C.L.A.S.S. Compass Life Adult Sunday School

Pastor Pete

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**“A History of Jehovah Witnesses”**

**I. Groups that Deny the Deity of Christ**

Muslims believe Jesus was one of Islam’s many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a good and holy man, but certainly not the Son of God. Mormons believe God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus through a relationship with one of His celestial wives. In fact, according to the Mormon publication, Pearl of Great Price and the LDS website, even \_\_\_\_ was a son of God and a brother of Jesus, equal with Jesus in nature. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe Jesus was and is merely an \_\_\_\_\_\_ who is just one of many “gods” they say exist. To underscore their belief that Jesus is not Almighty God, they give Jesus the title “god” but with a small “g” in their self-published New World Translation of the Bible (John 1:1). New Age Adherents believe Jesus was a great enlightened \_\_\_\_\_\_ who realized He was God, just like we all can realize we are God. Hindus believe Jesus was one of many great and holy men. Many Hindus believe Jesus was a good teacher and perhaps one of their 330 million incarnations of Brahman (Hinduism's impersonal, pantheistic deity). Buddhists believe Jesus was an enlightened man. God in the flesh? No. Oneness Pentecostalism believes God is only \_\_\_\_ person, and that he manifests himself in different ways, faces, or "modes": "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different designations for the one God.

**II. Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916)**

Charles Taze Russell was born on February 16, 1852 in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, the second of five children born to Joseph and Ann Russell. Charles grew up in a devout home and his parents were respected members of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ church. When he was young, his family moved to Pittsburgh, where his father came to own a number of clothing stores. In his early teens Charles became a partner in this business and soon owned several of the locations. As a boy Charles had a great deal of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ enthusiasm, and while still only a teenager left his Presbyterian congregation to attend a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ church. As a form of evangelism, he would often go to public locations and use \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to write out Bible verses related to sin and damnation. But then, at the age of sixteen, he engaged in a debate with a friend that led him to question the reliability of the \_\_\_\_\_\_ and the validity of the Christian faith. He embarked on a period of religious searching and dabbled in many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ religions before determining that they, too, were empty and unsatisfying. When Charles was eighteen he encountered \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ preaching and began to regularly attend a Bible study. It was not long before he determined that he could not reconcile an eternal hell with a merciful God. Over the next two years he came to question many other historic Christian doctrines and became convinced that the historic creeds \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ true Christianity. At the same time, he adopted Adventist teachings: that the end times had begun in 1799, that Christ had returned invisibly in 1874 and been crowned King of Heaven four years later, that all Christians who had already died would be resurrected before the end of 1878, and that 1914 would mark the end of a harvest period and usher in Armageddon. He sold his five clothing stores, an act that generated a substantial amount of money (today’s equivalent of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ dollars), and committed his life to writing, publishing, and funding the propagation of the message of Christ’s imminent return. He did this at first through a partnership with Nelson H. Barbour and his Adventist periodical Herald of the Morning. When 1878 came and went without any of the predicted events, he was forced to re-examine his beliefs and to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ himself from some of his Adventist peers, including Barbour. He founded his own periodical which he titled Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence. At this time, he also married Maria Frances Ackley in an apparently celibate union that would last until 1897 before ending in an acrimonious \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In 1881 Russell founded the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society which grew to a substantial publishing venture, and there were soon some \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of his books and booklets in print. He preached and wrote constantly, his sermons were printed in several thousand newspapers around the globe, and he became one of the most famous preachers in the world. He eventually moved the headquarters of the Watch Tower Society to Brooklyn, New York. Russell died on October 31, 1916, near Pampa, TX. By the time of his death, his writings had become among the most widely-distributed works in the world. Some estimate that when he died, only the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the Chinese almanac were in greater circulation than his myriad books and pamphlets. Unlike so many other false teachers before and after him, Russell did not rely upon visions or other extra-biblical revelation. Rather, he simply interpreted, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the Bible. While claiming to be a Christian who was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the faith of the New Testament, he denied many key Christian doctrines including eternal punishment, the \_\_\_\_\_\_, the deity of \_\_\_\_\_\_, and the existence of the Holy Spirit. Russell, as with most Adventists, denied the existence of hell as a place where the wicked face God’s wrath. He also held that the soul simply ceases to exist after death. As with Arius centuries before, he held that Jesus was a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and was actually Michael the Archangel in human form. While he taught that this Jesus died on behalf of humanity, he also taught that Jesus rose only spiritually rather than physically. While he denied the divinity of Jesus, he denied the existence of the Holy Spirit, teaching that the Spirit is not a person, but simply a name given to express a specific manifestation of God’s power. Those who followed Russell during his lifetime referred to themselves as Bible Students. In the years following his death, Joseph Franklin Rutherford succeeded him as president of the Watch Tower Society. Rutherford’s followers-maintained control of the Watch Tower Society and officially renamed themselves Jehovah’s Witnesses in July 1931

