

Reference Document

“Why Jehovah’s Witnesses Want to Celebrate Birthdays SO BAD”

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from official Watchtower publications (including historic and current *Watchtower* magazines, the *Questions from Readers* columns, the *School and Jehovah’s Witnesses* brochure, official *Become Jehovah’s Friend* videos still hosted on jw.org, and JW Broadcasting transmissions), or peer-reviewed academic and regulatory records. Primary sources can stand on their own.
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established advocacy or legal resource sites, academic researchers, or reputable investigative journalism. Secondary sources support claims and are most defensible when paired with a primary source.

SECTION 1 — THE BETHDAY ANCHOR AND THE CHANNEL’S OWN NUMBERS

Claim: My wife Beth’s parents — her father a first-generation Jehovah’s Witness elder, her mother known in the congregation as a pillar — quietly celebrated her birthday in private for the first thirty-one years of her life under the code word “Bethday,” while publicly observing the JW birthday ban.

- **Source:** Creator’s firsthand testimony, corroborated by Beth’s own public record on her YouTube channel *Stop the Shunning* and in her published book
- **URL:** n/a — firsthand testimony. See Beth’s public channel for corroborating material.
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — firsthand eyewitness account from named family members, corroborated by an independent public record
- **Note:** Names of Beth’s parents are not disclosed to protect their privacy, but the elder appointment under the October 1, 1972 body-of-elders arrangement is verifiable. See Section 7.

Claim: My last video about the birthday ban pulled over eighty thousand views. My video on Watchtower losing a court case and being ordered to reverse a disfellowshipping got sixty thousand. The blood doctrine revision got fifty thousand. A video dismantling the 144,000 doctrine got forty thousand.

- **Source:** Creator’s YouTube Studio analytics for the EXJW Analyzer channel
- **URL:** <https://www.youtube.com/@EXJWAnalyzer>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — creator’s own published videos and public view counts, visible on the channel at time of recording

SECTION 2 — THE OFFICIAL STORY (THE FOUR ARGUMENTS)

Claim: Jehovah’s Witnesses cite Pharaoh’s and Herod’s birthdays — the only two birthday celebrations explicitly mentioned in the Bible — as evidence that birthdays are unchristian.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1951, “Questions from Readers,” p. 607
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1951727>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the official Watchtower publication that originated the ban, still hosted on the organization’s own Watchtower Online Library
- **Key quote:** “*The only birthday celebrations that the Holy Scriptures mention are those of pagans, those of Egypt’s Pharaoh and of Herod Antipas who marked his birthday by having John the Baptist’s head chopped off.*”

Claim: Jehovah’s Witnesses cite the early-Christians argument, the Ecclesiastes 7:1 verse (“the day of death is better than the day of birth”), and the pagan-origins argument as additional reasons for the ban.

- **Source:** *School and Jehovah’s Witnesses* brochure, published by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society — the official brochure still distributed to schoolteachers to explain the JW birthday position
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/brochures/School-and-Jehovahs-Witnesses/Holidays-and-Celebrations/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower educational brochure, current on jw.org
- **Key quote:** “*Additionally, birthday celebrations tend to give excessive importance to an individual, no doubt one reason why early Christians shunned them. (Ecclesiastes 7:1) So you will find that Jehovah’s Witnesses do not share in birthday festivities.*”

Claim: The current jw.org FAQ lists pagan origins as the first reason Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays.

- **Source:** *Why Don’t Jehovah’s Witnesses Celebrate Birthdays?* — official jw.org FAQ page
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/birthdays/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — current official Watchtower FAQ

SECTION 3 — THE 1951 CONTRADICTION (THE BAN'S ACTUAL ORIGIN)

Claim: Until 1951, Jehovah’s Witnesses (previously called Bible Students) openly celebrated birthdays. There are *Watchtower* articles from the 1930s and 1940s describing birthdays warmly.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1998, “Questions from Readers” — Watchtower’s own historical acknowledgment of prior birthday practice
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1998766>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower publication acknowledging its own historical practice
- **Key quote:** “*Well, early in this century, Bible Students, as Jehovah’s Witnesses were then known, did take note of birthdays... The Watch Tower of February 15, 1909, related that at a convention in Jacksonville, Florida, U.S.A., Brother Russell, then president of the Society, was ushered onto the platform... given a surprise birthday present of some boxes of grapefruit, pineapples, and oranges.*”

Claim: At a 1909 convention in Jacksonville, Florida, the Society’s first president Charles Taze Russell was given a surprise birthday gift of boxes of grapefruit, pineapples, and oranges by the brothers.

- **Source:** *The Watch Tower*, February 15, 1909 (as cited in the October 15, 1998 *Watchtower* “Questions from Readers” column)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1998766>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower Online Library, hosted by the organization

Claim: A January 1, 1940 *Watchtower* article described a birthday gift received by one of its members as “a birthday gift from Jehovah,” printed in an official organizational publication.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1940, p. 16
- **URL:** Original 1940 issue. Contemporary archival discussion and verification available via JWfacts: <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/celebrations.php>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY (original publication) / SECONDARY (scanned archive). The original 1940 *Watchtower* is a Watchtower publication; the archival scan used to confirm the exact phrasing is hosted by an independent research site.

Claim: The October 1, 1951 *Watchtower* “Questions from Readers” column is the article that instituted the birthday ban. A reader asked whether it was proper to celebrate a birthday anniversary. The answer was “no.”

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1951, “Questions from Readers,” p. 607
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1951727>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the originating ruling, still hosted on the organization’s own Watchtower Online Library
- **Key quote:** “*Such celebrations have their roots in pagan religions, and not Scriptural grounds.*”

SECTION 4 — THE LOAD-BEARING ARGUMENT (PAGAN ORIGINS) AND ITS INCONSISTENCY

Claim: The Bible doesn’t have a single positive thing to say about dogs. “Dog” in biblical usage is an insult (as when Goliath mocked David).

- **Source:** 1 Samuel 17:43, New World Translation
- **URL:** <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A43&version;=NWT>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — biblical text

Claim: Revelation 22:15 explicitly lists “the dogs” among those kept outside the New Jerusalem.

- **Source:** Revelation 22:15, New World Translation
- **URL:** <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+22%3A15&version;=NWT>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — biblical text

Claim: The Watchtower explicitly acknowledges in its own publications that wedding rings have pagan origins, quoting a 19th-century Catholic cardinal (John Henry Newman) who listed “the ring in marriage” among customs “of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.” Jehovah’s Witnesses wear them anyway.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1972, “Questions from Readers: Is it proper for a Christian to wear a wedding ring?” (this article contains the Newman citation; the 2007 *Watchtower* of February 15, p. 30, reiterates the same position)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1972047>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower Online Library

- **Key quote:** *“The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints... sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date... are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.” (Cardinal John Henry Newman, quoted by the Watchtower)*

Claim: Jehovah’s Witnesses acknowledge in their own publications that the modern division of the day into 24 hours of 60 minutes, and the minute into 60 seconds, derives from the Babylonian sexagesimal system — and that they use it anyway.

- **Source:** *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, entry “Day” — an official Watch Tower Society reference work
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200011104>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower reference work, current on the Watchtower Online Library
- **Key quote:** *“The early Babylonians used the sexagesimal system based on mathematical scales of twelves and sixties. From this system we get our time division whereby the day is partitioned into 24 hours... and each hour into 60 minutes of 60 seconds each.”*

Claim: The Watchtower has acknowledged in “Questions from Readers” columns that sending flowers to honor the dead is a pagan practice — but permits Witnesses to send flowers to comfort the survivors instead.

- **Source:** Watchtower publications on funeral practice; archival summary and primary citations collated by JWfacts
- **URL:** <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/quotes/pagan-practices.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — research archive collating primary Watchtower citations on pagan practices; original Watchtower publications available via wol.jw.org

Claim: From 1952 until July 2025 — over 73 years — Jehovah’s Witnesses were forbidden from toasting or clinking glasses. The prohibition was grounded in pagan-origins reasoning: toasting as “a salute to pagan gods”; clinking glasses to “scare away demons.”

- **Source:** Watchtower publications from May 15, 1952 onward, including the January 1, 1968 *Watchtower* and the February 15, 2007 *Watchtower* (p. 30). Comprehensive primary-source citations collated at JWfacts.
- **URL:** <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/toasting.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — research archive collating primary *Watchtower* citations; each original issue verifiable via wol.jw.org

Claim: On July 4, 2025, Governing Body member Stephen Lett delivered Governing Body Update number four on JW Broadcasting, announcing that there is no need to make a rule regarding toasting and clinking glasses — reversing 73 years of pagan-origin prohibition in a single broadcast.

