

# Christian Witnesses of Jah

## Notes & Reminders:

Often people think they have to "know" something is true before they can believe it. Yet, many of us regularly, even daily, go through traffic intersections when our light is green without 'knowing' for sure whether those travelling in other directions with red lights will stop. In fact, all too often people run red lights and crash into those driving through green-light or green-arrow intersections. Yet, we continue driving according to the rules of the road because we have good reasons to believe we will not be injured or killed by others.

Thus, we *do* form beliefs and even put our lives at risk constantly without *knowing* for sure whether what we believe is true will actually happen. So absolute knowledge of something is not necessary before we form and accept important beliefs. This is, in fact, what the Bible calls "faith," or "the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen" based on "the evidence of things we cannot yet see."—Hebrews 11:1, *New Living Translation*.

Christian Witnesses of Jah are those who have come to accept as true, without claiming to *know for a certainty*, that there is a God named Jah, that he sent forth a Savior or Messiah known as Jesus of Nazareth, and that we can learn a great deal about them from the Bible. We reject the idea that we must follow what can be shown to be nothing but traditions from men or from women, that is, traditions which clearly contradict the good reasons for belief found in nature and supported by the Bible.

Of course, not all human traditions are "bad" or rejected by Christians. But Christian Witnesses of Jah do not influence others to accept what is *clearly* human as if it is from God, or something we *must* do in order to be accepted by Jah and by those who worship him as God. Indeed, in the Bible itself we are taught that "each of us shall give account of himself to God," and so we should "not judge one another anymore" (Romans 14:12-13).

To learn more about Christian Witnesses of Jah, our beliefs and the good reasons supporting them, consider the web sites below. Feel free to call, email, or write to us, that is, if there is anything we can do to help you grow as you consider the meaning of life, or even how the life that we have now came to be here in the first place.

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# Beliefs Based on the Best Available Reasons

From



and

# Christian Witnesses of Jah

[www.ChristianWitnessesofJah.org](http://www.ChristianWitnessesofJah.org)

# Jah

The word, "Hallelujah," means, "Praise Jah!" It is a transliteration of two Hebrew words: *halelu* (meaning, "praise") and *Yah* (יה). *Yah* is a transliteration of the Hebrew characters יה which is properly Anglicized as "Jah."<sup>1</sup> This is the shortest form of the divine name found in the Bible. It occurs as a part of place and other proper names including the first two letters or first part of the tetragrammaton (יהוה), which is most often Anglicized as "Jehovah."<sup>2</sup>

The earliest dateable use of this name outside of the Bible (but related to it) is on the Moabite Stone (see footnote under The Bible). The earliest recorded use of God's name in the Bible is in Genesis 2:4. Here Jah/Jehovah is credited with the creation of the heavens and the earth. Thus, God's name is ancient in its use and it is associated with verifiable historical events, as well as with various acts of mercy and justice recorded in the Bible.

Though the four-letter form of this name is often *mis*-transliterated and *mis*-pronounced as "Yahweh," and though there is plenty of credible evidence supporting the use of "Jehovah" as the Anglicized form of God's name, "Jah" is the least disputed form and pronunciation.<sup>3</sup> It is *this name* ("Jah") which Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 says all living creatures will one day "praise" for good reasons!<sup>4</sup> Some of the good reasons for praising Jah are given in this brochure under Christian Witnesses of Jah.

<sup>1</sup>Transliteration represents the letters of one language "in the corresponding characters of another alphabet" (*Webster's II, New Riverside University Dictionary*, [Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994], page 1227). Anglicization occurs when a word is made to "become English or similar to English in form, pronunciation, idiom or character" (*Webster's II, New Riverside University Dictionary*, page 108). "Jesus" is an Anglicized form of the Greek name Ἰησοῦς, which is often transliterated "in the corresponding characters" of English as *Iesous*. But "Jesus" is not a name any Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek speaking person in the first century CE would have known or used. Yet, this is no good reason for English speakers to avoid using "Jesus" today.

<sup>2</sup>Compare the use of these words in the Hebrew Bible text of Psalm 117:1. In the first part of the verse *halelu* ("praise") is followed by the Hebrew particle לַיהוָה ('*el*) which is used to identify the object of "praise," the tetragrammaton, יהוה (transliterated into English as *YHWH*). This string of words has the same meaning as *halleluyah* (*halelu* + *yah*) at the end of Psalm 117:2. But in verse 2 "Jah" (יה) is used. The tetragrammaton (יהוה) is used 6,828 times in the Hebrew Bible and "Jah" (יה) occurs by itself another 49 times (see John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew English-Concordance to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998], pages 623 and 630). However, few modern Bibles use any transliterated or Anglicized form of God's name.

