

Reference Document

A Point-by-Point Reply to the Watchtower Talk “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Mark Sanderson)

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. Claims appear roughly in the order they are made in the video. Quotations from the talk, from Watchtower publications, and from the Bible are reproduced verbatim from the cited sources.

Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — the original document itself: the source talk on JW.org, an official Watchtower publication (including the New World Translation and the elders’ manual), or the biblical text. Primary sources stand on their own.
- **SECONDARY** — authoritative outside references and standard documentation that support and contextualize the primary evidence.

Section 1 — The Talk and the Speaker

The video responded to is a morning-worship talk titled “Protect Yourself From Misinformation,” delivered by Mark Sanderson and posted on JW.org. It runs about ten minutes and is built around the 2023 year text (Psalm 119:160).

Source: JW.org, Studio Monthly Programs / morning-worship talk, “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Mark Sanderson). Runtime ~9.6 minutes.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioMonthlyPrograms>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The talk itself, published on the organization’s own website. All Sanderson quotations in this document are transcribed from that video.

Mark Sanderson is a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses — the small group of men (about eight) who direct the worldwide organization.

Source: JW.org, “Governing Body” (organizational pages); Watchtower publications identifying the Governing Body members.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/governing-body/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The organization’s own identification of its Governing Body.

The talk’s stated standard is that God’s word — the Bible — is the ultimate standard for what is true and false.

Source: “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Sanderson), opening section, quoting the 2023 year text.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioMonthlyPrograms>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Sanderson’s own words in the talk.

Key quote / direct text: “That word is the ultimate standard for what is true and what is false.”

The 2023 year text is Psalm 119:160: “The very essence of your word is truth.”

Source: New World Translation, Psalm 119:160 (2023 year text). Corpus page id 143972.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/psalms/119/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The NWT text itself; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: “The very essence of your word is truth...”

Section 2 — The Standard vs. the Actual Instruction

While the talk says the Bible is the ultimate standard, the organization instructs members to follow the Governing Body’s direction even when they do not understand the reasons for it.

Source: *The Watchtower* (Study Edition), September 2026, “How to Develop ‘an Obedient Heart.’” Corpus page id 303357.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Watchtower’s own current teaching; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: “We will follow the direction we receive even if we do not fully understand all the reasons for it...”

Section 3 — The Bible Principles He Cites (verbatim)

First principle — Proverbs 14:15: “The naive person believes every word, but the shrewd one ponders each step.”

Source: New World Translation, Proverbs 14:15. Quoted by Sanderson; corpus page id 142849.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/proverbs/14/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The NWT text itself; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: “The naive person believes every word, but the shrewd one ponders each step.”

Second principle — 1 Thessalonians 5:21: “Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine.” Sanderson frames this as: verify the source and check whether the content is current and accurate.

Source: New World Translation, 1 Thessalonians 5:21; the same verse is cited by Watchtower in the 2024 study material. Corpus page id 145339.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/1-thessalonians/5/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The NWT text itself; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: “Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine.”

Third principle — Proverbs 28:26: “Whoever trusts in his own heart is stupid, but the one who walks in wisdom will escape.”

Source: New World Translation, Proverbs 28:26. Quoted by Sanderson; corpus page id 13956.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/proverbs/28/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The NWT text itself; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: *“Whoever trusts in his own heart is stupid, but the one who walks in wisdom will escape.”*

Fourth principle — Exodus 23:1: “You must not spread a report that is not true.”

Sanderson adds that it is often “far better to hit the delete key than... the send button.”

Source: New World Translation, Exodus 23:1. Quoted by Sanderson; corpus page id 13189.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/exodus/23/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The NWT text itself; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: *“You must not spread a report that is not true.”*

Sanderson’s “impressive packaging” warning is his own: a source “might have a very impressive name... but none of those things make the information true.”

Source: “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Sanderson), fifth-principle section.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioMonthlyPrograms>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Transcribed verbatim from the talk.

Key quote / direct text: *“It might have a very impressive name. But none of those things make the information true.”*

Sanderson’s “faked authority” example is his own: “3 out of 4 doctors support this product... what type of doctors were they?... Information can be packaged so that it sounds believable and authoritative.”

Source: “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Sanderson), doctors/packaging section.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioMonthlyPrograms>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Transcribed verbatim from the talk.

Key quote / direct text: *“Information can be packaged so that it sounds believable and authoritative. Make sure that you have the facts.”*

Sanderson’s “deepfake” example is his own: technology can manipulate a video so a person “seems to be saying something they never said.”

Source: “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Sanderson), deepfake section.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioMonthlyPrograms>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Transcribed verbatim from the talk.

Sanderson himself invented three false coffee-and-tea headlines to illustrate believing what we want — then disclosed that he “made them all up.”

Source: “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Sanderson), headline-illustration section.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/StudioMonthlyPrograms>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Transcribed verbatim from the talk.

Key quote / direct text: *“Actually, none of these headlines are real. I made them all up...”*

The talk correctly notes that in late 2016 Oxford Dictionaries selected “post-truth” as its Word of the Year.

Source: Oxford University Press / Oxford Languages, Word of the Year 2016 announcement; repeated by Sanderson in the talk.

URL: <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/>

Verification: **SECONDARY** — The publisher’s own announcement; Sanderson’s statement is accurate.

Section 4 — “Make Sure of All Things” vs. “Never Read It”

In the same 2023 program, another part — “Protect Yourself From Apostasy” — instructs members to treat critical information as poison and never read, reply to, or repeat it.

Source: *Our Christian Life and Ministry—Meeting Workbook*, May 2023, “Protect Yourself From Apostasy.” Corpus page id 136521.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/jw-meeting-workbook/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Watchtower’s own workbook; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Key quote / direct text: “How should we react to apostate teachings? Treat them as the poison they are! Never read them, reply to them, or repeat them.”

