

WE ARE NOT JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES OR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

The teachings of The Restored Church of God are different from traditional Christianity. However, when some of our readers find certain doctrinal similarities with other religious groups, they conclude that we must be related to these organizations. This article will clear up such misunderstandings.

MANY NOTICE that The Restored Church of God (RCG), which publishes *The Real Truth* magazine, does not observe Christmas, Easter, Halloween or other holidays of pagan origin. As a result, some quickly associate this with the practices of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Other similarities, such as our not celebrating birthdays and our focus on the kingdom of God, seem to reinforce these assumptions. However, upon closely comparing our beliefs with those of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the differences far outweigh any similarities.

Many tend to classify us with any group that embraces even a *few* similar beliefs. For this reason, we are also frequently categorized as being associated with the Seventh-day Adventists. Obviously, this is due to our observance of the biblical seventh-day Sabbath. A close comparison of our teachings likewise reveals many differences.

Although completely independent of one another, it is interesting to note that the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventist movements are distinctly American in origin. Unlike The Restored Church of God, which traces its roots to the first-century Church established by Jesus Christ, these two organizations began in the 1800s. Both have also

traditionally emphasized the Return of Christ as the focal point of their prophetic understanding. The differences between their respective approaches, in contrast to the beliefs of the Church of God, are more significant than most realize.

Many sincere and dedicated people follow the Seventh-day Adventists' and the Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs. It is not our intention to belittle their convictions, but to compare their doctrinal positions to our own. Since some of our readers confuse us with these organizations, our purpose is to emphasize that we do not subscribe to the vast majority of their doctrines.

Beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement

To better understand the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist movement and the influences upon it by remnants of the (Sabbatarian) Church of God, we need to review events that occurred primarily in the 1800s. Initially, we look back to 1664, when Steven Mumford arrived from England and helped to develop interest in the doctrines of the Church of God in Rhode Island. After a few decades, congregations developed in Newport and Westerly.

Membership in Rhode Island and Connecticut flourished, as did congregations later established in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. By 1818, the majority of these Sabbath-keepers agreed to merge under the banner of the Seventh Day

Baptist General Conference. Reasoning that the name "Church of God" sounded too exclusivist, they desired a name similar to the churches around them; however, they still held to observing the Sabbath. This led to a split in the membership, in which a small minority continued as the Church of God. (You may read our fascinating book *Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!* to learn more.)

Just prior to 1843, a very popular movement took place in the U.S., in which a famous theologian, William Miller, pronounced that Christ would return about the time of 1843 to 1844. This was known as the Advent movement (in this context, "Advent" means advocacy of Christ's Second Coming). Miller's movement at this point consisted entirely of Sunday-keepers.

When Christ did not return by 1844, William Miller and his many hundreds of followers were greatly disappointed. In fact, the abandonment by many of his adherents was actually called "The Great Disappointment."

Many of the Adventists who left Miller began to associate with the remnants of the Church of God that still held fast to the Sabbath and refused to adopt the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and the trinity. After about 15 years of associating with them, the majority of these Church of God members started adopting some of the Adventists' beliefs—just as the majority had previously accepted popular beliefs of other churches upon

forming the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

In 1860, the Sunday-keeping Adventists influenced the majority in the Church of God to abandon the name “Church of God” (just as their predecessors did in 1818) in favor of a name “more descriptive of their beliefs.” They merged with the former Adventists (who vastly outnumbered them) and jointly decided to call themselves “Seventh-day Adventists.” It was not until 1863 that the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church was formally organized. Thus, this movement had roots with *some* who had been in the Church of God, through whom they were exposed to and accepted the truth of the Sabbath, as well as other positions, such as their initial opposition to the trinity, the immortal soul and an ever-burning hell fire.

Ellen G. White was most influential in shaping the posture of the newly formed Seventh-day Adventist movement. She articulated many doctrines and prophetic understandings that formed its foundational beliefs, and is considered its founder. White held that Miller’s 1844 prediction was correct, but that benchmark year began the period of supposed “Investigative Judgment,” a time in which Christ would begin judging the dead and the living on the earth. She believed this judgment period would be followed by the Return of Christ. More than 160 years have transpired since 1844, with no apparent evidence that Jesus did return, as Miller had predicted and White had later theorized.

Some Practices and Doctrines of the SDA Movement

Although it originated in the United States, the Seventh-day Adventist church is currently well represented throughout the world. The SDAs generally support and promote medical research, hospitals, clinics and dispensaries. They also operate more than 90 colleges and universities worldwide.

One unique aspect of this group is the special interest they take in health concerns. Many of its members are involved in owning or associating with health food stores and restaurants. One reason numerous SDAs take an unusual interest in health is their abstaining from eating meats—even those designated by the

Bible as clean. Many but not all SDAs follow this practice. One of the doctrines prophesied for the “latter times” pertains to those who abstain from meats: “Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith,...abstain[ing] from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (I Tim. 4:1, 3).

