses & Mormonism.

Jehovah’s Witnesses (JWs)

Jehovah's Witnesses are a form of Arianism (they believe Christ was a created being) and Unitarianism (deny the Trinity). They are best known for their literature - *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* - and for refusing military service and blood transfusions. They reject Trinitarianism, immortality of the soul, and hellfire. They do not observe Christmas, Easter and birthdays. Famous JWs include top tennis players, Serena Williams and Venus Williams, musicians Prince, Janet Jackson and Michael Jackson and supermodel Naomi Campbell.

1. Who are JW founders & leaders?

- a. Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). In 1884, he founded the Zion’s Watchtower Tract society, now renamed The Watchtower. In 1886, Russell predicted the end times and the coming of Christ in 1914. When that did not materialize, the dates were revised to 1918, then 1925. Russell died in 1916. In 1870, Russell and others formed a Bible study group in Pennsylvania, disputing the doctrines on the immortality of the soul, hellfire, predestination, the bodily return of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. In 1876, Russell and Nelson Barbour co-wrote *Three Worlds*, which taught that Christ had returned as an invisible spirit being in 1874 inaugurating the "harvest of the Gospel age," and that 1914 would mark the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. In July 1878, Russell began publishing the magazine *Zion's Watch Tower*, in order to show that the world was in "the last days," and that a new age of earthly and human restitution under the reign of Christ was imminent.
- b. Joseph Rutherford (1869-1942). A dynamic and prolific writer, the name Jehovah’s Witnesses (taken from Isa 43:10) was coined under his leadership in 1937.
- c. Nathan Knorr (1905-1977). Knorr took over the movement with 115,000 followers. Under his visionary leadership, the membership, buildings and publication grew.
- d. Frederick Franz. Franz predicted that Christ would come in 1975. Many JWs sold their properties and houses and left their jobs in anticipation of the event. But 1975 came and went uneventfully.
- e. Today JWs has a worldwide membership of 8 million. They use their own Bible translation, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, published in 1961. There have been four revisions, the last in 1984. Another important booklet is *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1985, last revised in 1989).

2. What’s wrong with the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses?

- a. God.
 - JW: There is one God in one person, no Trinity (*Let God be True, pp.100-101*). The Holy Spirit is God’s impersonal active force, not a person who is alive (*The Watchtower, Jun 1, 1952*).
 - **Biblical response**: *The Holy Spirit is an eternal Person, can be grieved by our sins (Eph 4:30), and possesses all the essence of God (John 14:16-17, 26; Acts 5:3-4). The Holy Spirit speaks and sends (Acts 13:2, 21:10-11). Only a personality can do these things, not an invisible force. The Holy Spirit is a personal God (Jn 16:7-14; Gen 1:2).*
- b. Jesus.
 - JW: Jesus was Jehovah’s first creation, his ‘only-begotten Son’, who created all other things (deny the eternality of the Son). Jesus was Michael, the archangel who became a man (*The Watchtower, May 15, 1963, p.307*). Jesus was only a man, not God in flesh. Jesus did not rise from the dead in his physical body, but was raised as a spirit. Jesus returned to earth, invisibly, in 1914. Jesus’ ransom sacrifice did not include Adam.
 - **Biblical response**: *JWs is a form of Arianism that was condemned as heresy in AD 325 at the Council of Nicaea. JWs misinterpreted the Greek term “monogenes” as “only generated” and suggested that it means Christ is but a creature. Most authoritative Greek lexicons and grammar books render ‘monogenes’ as “only or unique”, the only member of a kind. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is the eternal Son of God (Jn 8:58; Lev 11:17-18; Isa 44:6). Though in human form, Jesus never ceased to be Deity - God in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16) - for in His physical body dwells the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9).*

c. Salvation.

- JW: Good works are necessary for salvation. Salvation is by faith and works. It is possible to lose your salvation. Only 144,000 JWs will go to heaven (Rev 7:5-8). The rest, “the other sheep” (John 10:16) are second-class believers who have to earn their salvation while on earth.
- **Biblical response**: *Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:8-9). It is the gift of God, and cannot be obtained by human works. Christ’s death on the cross saves sinners who have repented from their sins and receives eternal security. There is no evidence of second class believers.*

d. Annihilation.

- JW: After death the soul is annihilated; there is no hell fire for punishment of the wicked.
- **Biblical response**: *Christ clearly taught that there is life after death. Just consider the historical incident of the rich man and Lazarus, related by our Lord in Luke 16:19-31. There is a conscious existence after death, and there is no annihilation of souls. Hell is literal and real to every unredeemed soul when they depart from this life into a place of eternal torment and suffering (Rev 20: 11:15; Mt 13:41-42, 49-50; Mark 9:47-48).*

e. Blood.