**III. Joseph “Judge” Rutherford (1869-1942)**

Joseph Franklin Rutherford also known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Rutherford, was the second president of the incorporated Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. He played a primary role in the organization and doctrinal development of Jehovah’s Witnesses, which emerged from the Bible Student movement established by Charles Taze Russell. Rutherford began a career in law, working as a court stenographer, trial lawyer and prosecutor. He became a special judge in the 14th Judicial District of Missouri at some time after 1895. He developed an interest in the doctrines of Watch Tower Society president Charles Taze Russell, which led to his joining the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ movement, and he was baptized in 1906. He was appointed the legal counsel for the Watch Tower Society in 1907, as well as a traveling representative prior to his election as president in 1917. His early presidency was marked by a dispute with the Society's board of directors, in which four of its seven members accused him of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ behavior and sought to reduce his powers. The resulting leadership crisis divided the Bible Student community and contributed to the loss of one-seventh of adherents by 1919 and thousands more by 1931. Rutherford and seven other Watch Tower executives were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in 1918 after charges were laid over the publication of The Finished Mystery, a book deemed seditious for its opposition to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Rutherford introduced many organizational and doctrinal changes that helped shape the current beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses. He imposed a centralized administrative structure on the worldwide Bible Student movement, which he later called a theocracy, requiring all adherents to distribute literature via door to door preaching and to provide \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of their preaching activity. He also instituted training programs for public speaking as part of their weekly meetings for worship. He established 1914 as the date of Christ's \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ return, asserted that Christ died on a tree rather than a \_\_\_\_, formulated the current Witness concept of Armageddon as God's war on the wicked, and reinforced the belief that the start of Christ's millennial reign was imminent. He condemned the observance of traditional celebrations such as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the saluting of national flags and the singing of national anthems. He introduced the name "Jehovah's witnesses" in 1931 and the term "Kingdom Hall" for houses of worship in 1935. He wrote twenty-one books and was credited by the Society in 1942 with the distribution of almost 400 million books and booklets. Despite significant decreases during the 1920s, overall membership increased more than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the end of Rutherford's 25 years as president.

**IV. Jehovah Witnesses Today**

Jehovah’s Witnesses consider themselves to be Christians (but not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_), even though they reject the doctrine of the Trinity. JWs claim that Jesus was not divine and believe that Jesus is God's only direct \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, “the firstborn of all creation” and therefore entitled to be called the “son of God.” They believe Jesus lived in heaven before coming to earth and, after his death and resurrection, he returned to heaven. Meetings for worship and study are held at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and are open to the public. Witnesses are assigned to a congregation in which "territory" they reside and are expected to attend weekly meetings as scheduled by the Watch Tower Society and congregation elders. The meetings are largely devoted to study of the Bible and Witness doctrines.  According to The Watchtower, one role of the frequency and length of meetings is to protect Witnesses from becoming "involved in the affairs of the world." Two meetings each week are divided into five distinct sections, lasting a total of about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Meetings are opened and closed with hymns and brief prayers delivered from the platform. Kingdom Halls are typically functional in character, and contain no religious \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Jehovah Witnesses do not take an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in their meetings.

**4/14 “Evangelizing Jehovah Witnesses and 7th Day Adventists”**