The organization’s elders’ handbook defines the apostasy offense in terms of doubting “the Bible truth taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses” — i.e., the organization’s teachings, not the Bible on its own.

Source: *Shepherd the Flock of God* (2025 edition), Appendix A, ¶41 (“Deliberately Spreading Teachings Contrary to Bible Truth”). Corpus page id 124871.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: **PRIMARY** — The organization’s internal elders’ manual; confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus.

Note: The two instructions — ‘make sure of all things’ and ‘never read it’ — come from the same organization in the same era; the video’s point is that they cannot be obeyed at once.

Key quote / direct text: “...the Bible truth taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

Section 5 — The Century of Retracted Claims

Watchtower publications repeatedly tied the end of the present system to the twentieth century — e.g., teaching that events would reach their climax “in our own twentieth century.”

Source: “*The Nations Shall Know That I Am Jehovah*”—*How?* (1971) and related 1970s publications. Corpus page ids 26499, 27013, 28171, 29164.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: **PRIMARY** — Watchtower’s own publications; the phrase is confirmed verbatim in the WOL corpus across multiple 1970s books.

Key quote / direct text: “...in our own twentieth century...”

Watchtower promoted “Millions Now Living Will Never Die” and directed expectation toward 1925.

Source: J. F. Rutherford, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (Watch Tower, 1920); the 1925 expectation is documented in Watchtower literature of that period.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: PRIMARY — The Watch Tower’s own booklet and contemporaneous publications.

Watchtower fostered the expectation that the end would come around 1975, and discouraged young members from pursuing higher education or long-term careers on that basis.

Source: *Awake!*, October 8, 1968 (“Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?”); *Kingdom Ministry*, May 1974; documented widely in Watchtower literature of the era.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: PRIMARY — Watchtower’s own publications of the 1966–1975 period.

Note: The organization later acknowledged that undue expectations had been raised about 1975 (*The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980).

A widely documented example of a quietly-revised prediction: the January 1, 1989 Watchtower stated the preaching work would be completed “in our own twentieth century,” wording changed to “in our own day” in the later bound volume.

Source: *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1989, p. 12 (magazine) vs. the 1989 bound volume; the change is a documented and frequently-cited example.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: SECONDARY — The magazine-vs-bound-volume difference is well documented in ex-JW research; the video presents it as an illustration of the pattern, not a doctrinal proof.

Section 6 — Other Factual Claims Made in the Video

The creator’s own full-text research database (the WOL corpus) tallies Watchtower’s published output at 167,625,843 words (figure shown on screen from the creator’s tool at time of recording).

Source: Creator’s WOL corpus — a full-text index of ~2,780 Watchtower publications back to the 19th century.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: PRIMARY — The creator’s own indexing tool. The live corpus total (167.6 million words) matches the on-screen figure; small differences reflect publications added since the screenshot.

Note: This is a count of Watchtower’s own published words, not an outside estimate.

The talk addresses an audience of roughly nine million Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide.

Source: Watchtower annual service-year report (2024): peak publishers approximately 8.8 million; total associated / Memorial attendance is higher.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2024-service-year-report/>

Verification: SECONDARY — The “nine million” figure is a round approximation of the worldwide membership the talk is addressed to.

The Governing Body is presented to members as the sole channel of communication from God, though its members hold no formal theological degrees or credentials.

Source: JW.org / Watchtower publications on the Governing Body’s role and biographies; the video characterizes this as manufactured authority.

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/governing-body/>

Verification: SECONDARY — The “sole channel” framing is Watchtower’s own; the absence of formal theological credentials is a factual characterization of the men’s published backgrounds.

Former Governing Body member Anthony Morris III was recorded in a liquor store on a Sunday morning — an incident widely circulated among current and former Witnesses.

Source: Publicly circulated footage (“Bottlegate”); Morris was a Governing Body member until his 2023 removal.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: **SECONDARY** — The video mentions this only as an illustration and explicitly flags the surrounding speculation as speculation.

Watchtower’s literature has cited scientists, historians, and scholars in trimmed or out-of-context form so an expert appears to support a Watchtower conclusion — e.g., in the anti-Trinity brochure.

Source: *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (Watch Tower, 1989); the pattern of selective quotation is documented in scholarly and ex-JW analysis.

Source type: print publication / on-record video (citation above)

Verification: **SECONDARY** — The video’s point is methodological (selective quotation), presented as commentary on the organization’s sourcing, not a claim about the doctrine itself.

Section 7 — Additional Supporting Sources

The talk: “Protect Yourself From Misinformation” (Mark Sanderson)

URL: [JW.org — Studio Monthly Programs](https://www.jw.org/en/studio-monthly-programs/)

Verification: **PRIMARY** — the source video, on the organization’s own site.

Contains: Every Sanderson quotation in the video, transcribed verbatim.

Watchtower Online Library (WOL)

URL: <https://wol.jw.org>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — the organization’s own publication archive.

Contains: The year text, the “Obedient Heart” article, all four Bible principles, and the “Protect Yourself From Apostasy” workbook part — each confirmed verbatim.

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (2013 revision)

URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/bible/study-bible/books/>

Verification: **PRIMARY** — the organization’s own Bible.

Contains: Proverbs 14:15 and 28:26, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Exodus 23:1, and Psalm 119:160 as quoted in the video.

Shepherd the Flock of God (2025 edition)

Verification: **PRIMARY** — the organization’s internal elders’ manual.

Contains: Appendix A, ¶41 — the apostasy offense defined against “the Bible truth taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

All Watchtower, New World Translation, and talk quotations are reproduced verbatim from the cited sources and were confirmed against the Watchtower Online Library full-text corpus. Bible citations follow the New World Translation except where another version is named.