- JW: Blood transfusions are sinful as they violate God’s command against eating blood. JWs will not allow blood transfusion even in a life-threatening situation.
- **Biblical response**: *Gen 9:4 & Lev 19:14 prohibit the eating of animal blood. But this has nothing to do with transfusion of human blood for medical purposes to save lives. Blood transfusion is not equivalent to eating blood. “A blood transfusion replenishes the supply of essential, life-sustaining fluid that has otherwise drained away or become incapable of performing its vital tasks in the body. A transfusion is not even equivalent to intravenous feeding because the blood so given does not function as food. The JWs’ argument is based on a false analogy.” (Sire, 86). Even orthodox Jews who hold to strict OT laws accept the practice of blood transfusion. If we refuse blood transfusion, which saves lives, we are in fact violating the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.”*

f. End times prophecies.

- JW: William Miller and Frederick Franz have predicted the end times and the coming of Jesus in 1914, 1918, 1925, and 1975. All these prophecies did not come to pass.
- **Biblical response**: *Beware of false prophets whose prophecies did not come to pass. Deut 18:20-22: “20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die ... 22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously.” Christ said no man knows when He will return (Mt 24:4-5, 23-24, 36-37). Try the spirits (1 Jn 4:1 believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.) Test their doctrines for authenticity. There are false prophets in the last days (Mk 13:22 “For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.”; 2 Cor 11:13-15 “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 ... for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”).*

g. Arms & Armies.

- JW: They are not allowed to serve in the armed forces or carry arms. They refuse to vote, vow, salute the flag, or sing the national anthem.
- **Biblical response**: *God commands us to obey human authorities whom He appointed for the proper order of society (Rom 13:1-7). “1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. ... 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”*

3. **How should we respond to a Jehovah’s Witness?** [<http://www.4truth.net>]

- f. Be prepared to spend time with the person. But limit your conversation to the question “Who is Jesus?”: “I admire your diligence in sharing your beliefs. However, we disagree on a major point, the deity of Christ, and I’d like to discuss this with you.
- g. For example, once I had a discussion with the JW’s who had come to my home. I asked them for Scriptures which in their opinion indicated that Jesus was created. They cited Col 1:15. I showed them that the word “firstborn” could not possibly mean “first created” in this passage. The JW’s and I

continued to talk a little longer. In summing up, I said, "We've talked a while (3 hours and 15 minutes!) and here's how I see our conversation. You haven't provided a single good reason from Scripture why I should believe Jesus was created. But, I have provided many texts that strongly indicate Jesus *is* God.

- h. Remember, your responsibility is to plant the seed. It is the Holy Spirit who works the change (1 Cor 3:6-7). The purpose of your discussions with the JW should be to reveal the truth with love, patience, and compassion (2 Tim 2:24-26; 1 Pet 3:15-16). The person who does not care about the truth will not change. The person who does care about it will think about what you have said and engage in further study. But ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who brings a person to the truth.

Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)

1. **Who are their founders?** This is a religious movement which claims the support of the Scriptures, but distorts the Christian gospel by an additional revelation or by subtracting a fundamental tenet.
 - a. *The founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith*, was born in 1805. In the year 1823, he claimed that an angel named "moroni" told him to uncover some ancient gold plates. He apparently found these gold plates and translated them into the Book of Mormons, published in 1830. Three witnesses originally testified to have seen the actual gold plates. Later, each of these either left the church or discredited Smith or denied ever seeing the gold plates.
 - b. After Joseph Smith died, *Brigham Young took over and built Salt Lake City* in Utah, USA, which became the HQ of Mormonism, aka the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Their current leader is Thomas S. Monson. They boast a membership of 15 million and sent out 85,000 missionaries. Famous Mormons include Donny & Marie Osmonds and Mitt Romney. Their official website is www.lds.org. Be aware of their pseudo-Christian moral teachings on the Internet.
2. **What do the Mormons (LDS) believe?**
 - a. **On God.**
 - **LDS:** God has flesh and bones, and is merely a man who has achieved godhood over time and by his works. They believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct gods, and that God the Father has eternal wives through whom spirit children have been and continues to be born. They taught that God had physical relations with Mary that resulted in the conception of Jesus Christ (*Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses*). There are many gods. There is a mother god (*Articles of Faith, James Talmage*). God used to be man on another planet (*Times & Seasons, Joseph Smith; Journal of Discourses, Brigham Young*). God resides near a star called Kolob (*Mormon Doctrine, p.428*). God the Father has a body of flesh and bones (*Doctrines & Covenants*). We were first begotten as spirit children in heaven and the born naturally on earth (*Journal of Discourse*). All humans, as well as Jesus Christ and Lucifer, are god's heavenly children (*Doctrine and Covenants*).
 - **Biblical response:** *God is spirit and is not confined to a physical body (see John 4:24). Jesus Christ was incarnated through a miraculous and nonphysical conception through the Virgin Mary. He was fully God from the beginning (John 1:1). Together with the Person of the Holy Spirit, they form the triune (three in one) eternal God.*
 - b. **On Man.**
 - **LDS:** Man is eternal just like God. Each man's spiritual body in the pre-existent state was formed by God's physical relations with one of his spirit wives. Adam's fall in the garden of Eden was a fall upward! The fall was not sinful but necessary for the propagation of the human race. Man has the full potential of becoming God just like Christ and they quote Psalm 82:6 "Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." They believe that a Gentile Mormon convert has its gentile blood purged and replaced by the blood of Abraham through the Holy Spirit, and becomes the actual child of Abraham. After you become a good Mormon, you can potentially be god (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*).
 - **Biblical response:** All men are created beings and have no prior existence before their earthly life. Man has fallen and because of their sin, are separated from God (Isa 59:1-2). No man can save himself (Rom 3:10, 23, 6:23); only Christ can save him.
 - c. **The Bible.**
 - **LDS:** Mormons accept four books as scripture and the word of God. The King James Version of the Bible is one of them, but only "as far as it is translated correctly"- seemingly allowing for possible questions about its authority. Joseph Smith made over 600 "corrections" to its text. Other "standard works" are the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrines and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Book of Mormon is more correct than the Bible as the Bible is missing precious parts. If it had not been for Joseph Smith, there would be no salvation.

