



## **'I was trapped in a pseudo-Christian cult!'**

A local testimony by Jeremy Ley

*You may have heard the phrase, 'Beware of imitations'. When it comes to the Christian faith, imitations are not only different, they are dangerous. Local Bodmin man, Jeremy Ley, describes how his search for God began when he was introduced to the bold promises of the Watchtower Society. But were those promises based on God's promises? And was becoming a Jehovah's Witness really tantamount to being in 'The Truth'? Jeremy's journey paints a story of blind obedience to shocking discovery and painful loss, an experience that almost destroyed him...*

---

**T**hey first came to my front door when I was eighteen. It was perfect timing; I remember feeling quite low and I was alone in the house.

It's strange; before I opened the door I already knew who they were. It was like one of those slow motion moments when you tell yourself not to do what you are about to do because...

A smartly dressed man and woman met me on the doorstep. 'Hello there', said the gentleman, Bible in one hand and briefcase in the other. 'We hope you don't mind us calling... we've been visiting people in your neighbourhood asking them what they think about the state of the world today. I wonder, do you have any thoughts about that...?'

Something inside me told me to ignore these folks, say something like, 'Sorry I'm really not interested' and close the door. But something else told me how good it was to talk to people who seemed interested in my opinion. Interested in me. They seemed friendly and I felt like I needed a friend. I knew people frowned on the Jehovah's Witnesses but no one had ever explained to me just why they were wrong.

Perhaps they were not wrong. Perhaps I should give them the benefit of the doubt...?

So I did. And so began my journey into the Watchtower Society, a journey that began with two people bringing me a handshake of friendship. Before long I had agreed to a home Bible study and began attending a Kingdom Hall in Liskeard. My parents really disagreed with my new found interest but for the first time in my life I felt part of something special, something that brought a sense of purpose to my life, an identification with other likeminded people.

**J**ehovah's Witnesses call it 'The Truth' and it is known as the Watchtower Organization. This authority boldly claims itself to be God's sole channel of truth to men and women on earth. After a number of studies using their books alongside the Bible I started to believe it. I

soon thought that being 'in The Truth' was necessary for me if I was going to 'escape this wicked system of things' and 'enjoy everlasting life on a paradise earth'.

Of course, at the beginning, some things they taught seemed rather at odds from what I had been told in Sunday School: Jesus was now Michael the Archangel; there was no hell; only 144000 end up going to heaven and the Holy Spirit is just the impersonal force or power of Jehovah and not part of the Godhead. But as time went by, I nudged aside my doubts and started to apply the Watchtower teaching that 'independent thinking was forbidden'. The Organization had all the answers, I was told, and Jehovah God was pleased to use it as His instrument of truth. Accepting the Watchtower's prohibition to have blood transfusions, understanding the mainstream churches were the false religions of Babylon the Great and believing that Armageddon was coming soon came next in my progressive obedience to 'God's Prophet' to mankind.

In the space of about a year I thought like, spoke like and began to dress like the Jehovah's Witnesses. I had even tried to give others some of their books and magazines. I had come to know many people at the Kingdom Hall, had more friends than I had known before and was in love with a beautiful Jehovah's Witness girl who attended a neighbouring college I studied at. For the first time in my life I thought that things were finally going right for me...

If only things could have been better at home. Mum had become very worried that I was taking things too seriously - especially when I refused to apply to go to University. She was certainly less than impressed with my plan to become a window cleaner and 'go on the doors!' It was then that things about the Watchtower Society I had not seen before began turning up all over the house and especially in my bedroom. I remember finding tracts about the Organization that claimed they were false prophets and literature about the history of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Initially, I was angry. My mum and stepfather were trying to seduce me away from God's Organization with lies. It'll never work, I thought. They are just persecuting me because I am in the truth.

Then mum invited me to meet someone who, apparently, had evidence that would prove that the Watchtower Organization was not 'The Truth' and if I would just get to see him, I would find out what the real truth was.

At first I refused. I was also warned by the Jehovah's Witnesses not to go. My girlfriend in the Witnesses was very worried that should I go to see this person then I would not be coming back. But after a time I remember thinking that I needed to prove to myself that the Jehovah's Witnesses were right, once and for all. If I went to see the person with the supposed evidence (not that I believed in the slightest that such evidence existed) then I could walk away still confident that I was in the truth and say to mum that in all fairness, she should now leave me alone to be with the Witnesses.