<sup>3</sup>For a more complete discussion of the divine name in Hebrew, in Aramaic, and in Greek, see Greg Stafford's *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Third Edition (Murrieta, CA: Elihu Books, 2009), Chapter 1. All 126 pages of this chapter can be viewed online under "J" in the Topical Index of the Elihu Books web site ([www.elihubooks.com](http://www.elihubooks.com)).

<sup>4</sup>In modern printed editions of the Greek text of Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6, you will likely see the word Ἀλληλουϊά (English transliteration: [*h*]allelou + *la*). This is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew words *halelu* and *yah*, again, meaning "praise" and "Jah" (in English). See Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, Third Edition, pages 95-100.

# Jesus of Nazareth

Before the first century of our Common Era (CE), the biblical history of Isaiah spoke of one who would come as a "witness" to the God Jah:

Isaiah 53:5, 11; 54:4: He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. ... Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ... See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. (New Revised Standard Version [1989])

There are at least four historical witnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. They are the records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These witnesses documented what Jesus did and what others did to him in fulfillment of the above texts from Isaiah. The Isaiah Dead Sea Scrolls prove these things were written before Jesus was even born.<sup>5</sup> The historical records of the New Testament (NT) have ancient and well-attested evidence supporting them.<sup>6</sup> Further, they are quoted by others who lived after the first century CE, such as Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130 to c. 200 CE), Origen (c.185 to c.253 CE), Jerome (347 to 420 CE), and others who quoted, preserved, and translated biblical texts.

There are also early, non-biblical references to "Christians" and to Jesus. Ancient Rome's greatest historian, Tacitus (c. 55-57 CE to c. 120 CE), called "Christians" those whose name came from "Christus" (Latin for "Christ"), who "suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius" by "Pontius Pilate" (*The Annals*, Book 15.44). This is consistent with the NT record of Luke 3:1; 23:24-25, 33. The famous Jewish historian Josephus wrote of a one known as "James," "the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ" (Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book xx. 200). This agrees with Galatians 1:19 in the NT, which speaks of "James" as "the Lord's brother." In *The Death of Peregrine* Lucian of Samosata (c. 120 CE to 190 CE) wrote about the devotion of "the Christians" to "a man" who "was crucified" because of the "novel rites" which he is said to have introduced.<sup>7</sup>

Though there is early non-biblical corroboration to the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, the four NT records are the best and most credible sources of information about what he did and what he taught. According to Jesus, the entire Hebrew "Law" of Moses and all that was written by the biblical "prophets" is balanced by these teachings, "You must love Jah your God with your complete heart and with your entire soul and with your whole mind," and "You must love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 23:37-40). These are also the primary teachings of Christian Witnesses of Jah today.

<sup>5</sup>The text of Isaiah is best supported by the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>) from the Dead Sea Scrolls, preserving the entire book and dated to between 150-100 BCE. The Scroll of Isaiah (1QIsa<sup>b</sup>) is also found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and it contains about 75% of Isaiah. There are also at least 20 other Dead Sea Scrolls which support this biblical book's ancient text. Isaiah is one of the three most frequently quoted books in the entire New Testament (Deuteronomy and the book of Psalms are the other two). Finally, the text of Isaiah is preserved in and verified by the Masoretic traditions of the Leningrad Codex (early 11th century CE), the Aleppo Codex (early 10th century CE), the early 9th century CE Petersburg Codex and the late 9th century CE Codex Cairensis, as well as the 4th century CE Greek Codex Vaticanus, the 4th century Greek Codex Sinaiticus, the 5th century CE Greek Codex Alexandrinus, and in other early and late Greek, Latin, Syriac, and other language versions.

<sup>6</sup>The New Testament (NT) documents have a tremendous amount of manuscript support. In *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, eds. Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 2001), there are transcriptions of sixty-nine (69) of the earliest NT manuscripts (dating from 100 CE to 300 CE). Additionally, there are other early papyri, the Greek Codices Sinaiticus (4th century), Vaticanus (5th century), Alexandrinus (5th century), Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus (5th century), Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (late 5th or early 6th century), as well as Syriac, Latin, and Coptic versions supporting the text of the NT.