The *Book of Mormon* has "the fullness of the gospel" and tells the story of a supposed migration of Israelites in 600 B.C. to the American continent. These Israelites subsequently lapsed into apostasy although their story was preserved on golden plates written in Reformed Egyptian. Joseph Smith, it is said, translated the plates by the "gift and power of God" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 135:3). {note: Reformed Egyptian does not exist as a language.} The golden plates were returned to the angel Moroni after they were transcribed and Moroni returned them to heaven. The *Book of Mormon* does not contain explicit Mormon doctrine. *Doctrines and Covenants* contains 138 revelations of the Mormon prophets and two "declarations." Most of Mormon doctrine can be found here: priesthood, baptism for the dead and polygamy. *The Pearl of Great Price* contains Smith's religious history, the Articles of Faith, the Book of Abraham, and the Book of Moses. Since the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, the first edition has gone through extensive "corrections" in 1920 & 1981.

- **Biblical Response:** The Bible explicitly warns against adding to or subtracting from its teaching (Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2). The Bible alone is inspired of God and profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

d. One True Church.

- **LDS:** The Mormon church claims to be the only true church. In God's supposed revelation to Joseph Smith, Jesus Christ told him to join no other church for "they were all wrong . . . their creeds were an abomination . . . those professors [members] were all corrupt" (*The Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith-History 1:19). Mormons teach that after the New Testament, all churches became heretical and no true saints existed until the "Church of the Latter-day Saints" was organized, hence their name. Non-Mormons are thus called "Gentiles." The new revelations given to Smith, the institution of the prophet and apostles in the church, the restoration of the divine priesthoods, and the temple ceremonies make the church authentic. True and full salvation or exaltation is found only in the LDS Church.
- **Biblical Response:** The true church of Jesus Christ has had an ongoing presence and witness in the world since Pentecost. Jesus Christ promised that His church, *truly* baptized and regenerate believers, would not fail (Mt 16:17-18). The marks of a true church include faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42), not the creation of new doctrines.

e. Salvation & Christ's Atonement.

- **LDS:** The Mormon salvation plan: all people have eternal life, but only the most faithful Mormons have godhood or enter the celestial kingdom. In order to obtain this ultimate step, Mormons must exercise faith in the God of Mormonism, its Christ, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; exercise repentance; and be baptized in the LDS Church. Mormons must also keep the "Word of Wisdom" by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine; tithe to the church; attend weekly sacrament meetings; support the Mormon prophet; do temple works; and be active in their support of the church.
- **Biblical Response:** Salvation is by faith in Christ alone (Rom 1:17). Works, baptism and sacraments can never save us (Eph 2:8-9).

3. **What to Say to Mormons**

- Be a loving and knowledgeable Christian. The object is *not* to win an argument but to lead a person to the truth. Therefore, present the evidence in a patient and loving manner (2 Tim 2:24-25). Do not view them as enemies, but as dedicated people who have been misled. Pray for them. Be aware of the Mormon doctrines. Mormons use Christian vocabulary (gospel, atonement, god), but redefine their meanings. Define clearly what you mean when you use biblical words.
- The Bible teaches that salvation is through the cross of Christ (Jn 3:16; Rom. 10:4,10-13; Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is a gift to be received, not a merit to be earned. Christianity is trustworthy because the text of the Bible is pure and much of it is confirmed by archaeology and secular history. We also have the proof from Jesus' resurrection.
- However, the Book of Mormon has "no archaeological proof. ... You can look all you want. And there's been a lot of speculation about it. There've been books written by Mormon scholars saying that "this event took place here" or "this event took place here." But that's entirely speculative. There is absolutely no archeological evidence that you can tie directly to events that took place." - *Dr. David Johnson, Professor of Anthropology, BYU*. Professional Egyptologists have translated the papyri (for the *Book of Abraham*) that Joseph Smith used and have found his translation to be wrong. If Smith's translation of the *Book of Abraham* is wrong, perhaps his translation of the *Book of Mormon* is also wrong. His claims of having a God-given ability to translate and to being a chosen Prophet of God become dubious.

Ref: [Jack Sin, *Cultic & Occultic Movements*; Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*]