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What About Jehovah's Witnesses?

There was a time when Jehovah's Witnesses were much more noticeable and controversial than they presently seem to be, but for many people they are still a source of interest and concern. We often wonder when we see them going door-to-door, 'What are they like? What do they believe? Should we consider them as just another Christian group, or are they to be avoided?' Hopefully, we will clear this up for you.

I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness, and at the age of 14 I made a commitment to the beliefs of the group and was baptized. Upon becoming an adult, I became very involved, becoming a "Pioneer" (seeking to spend 100 hours or more each month promoting the religion) and taking on various offices of service. I was one of those who went to other Kingdom Halls (their meeting places) and delivered hour-long speeches on subjects of their choosing. I held "Bible Studies" in private homes and conducted weekly "Bible Studies" with groups of about 10 people each.

The Beliefs Of Jehovah's Witnesses

As a Jehovah's Witness, I believed as they did:

- The name of God is Jehovah.
- Jesus is the first created being of Jehovah and died as the perfect human equivalent of Adam, to provide forgiveness of sin. He is not God, and not equal to the Father.
- The Holy Spirit is God's invisible force, not a person.
- The 144,000 are the only ones going to heaven to be with Jesus - all others who live forever will do so on planet earth, a restored planet in a parklike state.

- The Kingdom of God was established in heaven in 1914 and the end of the world will arrive before the generation that saw the start of World War I would die out.
- The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society is the official publishing group which produces the only printed material that is trusted to teach the truth about God's Word.
- Anyone who gets to survive Armageddon and live during the 1,000 year reign of Christ must be associated with Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Burden Of Being A Jehovah's Witness

Although I can look back and remember times when God obviously stepped into my life and helped me out, I also recall that during my time as a Jehovah's Witness I would experience periods of deep, dark depression. There was never a sense of being secure in the protection of Jehovah, because even if one were to survive the "Battle of Armageddon" and live for one thousand years in the re-constructed "New Earth," one had to still pass the test at the end of the thousand years to be judged worthy to live forever.

Jehovah Changes My Direction

As I said, there were times when God reached out to me in various ways, through circumstances and individuals, to let me know that He was involved in keeping me. At long last, when I had just about turned 27 years old, a former missionary for Jehovah's Witnesses asked a mutual friend and me some questions about our faith that could not be immediately answered. We began reading our Bibles and researching so as to respond to him and

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help him regain his confidence in the Watchtower Society.

To satisfy myself of the accuracy of any conclusions I might reach, I sought out books that taught me to read the New Testament Greek to some extent. Not that I could do the work of a scholar, but could get a basic understanding of important terms. One of the first major concepts I “discovered” was that of Justification, or as the New World Translation rendered it, being “declared righteous.”

Declared Righteous By Faith In Jesus

The revelation came as I read in the Book of Romans the brilliant treatise of the Apostle Paul on (1) the sinfulness of humanity (chapter 1); (2) the sinfulness of the Jew (chapter 2); (3) God’s provision for redemption in the person of Jesus Christ.

Paul writes in Romans 3:21-26, “But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ *for all who believe*. For there is no distinction, *since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that *he justifies (declares righteous) the one who has faith in Jesus.*”

The truth of the above scripture shone into my heart like a beacon in a dark night. This beautiful

truth was not just for 144,000 saints somewhere “out there.” It was “*for all who believe*. For there is no distinction, *since all have sinned* and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift.”

It was so simple, so spectacular! “He justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.” I have a right standing with God the Father because I trust in the sacrifice of Jesus on the tree to cover my sins!

The Deity Of Jesus Christ

Understanding that the message I had been taught in regards to being ‘declared righteous’ was in error, I continued to look for understanding of other teachings, asking God to show me by His Spirit the truth of His Word. As a J.W. I had learned to believe the the Father is Jehovah, and the Son, Jesus was the first creation of God and lesser than God. Reading John 1:1 cast a different light on that concept: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God.”