- **Source:** Governing Body Update #4, JW Broadcasting, July 4, 2025, delivered by Stephen Lett
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/governing-body-update-cheering-clinking-toasting-doctrine-jehovahs-witnesses/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — news coverage and verbatim transcription of the broadcast by AvoidJW, an established advocacy archive. The original broadcast itself is the primary source.
- **Key quote:** *“After prayerful consideration, the Governing Body has concluded that there is no need to make a rule regarding toasting and clinking glasses.”*

SECTION 5 — WHAT THE ORGANIZATION DOES PERMIT TO BE CELEBRATED

Claim: There is a substantial commercial industry around Jehovah’s Witness baptism gifts, pioneer gifts, and elder appreciation — a thriving marketplace of greeting cards, tumblers, plaques, engraved mementos, and themed products sold on Amazon and Etsy.

- **Source:** Public Etsy and Amazon search results for JW-themed gift categories, viewable at time of recording
- **URL (Bethel card):** <https://www.etsy.com/search?q=jw+bethel+going+away+card>
- **URL (Pioneer gifts):** <https://www.amazon.com/s?k=JW+Pioneer+Gifts>
- **URL (Baptism gifts):** <https://www.etsy.com/search?q=JW+baptism+gift>
- **URL (Baptism tumblers):** <https://www.amazon.com/s?k=JW+baptism+tumbler+personalized>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — live public commercial marketplaces demonstrating the existence and scale of the permitted-celebration industry

SECTION 6 — THE REDDIT POST AND THE 'CONSCIENCE MATTER' REFRAME

Claim: On the r/exjw subreddit, a user posted about a circuit assembly their mother had attended. The mother mentioned rumors that birthdays might be allowed soon. When her son noted that would be a significant change, her response was: “They’ve always been a conscience matter so what would the change be?”

- **Source:** Reddit community r/exjw, user post referenced publicly on the platform in April 2026
- **URL:** <https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — primary-source reporting of a statement made by a named individual’s mother, quoted verbatim by her son; Reddit community verifiable but the original specific thread may be subject to user deletion

Claim: “Jehovah Forgives” is an official animated *Become Jehovah’s Friend* video, Lesson 40, in which the animated child character Caleb is reduced to sobbing guilt over having taken a birthday cupcake at school. The video is still hosted on jw.org.

- **Source:** *Become Jehovah’s Friend — Jehovah Forgives*, jw.org children’s video series, Lesson 40
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/children/become-jehovahs-friend/videos/jehovah-forgives/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower-produced video, current on jw.org at time of recording

SECTION 7 — BETH'S FAMILY AND THE ELDER ARRANGEMENT

Claim: The modern body-of-elders arrangement went into effect on October 1, 1972, replacing the single congregation-overseer structure. Beth’s father was appointed as an elder the year the arrangement was created — placing him among the first elders globally under the modern governance structure.

- **Source:** *God’s Kingdom Rules!*, chapter 12, “Organized to Serve ‘the God of Peace,’” paragraph 14, published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1102014251>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower publication documenting the organizational change and its effective date
- **Key quote:** “Instead of having one brother serve as the congregation overseer in each congregation, other brothers who were Scripturally qualified would now also be theocratically appointed to serve as Christian elders... That new elder arrangement went into effect on October 1, 1972.”

Claim: My wife Beth has her own YouTube channel called *Stop the Shunning* and a published book. Her story and her parents' continued shunning since New Year's Eve 2017 are already on the public record.

- **Source:** Beth's public YouTube channel and published book
- **URL:** See Beth's public channel for direct material.
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — publicly published firsthand account

SECTION 8 — THE REAL REASON (THE WATCHTOWER'S OWN STATED LOGIC)

Claim: The October 1, 1951 *Watchtower* “Questions from Readers” column — the same article that invented the ban — states that the real reason is about individual significance: birthday celebrations “center the mind on the creature and exalt the creature, giving him and his birth undue importance.”

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1951, “Questions from Readers,” p. 607
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1951727>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower Online Library, still hosted on the organization's own website today
- **Key quote:** “*The celebration of birthday anniversaries centers the mind on the creature and exalts the creature, giving him and his birth undue importance.*”

Claim: The *School and Jehovah's Witnesses* brochure — the one the organization still hands to schoolteachers — restates the same thesis 75 years later: “Birthday celebrations tend to give excessive importance to an individual.”