One doctrine generally misunderstood by many Seventh-day Adventists is their church’s position on the nature of Jesus Christ. Instead of lowering Christ to the level of the archangel Michael, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach, the Seventh-day Adventists *elevate* Michael to Christ’s level. Both groups consider Christ and Michael to be the same personage.

Vast Differences in Prophetic Understanding

One of the major differences between the teachings of The Restored Church of God and the Seventh-day Adventists is our belief that the Millennium will occur *on Earth*—1,000 years of peace and abundance under the rule of Jesus Christ and His resurrected saints.

The SDAs, however, teach that the saints who have previously died will be resurrected and *taken to heaven*. They believe that during the following 1,000 years, only Satan and his demons will be living on the earth, and that the planet will be desolate. Then, at the end of the Millennium, the second resurrection will occur, and the righteous will return to Earth and establish the New Jerusalem.

The portrayal of the Millennium as a time of desolation amounts to a gross distortion of what the scriptures plainly reveal. In contrast to the SDA position, we read of this time in Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Revelation 5:10 tells us *where* these saints will reign: “And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall *reign on the earth*.”

Only on Earth could we find such conditions as the following: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling

together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for THE EARTH shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:6-9; see also 35:1-2 and Amos 9:13-14).

There are also vast doctrinal differences in other areas, such as the observance of God’s annual Holy Days (which picture His overall Plan of salvation) instead of the world’s pagan holidays.

Beginning of the Jehovah’s Witnesses Movement

Shortly after the Seventh-day Adventist movement began around 1860, the Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW) movement started. This organization was started in Pennsylvania by Charles Taze Russell, and was established as a religious society of ministers. “The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was incorporated in 1884 with Russell as president...The Society’s magazine, *Watchtower*, was first published in 1879.”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses Society adopted their name from Isaiah 43:12 as found in the American Standard Version of the Bible: “...You are My witnesses says Jehovah [Heb. “YHWH”] and I am God” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11). The TANAKH (the Jewish Publication Society translation of the scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text) renders this same passage as “...So you are My witnesses declares the LORD and I am God.” The *King James Version* (KJV) also uses the term “LORD” in this verse.

From the KJV, Exodus 6:2-3 reads: “And God spoke unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty [El Shaddai], but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them. In verse 2, YHWH is translated as “LORD”; yet, in verse 3, the same word is translated as “Jehovah.” According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the original terms in verses 2 and 3 come from YHWH (Strong’s #3068).

The word “Jehovah” is also found in Psalms 83:18, and Isaiah 12:2 and 26:4 of the KJV. Each of these is likewise a mistranslation of YHWH. The TANAKH and other versions based on the original Hebrew properly render the terms as “LORD” (instead of “Jehovah”).

The true pronunciation of the Hebrew word YHWH has been lost. This happened because the Hebrew language uses consonants and semi-consonants, but not vowels. Moses was inspired to write this name for the Creator with the four Hebrew letters YHWH, which means “Self-existent One” or “Eternal.” This Hebrew word, which the Israelites originally knew how to pronounce, comes from another Hebrew word—HWH, an old form of the root HYH, which means “to be” or “to become.”

If the term “Jehovah” did not originate from the Hebrew Scriptures, then from where did it originate? The *Jewish Encyclopedia* offers valuable insight on this subject: “‘Jehovah’ is generally held to have been the invention of Pope Leo X’s Confessor, Peter Galatin...who was followed in the use of this hybrid form by Fagius...But it seems that even before Galatin, the name ‘Jehovah’ had been in common use...It is found in Raymond Martin’s ‘Pugio Fidei,’ written in 1270” (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, article “Jehovah,” Vol. VII, p.88). From all indications, the word “Jehovah” came to the modern world through the Catholic Church.

A Crucial Doctrinal Difference

The doctrine mostly unique to this group is their belief that Christ is a created spirit being. This contradicts John 1:1-2: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” This describes the Godhead consisting of two Beings, yet both called God. This is why, upon creating the first man, God (Hebrew: *Elohim*) said, “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness...” (Gen. 1:26).

One of these Beings, called “the Word,” later became Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Christ was the YHWH (“LORD”) of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:1-4), who created all things (John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16-17).

The other God-Being, called “the Father,” was unknown to mankind, and

had to be revealed by Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:27). Yet, the Jehovah’s Witnesses think that there is only one God-being, whom they call “Jehovah,” and that Christ was created, as were angels.

There is one God (I Tim. 2:5), but there are two Beings who share the name “God.” *Elohim* is a uniplural term, like the word “family”—*one* family, but consisting of *many* members. “God” is a family name!

Although Jesus Christ is subordinate to the Father (John 14:28), the Bible clearly reveals that He is on the God-plane and is the second member of the God Family. (To learn much more about the true nature of God and man’s future role in the God Family, read our books *The Awesome Potential of Man* and *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?*)

Though the Jehovah’s Witnesses consider Christ as equal to and even synonymous with the archangel Michael, the following scripture proves that Christ is a far greater being than any of the angels: “God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; *being made so much better than the angels*, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. *For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?* And again, when He brings in the first begotten into the world, He said, *And let all the angels of God worship Him.* And of the angels He said, who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. *But unto the Son* He said, Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom” (Heb. 1:1-8).