The Watchtower’s circumlocution of changing the last phrase to “the Word was *a* god” slowly began to stand out as a ridiculous attempt to hide what the Apostle John was saying here. Their contrast of *the* God versus *a* god falls apart when we read in John 20:27-29 of Thomas’ declaration of faith: “Then he said to Thomas, ‘put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

In the Greek text at this juncture, Thomas declares, “The Lord of me and *the* God of me.” He here announces his faith that Jesus is God. Jesus’ response in verse 29 is instructive: “Jesus said to

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him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'" If the J.W. point of view were correct, Jesus would have immediately reprimanded Thomas by saying something like, "I'm a god, Thomas, not *the* God." The fact that Jesus let the comment stand and *commended* him for it speaks volumes to the belief that Jesus is indeed God.

There is another line of observation which helped me to see the deity of Christ. It begins with a verse with which J.W.'s are very familiar, Romans 10:13, "For, 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" The New World Translation renders this, "For, 'everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.'" This in itself is a quotation from Joel 2:32, and is one of the cases in the Old Testament where the name of God, YHWH, translated *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*, occurs.

The Septuagint translation of the Scriptures, in the *koine Greek*, was the commonly used translation of Paul's time, and consistently rendered YHWH as *kyrios* in its text. *Kyrios* had the impact of our word LORD. So whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.

Now, no matter what your understanding of the translation, *what does it mean to call on Him?* I have known some J.W.'s to be very evasive when I ask that question, but the obviously true response is that when you call on the name of the Lord, you are calling out to Him, addressing Him in prayer, seeking His divine approval. The Jehovah's Witness demonstrates this in practice by addressing God the Father as Jehovah and speaking in prayer to Jehovah.

The J.W. will NEVER address prayer to Jesus. One will end one's prayer "in the name of Jesus,"

but a J.W. never *addresses* Jesus in prayer, saying "Lord Jesus, we ask you to do thus and so." If one of Jehovah's Witnesses were to speak in that way in a Kingdom Hall, he or she would be quickly silenced and probably disfellowshipped.

Now lets look at 1 Corinthians 1:2. Paul writes this letter, "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place are *calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, both their Lord and ours." This passage says that the first century Christians were calling on Jesus, addressing Him in prayer, something the J.W. would never dare to do in a public setting.

At this point the J.W. may offer some feeble excuse to try to evade the obvious truth of this verse, so I turn to Acts chapter 7. This is the account of Stephen, the disciple of Jesus who was so full of the Spirit of God and of wisdom that none could refute his words. He was tried by the Sanhedrin, the highest religious court of the day and condemned to be stoned to death. As he was dying, he spoke out in prayer. At Acts 7:59, 60 it is recorded: "While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, '*Lord Jesus*, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'"

One might perhaps venture to say that Stephen was saying something like, "May the Lord Jesus receive my spirit." The greek text does not allow for such a conclusion. The word here rendered Lord is *Kyrie*, the form of direct address, meaning Stephen was speaking *to* Jesus, not about Jesus. If the J.W. position were correct, Stephen would have committed a major offense at the moment of death. Obviously, he was doing what Christians did, addressing Jesus in prayer in a moment of crisis. Since prayer in Scripture is only offered to

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God, this is supportive of the conclusion that Jesus is God.

Knowing God Versus Knowledge Of God

As a J.W. there was constant repetition of the Watchtower's version of John 17:3, "This means everlasting life, their *taking in knowledge* of you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent." One of the questions which confronted us is why does the New World Translation use this terminology when virtually every other translation says, "This is eternal life, that *they may know you*, the only true God.."?

The word here translated knowledge or knowing is the greek word *ginosko*, which refers not to the accumulation of data, not the assimilation of literate facts, but to personal, experiential knowing, knowing by personal contact. It is the word used by Mary when the angel told her she would become pregnant and have a child. Her response in Luke 1:34 is "How can this be, since I *know not* a man?" Her question is, how can I be pregnant, since I have not had sexual intercourse with a man? To *ginosko*, to know, is to have intercourse, personal experience with the other party. So when Jesus prayed, "This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ," He was saying that eternal life was the result of knowing God the Father and Jesus the Son by personal experience, not by studying facts about God.

This strikes at the very heart of the J.W. religious infrastructure. Their world is built on assimilating facts about God, and avoiding any emotional, spiritual exchange with God. Think about this: If you are a woman and married, you know your husband. You live with him, you sleep with him,

you have sexual relations and have his children. It is all knowing by experience. You may even write a book about your husband, but no one can really know your husband just by reading that book. It will all be a fractional, incomplete knowledge, because this knowing is impossible except by personal experience on an ongoing basis.

