

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses is a Christian denomination founded in the late 19th century by Charles Taze Russell. The group originated from the Bible Student movement and officially adopted the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" in 1931 under the leadership of Joseph Franklin Rutherford. The denomination is known for its door-to-door evangelism, unique interpretations of the Bible, and emphasis on the use of God's name, Jehovah.

More info: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/changed-bible-beliefs/>

Core Beliefs: Jehovah's Witnesses share some core Christian beliefs, such as the belief in one God and Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior. However, they differ significantly in several key doctrines. They believe that God's name is Jehovah and that it should be used in worship. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, they view God as one singular being with Jesus as His created son and the Holy Spirit as His impersonal force. They emphasize the imminent establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth and believe that only 144,000 anointed Christians will go to heaven, while others will live forever on a paradise Earth. Jehovah's Witnesses believe in a universal resurrection, where both the righteous and the unrighteous will be resurrected. The righteous will enjoy eternal life on a paradise Earth, while the unrighteous will be given an opportunity to learn and change. Those who do not accept Jehovah or live according to His principles after being resurrected will face eternal destruction, meaning they will be permanently annihilated and cease to exist, rather than suffering eternal torment.

More info: <https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/go-to-heaven/>

Practices and Rituals: Worship among Jehovah's Witnesses is characterized by simplicity and a strong focus on Bible study and evangelism. These worship services typically consist of Bible readings, discussions, and public talks. Key practices include:

1. **Baptism:** Baptism by immersion is essential for membership and is a public declaration of dedication to Jehovah.
2. **The Lord's Evening Meal:** Also known as the Memorial, it is observed annually to commemorate Jesus' death. Only those who believe they are among the 144,000 partake of the bread and wine.
3. **Evangelism:** Witnesses are known for their regular door-to-door ministry, where they teach non-members about their faith and distribute literature such as "The Watchtower" and "Awake!" magazines.
4. **Bible Study:** Personal and group Bible studies are strongly emphasized. Publications from the Watch Tower Society, the church's official publisher, are used as study aids.

Places of Worship: Jehovah's Witnesses meet in modest buildings known as Kingdom Halls. These halls are functional spaces designed for Bible study and worship, with no religious symbols or ornate decorations. Larger gatherings, such as conventions and assemblies, are held in rented facilities or dedicated assembly halls.

Leadership and Organization: The leadership structure of Jehovah's Witnesses is hierarchical and centralized. The Governing Body, based in Warwick, New York, is the highest authority responsible for doctrinal decisions and organizational policies. Local congregations are overseen by elders, who are appointed to provide spiritual guidance and administrative oversight. There are no paid clergy; all positions are filled by volunteers. The organization emphasizes the unity of belief and practice, and so all congregations follow the same teachings and guidelines.

More info: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/governing-body-jw-helpers/>

Holy Days and Observances: Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate traditional Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter, nor do they observe secular holidays or birthdays, because they believe these have pagan origins. The most important annual observance is the Memorial of Christ's death, held on the anniversary of the Last Supper according to the Jewish lunar calendar. This is the only religious holiday they observe, and it is marked by a special meeting.

More info: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/memorial/>

Symbols and Icons: Jehovah's Witnesses avoid the use of religious symbols such as crosses or icons in their worship, as they believe that these constitute idolatry. Their primary symbol is the Watchtower, representing their role in proclaiming God's Kingdom. Literature, such as "The Watchtower" and "Awake!" magazines, as well as their translation of the Bible, the New World Translation, are central to their religious life and identity.