<sup>7</sup>H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler, *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), page 82. For more on the references to "Christians" and to Jesus in Lucian see "Lucian of Samosata: A Warning for Christians from an Early Non-Christian" (link: <http://elihubooks.blogspot.com/2009/09/lucian-of-samosata-warning-for.html>)

Isaiah Scroll in Hebrew, c. 120 BCE, © photo, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

# The Bible

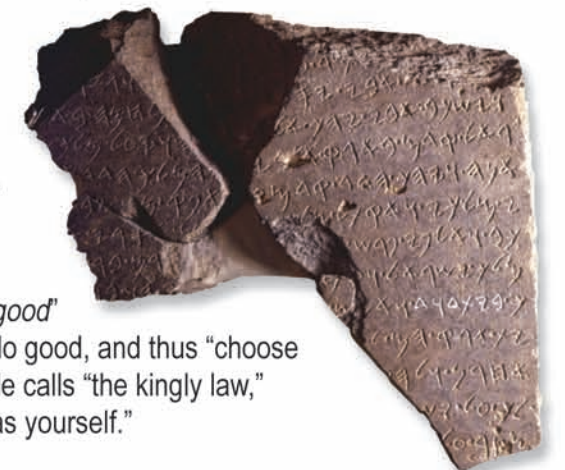
The Bible, as it is commonly presented in the Old and New Testaments, is really a collection of sixty-six (66) books. In the first two footnotes provided under Jesus of Nazareth in this brochure there is a useful summary of some of the evidence supporting several biblical records. There is a great deal more evidence for the Bible, in fact, than exists for any other collection of books in the entire history of the ancient world.<sup>8</sup>

The Bible starts with Genesis and with the story of mankind's creation, its destruction by the flood of Noah's day, and then to the division of humankind by language (Genesis 1-11). The Bible continues with Exodus and with the history of Moses and the release of ancient Hebrews from enslavement, to their migration to the land of Israel. Then the Bible proceeds to tell us about how Jah built up a nation from these Hebrew slaves, which included the likes of kings David and Solomon, as well as prophets like Isaiah, until finally there came through this people the one known as "Jesus," the "Nazarene." —Matthew 2:23.

In the Bible we read about how each of us obtains "the knowledge of good and bad" (Genesis 2:17; 3:6), as well as of "how to reject the bad and *choose the good*" (Isaiah 7:15). One of the best ways to do good, and thus "choose the good," is by practicing what the Bible calls "the kingly law," namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself." —James 2:8.

If you want what is good, Christian Witnesses of Jah encourage you to "*learn to do good*" to others. "Search for justice; set right the oppressor; render judgment for the fatherless boy; plead the cause of the widow" (Isaiah 1:17, *New World Translation*). For according to the Bible, men and women were made in Jah's image for "*good works*"! —Genesis 1:26-27; Ephesians 2:10.

<sup>8</sup>In addition to the available manuscript support for the Bible, archaeology consistently validates what the Bible represents. In addition to containing the earliest use of the divine name outside of the Bible (see under Jah in this brochure), the Moabite Stone discovered in 1868 dates to between 840-830 BCE and it supports events recorded in the account of 2 Kings Chapter 3 (see J.A. Emerton, "The Value of the Moabite Stone as an Historical Source," *Vetus Testamentum* 52.4 [2002], pages 483-492). Also, in 1979 tiny silver scrolls (used as amulets) were found which have been shown to contain a 6th century BCE inscription of Numbers 6:24-26, including the name of God (see G. Barkay, A.G. Vaughn, M.J. Lundberg, and B. Zuckerman, "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 334 [2004], pages 41-71). These items show the Israelites of the Bible were indeed an ancient people. Further, the Stele of Merneptah (dated to the 13th century BCE) records Pharaoh Merneptah's conquests over various nations, including "Israel" (see Michael Kerrigan, *The Ancients in Their Own Words* [New York, NY: Fall River Press, 2009], pages 58-59). There is also the Tel-Dan Stele of the mid-9th century BCE which records the victory of the Syrians over the "King of Israel" and the "King of the House of David" (lines 7-9, 12). This is consistent with the biblical record of 2 Kings 6:24; 8:28; and 9:15-16.



The "House of David" inscribed on the Tel Dan Stele of the 9th cent. BCE (on display in the Skirball Museum, Jerusalem).