

Jehovah Witnesses And Premillennialism

Intro: “There may be nothing in all of religious literature that is quite so confusing or conflicting as the Jehovah’s Witnesses system of eschatology.” (Wayne Jackson, “The Lord’s Return” *The Spiritual Sword* 6 (Oct. 1974):1:25.) We will first look at their views concerning the 144,000 then look at their view of hell and eternal punishment.

I. THE 144,000.

A. What they teach:

1. Only a little flock of 144,000 go to heaven and rule with Christ, the rest (the “other sheep”) will be on a renovated earth (Rev. 7:9).

a. Quotes:

- (1) “At Revelation 14:1, 3 the Bible is conclusive in predicting that the final number of the heavenly congregation will be 144,000, according to God’s decree. Because his true congregation was pictured by the twelve tribes of Israel under Moses, the heavenly congregation is likened to twelve tribes of 12,000 members each, under the Greater Moses, Christ Jesus. The congregation, then, is restricted to this select, predestinated number; and in heaven it is made the capital part or ruling body of Jehovah’s universal organization. It is referred to in Scripture also as the ‘body’ of Christ and as the ‘bride’ of the Lamb Jesus Christ. (Revelation 7:4-8; 19:7; 21:9; Ephesians 1:20-23). All other creatures receiving life at God’s hand through the Kingdom will not be a part of ‘the congregation of God’, but will live on this earth under the rulership of Christ Jesus and his congregation in the heavens.” (*Let God be True*, p. 129-130.)
- (2) “The Bible shows that only a limited number go to heaven, and that those who will live forever on earth will be a great crowd of unlimited number. (Revelation 14:1-5; 7:9; Psalm 37:11, 29) That God’s kingdom under Christ will fill the earth and reign over it is shown by a prophecy in the Bible book of Daniel.” (*Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Twentieth Century*, p. 16.)
- (3) “All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God’s will and then faithfully carry out their dedication will be rewarded with everlasting life (Romans 6:23). However, that life will not be the same for all. The Bible plainly shows that some of these, that is, 144,000, will share in heavenly glory with Christ Jesus, while the others will enjoy the blessings of life down here on earth (Revelation 14:1, 3; Micah 4:1-5).” (*Let God be True*, p. 298.)

b. Passages they use:

- (1) Luke 12:32 “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
- (2) Rev. 14:1,3 “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads....³ And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”

- (3) 1 Cor. 15:40-53
 - (4) Rev. 5:9-10 “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;¹⁰ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”
2. Russell distinguished between two classes of saved people; a higher class, which he called class *n* which would be the Bride, the little flock, which would sit with the Lord in his throne; and a lower class *m*, who shrink from the death of the human will and will not sit with the Lord in his throne, but would finally reach birth as spirit beings.
 - a. For Russell both classes were spirit-begotten; today the lower class cannot be spirit-begotten.
 - b. Russell taught that members of *m* class would eventually become spirit beings; today they teach that the other sheep will never become spirit beings.
 3. Witnesses say the first resurrection took place in 1914 with the coming of Christ to Jehovah’s temple. At that time part of the 144,000 were raised and the others remain on earth through the years and those who die after 1914 are changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye to an eternal spirit existence with Christ.
 4. The other sheep, great crowd, or little group are not limited in number. “Anyone may become one of this great crowd of sheeplike people who will gain everlasting life on a paradise earth.” (*Paradise Lost*, p. 195.)

B. Witnesses have split the saved into two groups with two separate and distinct hopes for the future.

1. The way of salvation and the eternal destiny is different.
2. “The hope of the ‘other sheep’ is earthly; the hope of the ‘little flock’ is heavenly.” (*Paradise Lost*. P. 195.)

C. Refutations:

1. The Bible teaches one-ness not two-ness.
 - a. Eph. 4:4 “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*”
 - b. 1 Cor. 12:13,20 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit....²⁰ But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.”
 - c. Gal. 3:26-29 “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
 - d. Eph. 2:15-16 “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;¹⁶ And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:”
2. Revelation 7 is symbolic (as is the 144,000).
 - a. The number 144,000 is a case of a definite number being put for an indefinite number; representing the irreducible completeness of the people of God; they are precisely noticed and none are left out.
 - b. The figure is $12,000 \times 12 = 144,000$.