I went the following Saturday night. I remember during the journey to Truro with mum having visions of meeting an old vicar with white hair in a musty old study telling me to have nothing to do with the Jehovah's Witnesses. I was looking forward to getting it over with. The sooner we got there the sooner I could come back and meet up with all my friends the next morning at the Kingdom Hall.

When we arrived in Truro, we found the correct address and knocked at the door. I was in for a surprise when a younger man by the name of Phil cheerfully greeted us and welcomed us in. For the next quarter of an hour over tea and biscuits Phil talked briefly about how many cults existed today and how many people were trapped in them, believing them to be the truth. I remember keeping silent, thinking to myself; 'This man is bewitching my parents - now they will never become Jehovah's Witnesses like me!'.

Next, he suggested we watch a documentary about Jehovah's Witnesses. I agreed, wanting the night to pass quickly without argument. Phil put on the film and we all sat round the television.

The documentary, called 'Witnesses of Jehovah' (produced by Jeremiah Films) introduced the Watchtower Society and began to delve into the Organization's historical roots. Various Jehovah's Witness spokespeople and former members of the Organization were interviewed and much of the literature produced by the Society was examined. After the first half an hour I recall thinking to myself; 'Well so far they have at least been accurate - even if I don't like what else they are saying about the Society'.

However, I became disturbed when claims of false prophesy were stated and then backed up with evidence by looking at the Society's literature. What made it worse was the fact that Jehovah's Witness representatives were denying that the Watchtower had said or done certain things when clearly their own literature proved they had.

But there was more. I learned that doctrines had been changed over the course of the Watchtower's history - some had even been reversed so that what they once taught as God's truth was now the exact opposite - and yet still dogmatically stated as God's truth in the Watchtower magazine. In fact, if you believed what they used to teach, you would likely be disfellowshipped today and treated as an outcast or 'apostate'.

I couldn't help thinking how this could be God's sole channel of truth to men and women on earth when 'God's truth' kept changing and dates about the end of the world and prophecies about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob returning to earth were not coming to pass? Surely God was not constantly changing his mind about things or was confused? I couldn't imagine Him being pleased either about what was being stated as His unchanging truth.

I felt sick to the stomach. The only reasonable explanation possible was that the Watchtower, supposedly chosen by God out of all the other religions in 1919, had never got things right in the first place. I remember the following words, spoken by an interviewee in the film who left the Jehovah's Witnesses, bringing home to me the reality of the sorry situation I was in:

*'What really shocked me to my core was this - and every other Jehovah's witness listening to this: is that we were so convinced that the leadership, the Governing Body, would never tell one lie. They would always speak the truth no matter what the truth was. That is a fabrication, it is a lie. They have lied to us, they have deceived us and we have the documented evidence. And because we've spoken about it, we were silenced, or threatened to be silenced. And that's what will happen to any Jehovah's Witness listening to this program - and he knows it in his heart, he knows it in his heart'.*

I did know it in my heart. But my heart was broken. I had believed a lie and had been investing my whole future in a complete fabrication.

I didn't even realize back then how dark and evil that deception truly is. Later, after further research, I discovered that they had told many more lies, deliberately misquoting respected Hebrew and Greek scholars to make it sound as though they supported their New World

Translation of the Bible. After spending much time obtaining copies of original letters and articles by the same scholars quoted, I found that they had been deliberately taken out of context. Most of them actually rejected the Watchtower Society's bible. One of them, Dr J R Mantey, called it a shocking mistranslation. In addition, the Watchtower had also misquoted ancient historians to try to give the impression that they did not support the doctrine of the Trinity when in fact they did.

All became clear when I examined the evidence. No wonder the Jehovah's Witness is instructed to refuse any material that questions the authority of the Watchtower. Independent thinking is part of their policy to keep people in (and also keep them from finding out the truth).

**T**he Jehovah's Witnesses had meant so much to me. They had become my world. I was happy. I had friends there. I had a beautiful girlfriend. How on earth was I going to convince them they were wasting their lives slaving for a false organization, peddling its falsehoods when they believed everyone else were wrong?

The truth is, I couldn't. They wouldn't listen. Worse, they considered me a threat. After a short while I was told that I couldn't see my girlfriend anymore. For a time we still met at college but the relationship was now doomed. She told me that others from the Kingdom Hall had said that I had left the Witnesses because I had been bribed. Funnily enough, she also said that if I came back, I could be assured that they would formally acknowledge my relationship with my girlfriend and I could expect it to continue. If that wasn't a bribe, I don't know what is. As much as I loved my girlfriend, the real truth was more important to me. I couldn't simply go back to the Jehovah's Witnesses and deliberately live a lie for the sake of getting the girl of my dreams.

I cried every day for two and a half months after disassociating myself from the Watchtower Society. I was a broken man. Everything I thought I had gained, I lost. Worse, what I had learned I could not share with those who I thought were my friends. They had been warned not to listen. Those I did get to talk to rejected me. I remember two elders I met with in my home being very angry with me and walking off without allowing me to explain anything to them. When I offered to pray for them, they sniggered back; 'pray for yourself!'

**I**t was about three months after leaving the Jehovah's Witnesses that I became a Christian. Just saying that would sound really odd to another Jehovah's Witness, of course. But the truth is, the Watchtower Organization never taught the saving message of Jesus Christ. This was something I discovered when I began reading the Bible for myself.

I went through the New Testament and discovered that everything pointed to Jesus as being the Truth and the one in whom we should be 'in' over and over again. Hence;

*John 8:32:* 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free' (Jesus speaking)

*John 8:36:* 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed' (Jesus speaking)

*John 14:6:* 'I am the way, the truth and the Life. No one comes unto the Father except through me' (Jesus speaking)

*Rom 8:1:* 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit'

What a revelation! The truth is not being in an organization or even a church – it is being in Jesus Christ!

I read that whosoever believed in Jesus would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). I read that all those who were burdened and heavily laden should come to Jesus to find rest for their souls and take His yoke upon them (Matthew 11:26). I read that if I confessed with my mouth the Lord Jesus and believed in my heart that God raised Him from the dead then I would be saved (Romans 10:9). And I read that if I confessed my sins, God is faithful and just and would forgive me my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

When I found these things, I took them to heart, got down on my knees and prayed to Jesus. It was a simple prayer that was to change my life completely. Only then did I enter into a saving knowledge of God - into a spiritual and genuine relationship with Him. Only then did I have an assurance that I was saved, that I never had to doubt whether I was good enough for God and that I might not make it. I saw that Jesus had done it all through shedding His blood on our account and by being raised from the dead. Salvation was through faith in what He had done for me - simply trusting that this was enough to save me and grant me a righteousness from God (Romans 3:21). No more going door to door, trying to satisfy an Organization whose own promises are a fabrication.

Looking back, knowing what I know now, my heart goes out to all Jehovah's Witnesses who are genuinely hoodwinked by the Watchtower Society. My prayer is that they will see that Jesus, not the Organization, is the basis upon which we should place all our hope. He is the Chief Cornerstone and foundation (Ephesians 2:20), the Rock upon which we must stand (1 Corinthians 1:4). Speaking of Jesus Christ in answer to the rulers and elders of the people, Peter in Acts 4:10-12, makes this declaration:

*"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

May God grant that the eyes of all Jehovah's witnesses be opened to the truth that Jesus, not the Watchtower Society, is the one to whom we must go for salvation. And may all genuine Christians everywhere will be prepared to open their doors and share what Jesus has done to make salvation possible to all who believe in Him.

.....

♦ *Jeremy Ley attends Bodmin Community Church where he is a member of the Core Leadership Team. He is happily married to his adorable wife, Beverley and dotes on his baby son; Samuel James.*

**If you have found that this testimony has challenged you to find out more about Jehovah's Witnesses or other pseudo-Christian cults then you may be interested in the work of Reachout Trust.**

**Reachout Trust is a Christian charity established to provide accurate information and support for people who may be directly or indirectly associated with suspect and dangerous religious groups today: <http://www.reachouttrust.org/>**