“Kingdom Power”?

Although the Jehovah’s Witnesses stress the spreading of the good news of the kingdom of God, their understanding of

this is very different from that held by The Restored Church of God.

Just as William Miller had predicted that Jesus Christ would return around 1844, the Jehovah’s Witnesses movement settled upon 1914 as the time of Christ’s Return. Yet it was well after that year when the *Watchtower* magazine gave special emphasis to this date as the time the kingdom of God was established on Earth.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that 1914 marked the beginning of increased world woes. They emphasize that this was prophesied by Christ, stressing that these prophesied signs would appear at the end of the current age. These signs would prove that Jesus was “invisibly present with kingly power.” The signs of world wars, famines, epidemics and earthquakes would prevail as explained in Matthew 24. Since the First World War started in 1914, there has been an increasing array of lethal weaponry beyond what mankind had ever imagined. The JW movement considers these signs and trends as indicators of the time of the end.

Notice how they explain that the kingdom of God *could* have been set up in 1914, after Christ’s undetected Return: “It is Satan the Devil who is responsible. When Christ received Kingdom power, his first act was to wage war on Satan in the invisible heavens. As a result, Satan, ‘who is misleading the entire inhabited earth’ was hurled with his angels down to the vicinity of the earth. Knowing that his destruction draws near, he stirs up great trouble...” (*Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania*, 2004).

They continue their explanation as to why the Millennium, with its time of peace and abundance, is not yet manifested on the earth: “Will there be any end to these woes? Yes!—when heaven’s government itself, the Kingdom of Almighty God, goes into action to ‘bring to ruin those ruining the earth’...Never will God permit political powers, false Christians, or anyone else to ruin his handiwork, the earth, with their nuclear devices... Jehovah, through his Christ, will use great forces that he controls in the universe in bringing overwhelming destruction to all who follow Satan on earth. This will be on a global scale, similar in magnitude to the flood of Noah’s day.

“In the Bible this destruction of wicked nations is called God’s battle of Armageddon...Only meek persons...may survive Armageddon into God’s peaceful new system...The grand work of restoring Paradise to the earth will then commence!” (ibid.).

Although they have had more than nine decades to refine their explanation, it still lacks many vital details. The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Christ received “kingdom power” upon returning to the earth in 1914. From that year, up until the Battle of Armageddon, they believe they are to preach to the world.

However, the book of Revelation shows that once Christ Returns, He *immediately* puts down human rebellion and binds Satan within days (Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-3).

According to their teaching, only at the Battle of Armageddon will the kingdom of God fully take effect to subdue all evil and put down opposition. Yet, their order of events seriously contradicts the sequence given in Scripture.

Time of Protection—or Delay of Kingdom?

A correct understanding of Isaiah 26 is crucial here, since the Jehovah’s Witnesses use such scriptures as this to explain the delay from 1914 to the future Battle of Armageddon. Yet, verses 20-21 read, “Come, My people, enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”

The same event is described in Revelation 3:10: “Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the *hour of temptation*, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” This “hour of temptation” is the Great Tribulation, which Christ warns of in Matthew 24:21-

22: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

Concerning this protection reserved for God’s servants, we read, “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

In short, numerous scriptures describing God’s future protection of His people during the coming Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are misapplied.

Christ Returns to Reign on Earth

To show how these end-time events will not become fulfilled in some secret way, unheeded or unnoticed by humanity, note the following passage describing the Day of the Lord: “And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: *For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*” (Rev. 6:12-17).

Likewise, Christ’s Return will not be an obscure event occurring invisibly—the whole world will witness His arrival: “For as the lightning comes out of

the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:27).

Christ will decisively defeat the armies gathered to oppose Him. After their defeat (Rev. 19:15-21), His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). Immediately after this, the seventh and final of the last plagues that complete God’s wrath will take place (Rev. 16:17-21). This greatest earthquake in the history of mankind will be followed by hailstones weighing about 120 pounds, which will complete the quashing of man’s rebellion against God. It is at this time that the voice of the angel will announce, “It is done.”

The next order of business that Christ will address is prophesied in Revelation 20:1-3. Christ will have Satan put away for the duration of the Millennium. This will be done promptly. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that Christ struggles with Satan for more than 90 years (as the 1914 theory supposes). When Christ returns, human rebellion will be put down and Satan will be restrained for a 1,000 years. Then the kingdom of God will be truly established on Earth.

It is clearly not here yet! (Read our booklet *Revelation Explained at Last!* for more details.)

Dramatic Differences

As stated earlier, the teachings of The Restored Church of God are significantly different from those of the Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Beyond this most brief overview, many more differences could be cited. Many great doctrines of the Bible are misapplied or ignored by these two organizations.

But by examining just the nature of God and the sequence of end-time events alone, it is obvious that the differences between RCG and these two groups far outweigh any superficial similarities.

If you would like to know more about us, read our booklet *Here Is The Restored Church of God*. □

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