It is the same with God. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6) To know God, to know Jesus, you must accept Jesus as your personal Savior, trust in the work He did on the tree, and ask Him into your life.

The Indwelling Christ

This leads us to the next concept, which is The Indwelling Christ. One of the questions which our mutual friend asked the two of us was, "Why does the New World Translation render the term from the greek, *in Christ* and *Christ in you*, as "in union with Christ, by means of Christ, in association with Christ, etc." I had to admit, I had never noticed the phrase, and it became part of my investigation.

This began to come clear when I read John chapter 15. Here Jesus develops the comparison of the vine and its branches. He says in verses 4 and 5, "Abide *in me* as I abide *in you*. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who *abide in me*, and *I in them*, bear much fruit; because apart from me you can do nothing."

The Witness viewpoint here would have the branches lying on the ground next to the vine and operating independently of the vine, just sharing

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the same goals. But Jesus is describing something much more wonderful, and vital. No vine can produce grapes, fruit, on its branches unless they are one entity. The branches must be attached, with the life-bearing juices flowing throughout the whole, for fruit to be borne.

In writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul invokes this reality when he says in Ephesians 3:17-21, “and that Christ may *dwell in* your hearts through faith, as you are rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be *filled with all the fullness of God.*”

“Now to him who by the power at work *within us* is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen.”

One has to wonder how any organisation could have obscured this obvious and beautiful truth of the Word of God. Through faith in Christ and the cleansing of the blood of Christ, God in the person of Jesus comes to *dwell in the Christian.* It is by the power of an indwelling Spirit that we are able to do those things which please God. No mere aligning of purpose and motivation will ever overcome our innate sinfulness. Only the power of the indwelling Christ can do that.

The Holy Spirit

Another puzzling doctrine of the Watchtower Society concerns the Holy Spirit. The whole realm of Christendom accepts the truth of the

personality of the Holy Spirit, but J.W.’s teach that the Holy Spirit is merely God’s invisible force or power, much as the wind is invisible but has power without personality. This view flies in the face of Scripture, as I believe investigation will show.

Consider what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, 17, 25,26 and 16:7-14: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the *Spirit of truth,* whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him... I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the *Holy Spirit,* whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all I have said to you.

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate (Helper) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: About sin because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will *not speak on his own,* but *will speak whatever he hears,* and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

When Jesus says in John 14:16, “I will send you another helper,” the word for *another* is *allon,* which means “another like the original.” The helper is like the one sending him. Jesus is a person, so is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit hears

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and speaks, because the Holy Spirit is a person, not a mindless force.

Throughout the New Testament, the disciples refer to the Holy Spirit as one would speak of a person. In Acts 5 is the account of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about how much money they received from selling some property and giving the proceeds to the church. In verses 3 and 4 Peter says, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to *lie to the Holy Spirit* and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? *You did not lie to us but to God!*"

Now consider this: How can you lie to an impersonal force? Not only that, but notice Peter says the Holy Spirit is God!

Later on in the Book of Acts, in chapter 13, we find another reference in support of this truth. In the church at Antioch the disciples were praying and it says in verse 2, "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the *Holy Spirit said*, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Here we are told that the Holy Spirit spoke, and called them. These are not the things which are spoken of inanimate, impersonal forces, but of personality.

Consider this: In Galatians 5:22, 23 Paul writes that "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." Love, joy, peace, etc. are aspects of personality, not impersonality. The Spirit is the One who produces this fruit and one should recognize the fruit-producer for the

wonderful, personal God He is.

To sum up, the movement called Jehovah's Witnesses is manifestly an aberration which does the work, not of God but of the enemy of God. Its clear purpose is to prevent you and others from discovering the marvelous provision that has been made for your redemption and glorious future as a child of God. You can enjoy a personal, intimate relationship with the Living God through Jesus Christ by repenting of your sins and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as the full payment for those sins.

Upon accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can receive the Holy Spirit and be filled with the very presence of God. You can be assured of eternal life, not worrying that you have to wait for a thousand years to see if God will let you live. As Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life."

We invite your response to this message. If you feel led to contribute to this effort, send correspondence to:

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