- c. Notice the number 12 in Revelation.
- (1) Woman clothed with the sun has a crown of 12 stars on her head; Rev. 12:1 “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:”
 - (2) New Jerusalem has 12 gates and at the gates 12 angels; Rev. 21:12 “And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:”
 - (3) On the 12 gates the names of the 12 tribes of Israel are inscribed; Rev. 21:12
 - (4) The city has 12 foundations and inscribed on them are the names of the 12 apostles of the lamb; Rev. 21:14 “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”
 - (5) The city is a square of 12,000 stadia; Rev. 21:16 “And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”
 - (6) The height of the wall is 144 cubits (12 x 12); Rev. 21:17 “And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”
 - (7) The foundations of the walls consist of 12 costly jewels; Rev. 21:19-20 “And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; ²⁰ The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”
 - (8) The 12 gates are 12 pearls; Rev. 21:21 “And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”
 - (9) The tree of life yields 12 kinds of fruit each month; Rev. 22:2 “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.”
 - (10) The 12,000 sealed from each of the 12 tribes of Israel is 144,000 (12,000 x 12); Rev. 7:4-8 “And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. ⁵ Of the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad *were* sealed twelve thousand. ⁶ Of the tribe of Aser *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed twelve thousand. ⁷ Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand. ⁸ Of the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.”
- d. The other figures are symbolic.
- (1) They are all Israelites.
 - (a) This would exclude Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Who were never of the tribes of Israel) and all Gentiles if literal.
 - (b) Mat. 8:11 “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”
 - (c) Many from the east and west indicates Gentiles.

- (2) There is no blemish on them.
 - (3) They are all virgins (if literal it would exclude Abraham, Moses, Peter).
 - (4) They are all males (if literal it would exclude Mary, Dorcus, Hannah, etc.)
3. The 144,000 and the great multitude are the same.
- a. Both are described as being before the throne of God.
 - (1) The great multitude; Rev. 7:15 “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”
 - (2) The 144,000; Rev. 14:3 “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”
 - b. The 144,000 are purchased or redeemed.
 - (1) Rev. 14:3
 - (2) All saints are purchased.
 - (a) Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
 - (b) Eph. 1:14 “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”
 - (c) 1 Pet. 1:18-19 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”
 - c. The 144,000 follow the Lamb everywhere He goes.
 - (1) Rev. 14:4 “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”
 - (2) All Christians follow Christ; John 10:27-28 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.”
 - (3) We will all be with Christ; 1 The. 4:16-17 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then 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.”

II. JESUS CAME INVISIBLY AND QUIETLY IN 1914 BEING RECOGNIZED THROUGH SPIRITUAL EYES ONLY BY JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES.

A. Jehovah Witnesses statements:

1. Charles Russell claimed the Lord returned in 1874 but now completely silent concerning this date: “Thus we found the time of our Lord’s second advent clearly proven to be in 1874—in October of that year....And now he has come! The Lord is indeed present! (*Studies in the Scriptures, Series III*, p. 127,133.)
2. They assert, “It is a settled Scriptural truth that human eyes will not see him at his second coming.” (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 295.)
3. “In A. D. 1914, at the close of the ‘seven times’ of the Gentiles, Christ Jesus, whose right it is to be God’s King in the true and everlasting Theocracy of heaven, came

and God gave the throne of The Theocratic Government to him...Christ Jesus came to the Kingdom in A. D. 1914, but unseen to men.” (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 300.)

