

# Reference Document

## "The Meal They Were Told Not to Eat: How Jehovah's Witnesses Were Conditioned to Reject Christ's Sacrifice"

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

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### 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, court rulings, legislation, or peer-reviewed research
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from academic researchers, established advocacy/legal resource sites, or reputable journalism

### SECTION 1: The Original Memorial Practice

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**Claim: Under Charles Taze Russell, every person who attended the Memorial partook of the bread and wine.**

- Source: 1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, Part 1 — United States of America (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society)
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/301975002>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Note: The 1975 Yearbook describes early Memorial observances where all attendees partook. Congregation letters to Russell confirm universal participation.

**Claim: In 1899, an incomplete report cited 339 groups with 2,501 participants at the Memorial. Every single one of them partook.**

- Source: 1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, Part 1 — United States of America
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/301975002>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "Hundreds gathered, on March 26, 1899, to memorialize the death of Jesus Christ, an incomplete report citing 339 groups with 2,501 participants."

**Claim: Russell believed the 144,000 was literal but taught that all faithful Christians were part of the heavenly calling. Even the 'great company' was understood as a secondary heavenly class, not an earthly one.**

- Source: Charles Taze Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. VI, *The New Creation* (1904); Wikipedia: Charles Taze Russell
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Taze\\_Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taze_Russell)
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Encyclopedic summary of Russell's theology, cross-referenced with primary Watchtower sources

**Claim: Early Bible Students described their Memorial participation in deeply personal terms — 'appropriating its virtues and merits each for himself' and leaving 'silent, like men in solemn haste.'**

- Source: Letters to C. T. Russell published in *Zion's Watch Tower*, reprinted in Watchtower historical compilations
- URL: <https://biblestudentkids.com/ABSCO/htdbv5/r3550.htm>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Original *Watch Tower* reprints (1905 convention report)
- Note: Direct scan of original Watch Tower page with first-person Memorial accounts from Russell-era congregations.

## SECTION 2: Rutherford's Systematic Dismantling (1917–1938)

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**Claim: Joseph Franklin Rutherford became president of the Watch Tower Society in January 1917. Within six months, he had ousted four of the seven board members.**

- Source: Wikipedia: Joseph Franklin Rutherford
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Franklin\\_Rutherford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford)
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Encyclopedic account with extensive citations to Watchtower and academic sources

**Claim: By the early 1930s, an estimated three-quarters of Russell's original Bible Students had left the organization.**

- Source: Wikipedia: Joseph Franklin Rutherford — Organizational changes; M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Franklin\\_Rutherford#Organizational\\_changes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford#Organizational_changes)
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Academic estimate from Penton, widely cited in JW scholarship

**Claim: Russell's Bible Students celebrated Christmas, sang hymns, wore the cross and crown symbol, observed birthdays, elected their own elders, and held 'love feasts' at conventions.**

- Source: 1975 Yearbook; JWfacts.com — Celebrations
- URL: <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/celebrations.php>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Research site compiling primary Watchtower sources with direct citations
- Note: Individual practices documented across multiple primary Watchtower publications from the Russell era.

**Claim: 1927–1928: Christmas was eliminated. A photograph of the Bethel Christmas celebration in 1926 includes four future Watch Tower presidents: Rutherford, Knorr, Franz, and Henschel.**

- Source: Wikipedia: History of Jehovah's Witnesses — Developments under Rutherford; *Golden Age* magazine (1927–1928)
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Jehovah%27s\\_Witnesses#Developments\\_under\\_Rutherford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Jehovah%27s_Witnesses#Developments_under_Rutherford)
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Encyclopedic account cross-referenced with primary Watchtower publications

**Claim: 1928–1932: The elected elder arrangement was abolished and replaced with Society-appointed men.**

- Source: Wikipedia: Joseph Franklin Rutherford — Organizational changes
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Franklin\\_Rutherford#Organizational\\_changes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford#Organizational_changes)
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Encyclopedic account with extensive citations

**Claim: 1938: Rutherford directed that congregational singing be dispensed with at meetings. Singing was reinstated after his death in 1942.**

- Source: Wikipedia: Joseph Franklin Rutherford; *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1938, p. 139
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Franklin\\_Rutherford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford)
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct Watchtower publication (May 1, 1938) confirmed by Wikipedia biographical entry
- Key quote: "A few words... pronounced at the beginning of the study would be far more beneficial than to occupy the same time in singing songs."

## SECTION 3: The 1935 Turning Point

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**Claim: On May 31, 1935, at a convention in Washington, D.C., Rutherford delivered a talk titled 'The Great Multitude' and declared that the great crowd of Revelation 7:9 were an earthly class, not a heavenly one.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, May 15, 2001 — 'Behold! The Great Crowd!'
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2001363>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication recounting the 1935 convention
- Key quote: "Will all those who have the hope of living forever on the earth please stand?... Behold! The great multitude!"

**Claim: The Watchtower stated that partaking 'would signify something that is not true with respect to them' — referring to those with an earthly hope.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, February 15, 2006, p. 24
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2006125>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "Were they to partake of the emblems, it would signify something that is not true with respect to them."

**Claim: One brother later recalled that the Memorial of 1935 was the last time he partook of the emblems.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, March 2021 — 'The Great Crowd of Other Sheep Praise God and Christ'
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2021241>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "The Memorial of 1935 was the last time that I partook of the emblems."

