

Waking Up from Watchtower's Distorted Teachings

Analysis of the Organization's Dogma

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Contents

Introduction

PART ONE

A SINGLE CLASS OF TRUE CHRISTIANS

1. Why There Are Not Two Classes of True Christians 1
2. True Christians Are Consistently Shown to Be of One Class 4
3. The Great Crowd are Anointed Christians 15
4. The Future Restoration of a Remnant of Ethnic Israel 21
5. The 144,000 Are the Remnant of Ethnic Israelites 25
6. 144,000 Will Be in the Same Location as the Great Crowd 29

PART TWO

BIBLICAL TRUTH ABOUT THE RESURRECTED JESUS

7. The Resurrected Jesus Is Not an Intangible Spirit 33
8. Jesus' Own Physical Body Was Resurrected 37
9. Misapplied Texts Concerning Jesus' Body 41
10. Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearances 48
11. Jesus' Sacrificed Life in Relation to His Body 50

PART THREE

HOW AND TO WHERE DOES JESUS RETURN?

12. How Could Jesus Have Returned Invisibly? 52
13. Jesus Will Come Right Back to Earth 56
14. Jesus Will Be on Earth Where the Kingdom Will Be 60
15. "Kingdom of the Heavens" Means "Kingdom of God" 63
16. The Holy Ones Do Not Rule from Heaven 67

- 17. The Kingdom Is Yet Future 69
- 18. Jesus Will Rule from Literal Jerusalem 71

PART FOUR

WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF TRUE CHRISTIANS?

- 19. Christ Never Promised Heaven as His Disciples' Destiny 75
- 20. Biblical Usage of the Words 'Heaven' and 'Heavenly' 80
- 21. Uniting with Christ Occurs When He Returns 83
- 22. Scriptures Misapplied to the Concept of Going to Heaven 90

PART FIVE

CLARIFYING THE DETAILS OF THE RESURRECTION

- 23. What Is Meant by Resurrection? 96
- 24. Everyone Is Resurrected in One of Two Phases 100
- 25. For Whom Is the First Resurrection? 106
- 26. The First Resurrection Cannot Have Begun in 1918. 110
- 27. Not "Caught Away" Before Jesus' Future Return 118
- 28. Can the First Resurrection Really Be Under Way? 124

PART SIX

FALSE TEACHINGS ON THE TIME OF THE END

- 29. Did the Sign of the Last Days Begin in 1914? 127
- 30. Is It the 1914 Generation That Will See Armageddon? 130
- 31. The Sign of the End of the Age and Its Precursors 133
- 32. Jesus Cannot Have Returned in 1914. 136
- 33. Jesus Returns Once and Only After the Great Tribulation 139

PART SEVEN
MISGUIDED CALCULATIONS FOR THE LAST DAYS

- 34. Jerusalem's Destruction Not in 607 B.C.E – the Evidence 143
- 35. Seventy Years "For" Babylon - Jeremiah 29:10. 146
- 36. The 70 Years Were Not for Paying-off the Sabbaths 153
- 37. The True Chronology of the Deportations of Judah 156
- 38. Watchtower's Faulty Scheme to Become God's Organization 159
- 39. The Great Tribulation Is Not Armageddon 163
- 40. Christians Will Not Suffer During the Time of God's Wrath 167
- 41. World Improvements Begin Soon After the Kingdom Begins 171
- 42. Changes That Will Happen When God's Kingdom Comes 174
- 43. Did 1975 Complete 6,000 Years of Mankind's History? 179
- 44. Another False Hope Created for Jehovah's Witnesses 190

PART EIGHT
MISUNDERSTANDING OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE IN GOD'S PURPOSE

- 45. Early and later Watchtower Teaching About Ethnic Israel 193
- 46. Watchtower Goes Too Far in Using Replacement Theology 199
- 47. The Prophecies for Israel Should Not Be Allegorized 203
- 48. Full Restoration of Israel Was Not from Ancient Babylon 206

PART NINE
FURTHER FLAWED INTERPRETATIONS

- 49. Flawed Interpretations Concerning Jesus 210
- 50. Miscellaneous Flawed Interpretations 215

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Summarizing the Society's Faulty System of Dates	226
Appendix B. History of the Day/Year Theory and the Gentile Times	228
Appendix C. Could the "Last Days" Run for 120 Years?	229
Appendix D. Ethnic Israel Returns to the Literal Land	231

Suggested Reading	232
Subject Concordance	234



Bible Translations Referenced

Unless otherwise stated all quotations of the Bible are from the New World Translation - 2013 edition. