

organization is portrayed as their savior. They are told: “Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. To receive life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.”⁴ There is no salvation or life apart from the **WT**, according to their teachings. Likewise, the organization requires unquestioning obedience from its followers, such as is due only to the Lord alone. **JWs** are to “*Avoid independent thinking...questioning the counsel that is provided by God’s visible organization.*”⁵ Any who fail to obey are put on trial, expelled, and cut off from family and friends.

By thus inserting itself into God’s plan of salvation, presenting itself as the essential means of salvation and the final authority to be obeyed, the **WT** usurps the position of Christ as Lord and Savior. This borders on idolatry, since the organization is portrayed in terms that rightly apply only to Deity.

Strangely enough, the Society itself has acknowledged in the past the possibility of people becoming “idolatrous worshipers of a man-made organization”⁶ (writing in regard to another organization, of course, not their own). How does this happen? How does one become an organization-worshiper? Note the Society’s own answer: “If one renders obedient service to someone or some organization, whether willingly or under compulsion, looking up to such as possessing a position of superior rulership and great authority, then that one can scripturally be said to be a worshiper.”⁷

What better description could there be of the relationship of **JWs** to their own organization? Their definition of “idolatrous worshipers of a man-made organization” fits no one better than themselves. Yes, by looking to it for salvation and by obeying it as their lord and master, **JWs** in effect deify their organization. While pointing the finger of accusation at others, they themselves have fallen into the snare of idolatry.

NO ONE CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE OUTSIDE OF THE WT SOCIETY

You can see for yourself from the following Watchtower quotes that this organization claims without reservation that **the Bible** is exclusively “a Watchtower book.”

Thus the Bible is an *organizational book* and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, *not to individuals*, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible *cannot be properly under-*

stood without Jehovah’s visible organization... [The **WT**] is serving as God’s *sole visible channel*, through whom alone spiritual instruction is to come. Those who recognize Jehovah’s visible theocratic organization, therefore, must recognize and accept this appointment of the “faithful and discreet slave” and be *submissive to it*.⁸

We all need help to understand the Bible, and we *cannot* find the Scriptural guidance we need *outside* the “faithful and discreet slave” organization.⁹ [One] *must have The Watchtower* to understand the Bible.¹⁰ Unless we are in touch with this channel of communication that God is using [the **WT**], we will not progress along the road to life, *no matter how much Bible reading we do*.¹¹

This is, in fact, saying, No one on earth can properly understand the Bible unless they are submissive to the men of the Watchtower’s Governing Body up in Brooklyn, New York! That’s right! and straight from their own mouth—“The Witnesses gladly look to [*not the Bible, but*] the mature brothers of the Governing Body for direction and guidance in matters of worship.”¹²

NO ONE CAN BE SAVED OUTSIDE OF THE WT SOCIETY

Do not conclude that there are different roads, or ways, that you can follow to gain life in God’s new system. There is only one. There was just one ark that survived the Flood...and there will be only one organization—God’s visible organization—that will survive the fast-approaching “great tribulation”...*You must be part of Jehovah’s organization*, doing God’s will, *in order to receive his blessing of everlasting life*.¹³ Outside the true Christian congregation [the **WT**] what alternative organization is there? Only Satan’s organization.¹⁴ We will be impelled to serve Jehovah loyally with his organization if we remember that *there is nowhere else to go for life eternal*.¹⁵

SALVATION IS A REWARD FOR YOUR “WORKS” SO SAYS THE WT SOCIETY

The **JWs** give “lip service” to the idea of *salvation by grace through faith in Christ*. But in reality, they believe in a *works-oriented* salvation. Salvation for a **JW** is impossible apart from total obedience to the **WT** and vigorous participation in its various programs. By such obedience, they see themselves as “working out” their salvation (*Phil 2:12*). The importance of doing “works” **for** salvation is evident throughout the Society’s literature:

To get one’s name written in that Book of Life will *depend upon one’s works*.¹⁶ It is for

the *reward of eternal life* that every last person on earth should now be *working*.¹⁷ What things are involved in getting “saved”? (*Acts 16:30*) The prime requirement is: “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved” (*Acts 16:31*). This involves taking in accurate knowledge of God’s purposes and his way of salvation. Then faith has to be exercised in Jesus Christ as the Chief Agent of salvation (*John 3:16; Titus 2:14*). This places the Christian in a saved condition, **BUT** he must now persevere in doing God’s will and *continue to adhere to all of God’s requirements for the rest of his life*. Only **THEN** will he be *saved to eternal life* (*Matt 24:13*).¹⁸

They admit that their “gospel” is not the same gospel that has historically been preached in Christian history: “Compare...the gospel of the Kingdom done by the religious systems of Christendom during all the centuries with that done by Jehovah’s Witnesses...They are not one and the same.”¹⁹ The **WT**’s “gospel” is a gospel of **faith plus works**. They teach that there are *four* requirements for salvation:

(1) “taking in knowledge...of God and of Jesus Christ.” (2) “obey God’s laws...conform one’s life to the moral requirements set out in the Bible.” (3) “be associated with God’s channel, his organization...we *must* identify that organization and serve God as part of it.” (4) and be “connected to the organization with loyalty.”²⁰

TRUE SALVATION IS BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE!

The **WT** directs its followers to “**Put faith in a victorious organization!**”²¹ But salvation is not in an organization, it’s in a **person—the Lord Jesus Christ!** “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**” (*Rom 8:1*). “If any man be **in Christ**, he is a new creature” (*2 Cor 5:17*). And salvation is not a merited “reward” that we somehow deserve because of our “works”; it’s a priceless “gift” given freely to sinners by a gracious God! “The gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus...a free gift...without money and without price” (*Rom 3:24; 6:23; Isaiah 55:1 NWT*). “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: **not of works**, lest any man should boast” (*Eph 2:8,9*).

What we have here is two entirely different messages, which lead souls to two entirely different destinations. One is a *false* gospel; one is the *true* gospel. Why is the **WT** “gospel” a *false* gospel? The Bible teaches **justification by faith alone**, and is thus a proclamation of “*salvation by faith*.” The **WT** teaches **justification by faith plus obedience**, and is

thus a proclamation of “*salvation by works*.” Now, they will insist that this is not so—that their message is not “salvation by works”; but the Bible says that it certainly is.

Justification is *by faith alone*; it is specifically said to be **without works** (see *John 6:47; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom 3:21,22; 9:30-33; 10:1-13; Gal 2:16; 3:1-14; Phil 3:8,9; 1 Peter 2:6-8; 1 John 5:1, etc.*). In fact, faith must be alone, or it’s not “faith” in the biblical sense of the word. The very idea of *believing* in Christ means that we trust him as the One who finished the **work** of salvation, so there’s nothing left for us to do. David even spoke of those “unto whom God imputeth righteousness **without works**” (*Rom 4:6*).

When the “Judaizers” at Galatia taught justification by “**faith plus obedience to the law of Moses**,” Paul condemned them as “false brethren,” teaching “another gospel”—a *false* gospel; and he uttered the strongest of curses upon them:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (*Gal 1:6-8*).

Strong words indeed! A divine curse was pronounced upon these false teachers. Why such severity? because the issues at stake in the purity of the gospel have to do with the glory of God and the eternal destinies of men. If that gospel is in any way distorted or perverted, it results in souls being eternally damned and it robs God of his glory.

Who were these people that Paul denounced so strongly? And what was the essence of their “gospel” that made it a distortion of the true gospel? They taught that a person must believe in Jesus, but **in addition** they taught that he also had to be circumcised—“See! I, Paul, am telling you that if you become circumcised, **Christ will be of no benefit to you**” [*5:2 NWT*]. To *add* “works” to “faith” in any measure—regardless of what those “works” look like—according to the Bible, is to believe in salvation by “works” and to place oneself under a curse. The “gospel” of these false teachers is essentially identical to the “gospel” of the **WT**.

These Judaizers taught that you not only had to believe in Jesus for salvation, but that you had to be *faithful to all the requirements of the law of Moses* as well! The **WT** teaches that

you not only have to believe in Jesus for salvation, but that you have to be *faithful to all the requirements of the WT* as well! You must **add** something that you *do* to what Christ has *done*. Paul denounces this in no uncertain terms, because it's adding human merit to the merit of Christ. It's faith in Christ **plus** human works. Paul says this is perverting the gospel of the grace of God. Consequently a divine curse, an anathema, was called down upon these Judaisers and their "gospel." By contrast, the true gospel is the gospel of "**the grace of God**," whereby a man is justified before God and accepted solely on the merits of the life and death of Jesus Christ, apart from human "works" altogether.

By adding works to faith, JW's destroy the very essence of grace! "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (*Rom 11:6*). These two principles are mutually exclusive! Works receive a merited reward, but grace is poured out upon those who are undeserving! The whole **WT** philosophy opposes the gospel of *God's grace*. Listen again to the driving force behind all of their door-knocking activity—"It is for the reward of eternal life that [we] should now be working."¹ No one has ever been accepted by God in such a way! "Now to him that **worketh** is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of *debt*. But to him that **worketh not**, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (*Rom 4:4,5*).

"Man is not justified by the works of the law, but *by faith in Jesus Christ*" (*Gal 2:16 NKJV*). This is the "good news" of the gospel. Sinners, guilty and under the judgment of God, are pardoned and accepted by his grace alone, his free and unmerited favor, on the basis of the death of Christ, and not for any works or merits of their own. The Judaisers, however, were totally perverting this teaching of grace by adding something man could do.

They were teaching **Jesus plus obedience to Moses**, not Jesus alone. The **WT** teaches **Jesus plus obedience to the organization**, not Jesus alone. The Judaisers could not accept the principle of *faith alone*. They insisted that we contribute something to our salvation.

THE JUDAISERS' GOSPEL

Salvation is through Faith in Christ plus obedience to Moses

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS' GOSPEL

Salvation is through Faith in Christ plus obedience to the WT

Both of these are *false gospels* that are denounced by the Word of God! Both of them come from *false teachers* who present a totally different "gospel" than that which God has given—a "gospel" that perverts the teaching of **grace** by *adding* something we can do. And anyone who believes either of these false gospels is believing a lie, brings down a curse upon himself, and will thus eternally perish. Paul warned: "If you become circumcised [the way they're telling you to be circumcised], **Christ will be of no benefit to you!**" (*Gal 5:2 NWT*). Why? because what these false teachers required them to do was *added* to faith in Christ for their acceptance with God! The **WT** likewise adds its *requirements* to faith in Christ for the **JW's** acceptance with God! And those who adhere to the **WT conditions** in order to be saved will most assuredly have these same words of condemnation thundered down upon them—"**Christ will be of no benefit to you!**"

The common objection **JW's** give is: "*But James teaches that faith without works is dead*" (*James 2:14-26*). Very true! But understand that Paul is dealing with the *nature of justification* and James is dealing with the *nature of faith*. James tells professing Christians, who show no evidence in their lives of a likeness to Christ, to show him their faith *by their works* (*James 2:18*). *Faith alone* justifies, but the faith that justifies is *never alone*. It's always accompanied by good works and a righteous life. James is concerned for professing believers who are not truly saved; they're not justified. They have faith, but their faith is "dead." It's useless and unfruitful (*James 2:17,20*). Churches today are full of these same type of people! They profess one thing and live another, and bring *reproach* upon the name of Christ. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (*1 John 2:4*). True believers desire to obey Christ's commands (*John 10:27; Luke 6:46; Matt 7:21*); but "good works" are the *outcome* (*Eph 2:10*), not the *cause* (*Eph 2:8,9*), of salvation in Christ.

"Believing in Christ" involves giving up entirely on all of our own *doing* and *ability* to be saved. Justifying faith, in its very essence, is reliance upon another. It's the attitude of one who has given up all hope of anything virtuous he could ever do. The sinner who trusts in Christ is like the poor swimmer who finally realizes that left to his own efforts he'll drown, ceases to struggle against the lifeguard, and completely relaxes in his care. Whoever claims that faith is just the beginning of salvation, and that you must do this and that struggling to keep afloat the rest of your life, has not trusted in Christ.

Our Lord gives a fine illustration of this in John's gospel when he explains saving faith in terms of the serpent in the wilderness (*Num 21:4-9*). Just as the serpent was lifted up by Moses that men might *look upon* it and be saved, so Jesus would be lifted up on the tree that whosoever *believes* ("looks") upon him might have eternal life. How were men saved in relation to the serpent? by "looking plus works"? No! *by "looking" alone!* "When he looketh upon it, he shall live" (*Num 21:8*). And since saving faith is the gaze of the soul upon Christ, it's impossible to exercise biblical faith and at the same time be looking to something else—our morality, our faithfulness, our best efforts, or loyalty to an organization! Those who put confidence in anything but Christ are still trusting in their own works and must surely perish.

When Moses lifted up the serpent of brass on the pole, those Israelites were to *cease completely* from doing anything; their eyes were to be totally directed *away* from themselves. The promise was, "Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (*Num 21:8*). That was their sole instruction: *just look!* Nothing else. There was nothing for them but just to believe God, and cease from all their doing, and all their efforts, and all their anxieties, and *look away!*

Our eyes are to be fastened upon Christ alone, lifted up as our Substitute at Calvary. "If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld...he lived" (*Num 21:9*). "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (*John 3:14-15*). Salvation reaches us just *where* we are, and just *as* we are—helpless, guilty and needy. **Look and Live!**

Dan Shanker

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Salvation Watchtower Style vs. Salvation in Christ

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY AS LORD AND SAVIOR

Christianity has been defined as a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. We become Christians as we see ourselves *sinners* in God's sight, and come to Christ in need of salvation, receiving him as Lord and Savior. He becomes our Master, our Teacher, our Shepherd—the One we obey. For **Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's)**, however, the rightful position of Jesus Christ has been usurped by **The Watchtower Society**. This organization is in effect the one they are taught to look to as lord and savior.

One can become a Christian by receiving Christ by faith before ever entering or joining an organized church. It's a spiritual bond, not dependent upon human relationships. Individuals have been known to become Christians after just reading the Bible. But becoming a **JW** is not so simple. One must first study **Watchtower (WT)** literature in order to "properly" understand the Bible. There must be a formal study program conducted by a **JW** in good standing with the organization. Then the newcomer must begin attending organizational meetings and participate in "field service"—knocking on doors with **WT** literature. Finally, after undergoing a doctrinal quiz,¹ he is acceptable for baptism and recognition as a **JW**.

Unlike Christian baptism, which is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, **JW** candidates for baptism must answer "yes" to the following two questions: (1) "On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?" (2) "Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?"² Somehow, the organization has inserted itself into the baptismal formula. And the organization continues to insert itself into the life of the **JW**, taking the place of Jesus Christ.

For example, people are invited to "**come to Jehovah's organization for salvation.**"³ The