B. They take this from the Greek word *parousia*.

1. “The meaning of *parousia* is more exact than the word ‘coming’ contained in the general English versions. It does not mean he is on the way or has promised to come, but that he has already arrived and is here.” (*Let God Be Found True*, p. 198.)
2. “His return is recognized by the eyes of one’s understanding, such eyes being enlightened by God’s unfolding word.” (*Let God Be Found True*, p. 198.)
3. This word is found 24 times in the New Testament.
4. The New Testament associates *parousia* with a visible, audible return of Christ at the end of the world.
 - a. 1 The. 4:15-16 “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”
 - b. 2 Pet. 3:12 “Looking for and hasting unto the coming [*parousia*] of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”
5. Jesus is present with us now.
 - a. Being God He is omnipresent.
 - b. He is with Christians
 - (1) Mat. 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
 - (2) Mat. 28:20 “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”
 - (3) Heb. 13:5-6 “*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. ⁶ So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”
 - (4) Christians see Him be the eye of faith which is not done by unbelievers.
 - (5) John 14:19-24 “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. ²⁰ At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. ²¹ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. ²⁴ He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”

C. Jesus return will be both visible and audible.

1. Acts 1:11 “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”
2. Rev. 1:7 “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”
3. 1 The. 4:16-17 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then 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.”

4. 2 Pet. 3:10 “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

D. The Kingdom began not in 1914 but on Pentecost of Acts 2.

III. HELL IS MANKIND’S COMMON GRAVE; NO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

A. Gehenna.

1. The Witnesses point out:
 - a. The word refers to “The Valley of Hinnom.”
 - b. During early times infants had been burned alive in this valley; it was the site of the worship of Molech.
 - c. Later it was a place for burning of refuse and for sanitary reasons they kept the fires burning continually.
2. They teach:
 - a. In the teachings of Jesus “where hell is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna* it means everlasting destruction or extinction.” (*Let God Be True*, p. 77.)
 - b. “*Gehenna* means a condition of death from which there will be no resurrection.” (J. F. Rutherford, *Creation*, p. 286.) *Gehenna* means “everlasting destruction or extinction.” (*Let God be True*, p. 77.)
 - c. They say that “death is the highest penalty known to the law of any land. No punishment could be greater than complete destruction. Such is the punishment that God will inflict upon the wilfully wicked.” (Rutherford, *Creation*, p. 288.)
 - (1) If so, why did Jesus teach; Mat. 10:28 “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (what can God do that man cannot).
 - (2) What is the sorer punishment of Heb. 10:29 “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”
3. Jesus took the idea from a literal place on earth and gave it a spiritual usage; using it to denote the realm of eternal punishment.

B. Contradicts the Bible’s teaching on degrees of punishment.

1. Luke 12:47-48 “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.⁴⁸ But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”
2. It would be the same punishment.

C. Eternal Punishment.

1. They teach the wicked will be eternally destroyed.
 - a. “The doctrine of hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons: (1) Because it is wholly unscriptural; (2) Because it is unreasonable; (3) Because it is contrary to God’s love; (4) Because it is repugnant to justice.” (*Let God be True*, p. 80.)
 - b. “In all places where hell is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna* it means everlasting destruction....It is a picture or symbol of complete annihilation, and not of eternal torment.” (*Let God be True*, pp. 96,97.)

- c. They say, eternal or everlasting used with punishment means that it is eternal in the sense that it is done and over with, will never be repeated and the results are forever.
 - d. “Everlasting shows no recovery is possible.” (*Make Sure of All Things*, p . 163.)
2. Bible teaches the punishment is eternal, not the results.
- a. Mat. 13:42 “And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”
 - b. Mat. 25:41-46
 - (1) See especially Mat. 25:46 “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”
 - (2) However long the life is, that is how long the punishment is (everlasting and eternal are the same Greek word).
 - (3) The punishment corresponds to fire.
 - (a) Mat. 25:41 “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”
 - (b) Rev. 20:10 “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”
 - (c) Rev. 14:10-11 “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”
 - c. 2 The. 1:6-9 “Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”
 - (1) The witnesses think the words destroy and destruction can only mean extinction or annihilation.
 - (2) But notice:
 - (a) 1 Cor. 5:5 “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
 - (b) 1 The. 5:3 “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”
 - (c) 1 Tim. 6:9 “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

IV. EARTH WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED OR DEPOPULATED

A. Ecc. 1:4; Isa. 45:18; Psalms 78:69