- **Source:** *School and Jehovah's Witnesses*, official Watchtower brochure, “Holidays and Celebrations” section, p. 18
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/brochures/School-and-Jehovahs-Witnesses/Holidays-and-Celebrations/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower brochure, currently hosted on jw.org
- **Key quote:** “*Additionally, birthday celebrations tend to give excessive importance to an individual, no doubt one reason why early Christians shunned them.*”

SECTION 9 — THE AMISH COMPARISON

Claim: The Amish, Old Order Mennonites, Hutterites, and conservative Anabaptist communities across the board celebrate birthdays — with cake, homemade ice cream, cards, and small gifts — despite being widely regarded as the most culturally separated and strictest religious communities in North America.

- **Source:** *The Amish Cook* columns by Kevin Williams, an investigative journalist with decades of documentation of Amish communities; Wanda Brunstetter's *Amish Facts*; multiple ethnographic sources
- **URL (Amish Cook):** <https://www.amish365.com/the-amish-cook-birthdays-memories-and-meatloaf/>
- **URL (Brunstetter):** <https://wandabrunstetter.com/amish-life/amish-facts/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — established journalism and community ethnography by long-standing observers of Amish life

Claim: *Gelassenheit* — a central German-rooted Anabaptist spiritual concept — describes submission, yielding, self-surrender, and giving up one's own will. It represents a theology of suppressing individual pride stronger than any comparable Witness teaching. Amish children are taught a verse about it.

- **Source:** Academic ethnography of Anabaptist theology; the children’s verse is part of long-established Amish home instruction traditions
- **URL:** See general Anabaptist scholarship. A broad overview of Gelassenheit in Anabaptist practice: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelassenheit>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — encyclopedic overview for general audience; the underlying scholarship (Kraybill, Hostetler, Nolt) is peer-reviewed ethnography of Amish life
- **Key quote:** “*I must be a Christian child, gentle, patient, meek, and mild, must be honest, simple, true, I must cheerfully obey, giving up my will and way.*”

SECTION 10 — THE REVERSAL PLAYBOOK

Claim: In 2024, the Governing Body announced that the term “disfellowshipped” — sacred terminology for eighty years — would be replaced with the softer “removed from the congregation,” reframing a long-standing disciplinary practice as a clarification rather than a policy change.

- **Source:** 2024 Governing Body announcement delivered at the annual meeting of Jehovah’s Witnesses, documented in the October 2024 JW Broadcasting program and in Watchtower study articles from that period
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/tag/governing-body-update/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — advocacy archive documenting Governing Body announcements; the original broadcast itself is the primary source.

SECTION 11 — ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING SOURCES

JWfacts — Historical Practice Aggregator

- **Source:** JWfacts, independent research archive on Watchtower history and doctrine
- **URL:** <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/celebrations.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — established research archive collating primary Watchtower citations
- **Contains:** Detailed citations of Bible Student and early Watchtower birthday, Christmas, and Mother’s Day practice pre-1951, with direct *Watchtower* quotations and page references.

AvoidJW — Governing Body Updates Archive

- **Source:** AvoidJW, news and analysis archive covering current Watchtower doctrinal changes
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/tag/governing-body-update/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — news coverage and verbatim transcription of Governing Body Updates
- **Contains:** Full text and contextual analysis of Governing Body Update announcements, including the July 4, 2025 toasting reversal.

Historical Background on Babylonian Origins of Time Measurement

- **Source:** Scientific American, “Why is a minute divided into 60 seconds, an hour into 60 minutes, yet there are only 24 hours in a day?”
- **URL:** <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/experts-time-division-days-hours-minutes/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — peer-reviewed science publication confirming the Babylonian sexagesimal origin of modern time divisions
- **Contains:** Independent academic confirmation of the same Babylonian-origin facts that Watchtower’s *Insight on the Scriptures* acknowledges.

Etymology of Days of the Week (Pagan Deity Names)

- **Source:** Standard etymological references confirming that Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday all derive from names of pagan deities in Roman, Norse, and Germanic tradition
- **URL:** <https://www.britannica.com/topic/week>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — established encyclopedic reference
- **Contains:** Etymology of the names of the days of the week, confirming the pagan-deity origins cited in the video.

This reference document is published alongside the video to allow viewers to independently verify every factual claim. All URLs were active at time of publication. Where Watchtower publications are referenced, primary links point to the Watchtower Online Library (wol.jw.org) or jw.org; where those cannot be directly linked, independent archives are provided.