**Claim: In 1935, there were 52,465 partakers out of 63,146 attendees. Within thirty years, partakers dropped to less than one percent of attendees.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1996 — Questions From Readers; Yearbook statistics
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2000042>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication with historical Memorial attendance data

## SECTION 4: The Conditioning Mechanism — How Refusal Is Maintained

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**Claim: The organization described new partakers as potentially suffering from 'past religious beliefs or even mental or emotional imbalance.' (Direct quote from the 2011 Watchtower.)**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, August 15, 2011, p. 22 — Questions From Readers
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2011609>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "A number of factors — including past religious beliefs or even mental or emotional imbalance — might cause some to assume mistakenly that they have the heavenly calling."

## SECTION 5: The Numbers That Broke the Doctrine

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**Claim: The Watchtower presented the declining number of Memorial partakers as proof that the end was near — listing the dwindling anointed as one of 'Six Convincing Lines of Evidence' of the last days.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, January 15, 2000, p. 13
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2000042>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "Sixth, the number of genuine anointed disciples of Christ is dwindling, though some will evidently still be on earth when the great tribulation begins."

**Claim: Memorial partaker numbers: 52,465 in 1935; 11,550 in 1965; 8,645 in 1995; 8,524 in 2005; then rising to 22,312 by 2023.**

- Source: JWfacts.com — Memorial Partakers (compiling official Watchtower Yearbook statistics)
- URL: <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/memorial-partakers.php>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Data sourced from official Watchtower Yearbook annual reports, compiled by JWfacts
- Note: All figures are from the Watchtower's own published annual service reports.

**Claim: In 2007, a Watchtower article admitted that 'we cannot set a specific date for when the calling of Christians to the heavenly hope ends' — effectively abandoning the 1935 sealing date.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, May 1, 2007, p. 31 — Questions From Readers
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2007327>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "It appears that we cannot set a specific date for when the calling of Christians to the heavenly hope ends."

**Claim: In 2013, the Governing Body redefined the 'faithful and discreet slave' as only themselves — no longer all anointed Christians collectively.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2013 — 'Who Really Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?'
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013533>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "That slave is made up of a small group of anointed brothers who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food during Christ's presence... these anointed brothers make up the Governing Body."

**Claim: Prior to 2013, the Watchtower taught that all anointed ones collectively made up the faithful and discreet slave.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, March 1, 1981 — 'Do You Appreciate the Faithful and Discreet Slave?'
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1981167>

- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Key quote: "All anointed followers of Christ Jesus make up God's 'servant,' with Jesus as its Master."

**Claim: In 2016, a Watchtower study article stated that the partaker count 'does not accurately indicate the number of anointed ones left on earth' because some partakers are simply mistaken.**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, Study Edition, January 2016, pp. 25–26
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Note: This article reiterated the 'mental or emotional imbalance' language from the 2011 article and added that rising partaker numbers should not trouble Witnesses.

## SECTION 6: The Bible Reading Admission

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**Claim: The Watchtower warned that some had begun to read the Bible 'exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home' and that through such Bible reading, 'they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom's clergy were teaching 100 years ago.'**

- Source: *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1981
- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1981609>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication
- Note: The Watchtower's own admission that independent Bible reading leads to mainstream Christian beliefs — directly relevant to the Memorial partaking question.

## SECTION 7: The COVID-19 Memorial Detail

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**Claim: During COVID-19 lockdowns, the organization instructed each publisher to prepare the bread and wine at home and have them present during the Memorial discourse — but still told them not to eat or drink.**

- Source: Watchtower organizational instructions (COVID-era Memorial letters to congregations, 2020–2021)
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official organizational correspondence to congregations
- Note: Instructions were distributed through congregation elders via letter from the branch office. These were not publicly posted on jw.org but were read to all congregations.

## SECTION 8: Scripture References

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**Claim: Jesus said: 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves.' (John 6:53)**

- Source: The Bible — John 6:53 (New International Version)
- URL: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%206%3A53&version=NIV>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Scripture

**Claim: Revelation 7:4 describes the 144,000 sealed from every tribe of Israel. Revelation 7:9 describes a 'great crowd' that no man could number, from every nation.**

- Source: The Bible — Revelation 7:4, 9 (New International Version)

- URL: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+7%3A4-9&version;=NIV>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Scripture
- Note: The Watchtower interprets these as two separate groups (heavenly class and earthly class). Mainstream Christianity generally does not.

## SECTION 9: Additional Supporting Sources

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### **JWFacts.com — Memorial Partakers (comprehensive analysis)**

- Source: JWFacts.com, maintained by Paul Grundy (former Witness and Bethel member)
- URL: <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/memorial-partakers.php>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Research site compiling primary Watchtower sources
- Contains: Complete Memorial attendance and partaker statistics from 1935 to present, with graphical analysis of trends

### **EXJWAnalyzer.com — Joseph Franklin Rutherford biographical profile**

- Source: EXJWAnalyzer.com (creator's own research site)
- URL: <https://www.exjwanalyzer.com/wiki/articles/02-01-joseph-rutherford.php>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Creator's original research, cross-referenced with primary sources
- Contains: Comprehensive biographical profile of Rutherford with sourced documentation of organizational changes

### **Wikipedia — Joseph Franklin Rutherford**

- Source: Wikipedia
- URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Franklin\\_Rutherford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford)
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Encyclopedic account with extensive academic citations
- Contains: Overview of Rutherford's presidency, organizational changes, doctrinal shifts, and the singing ban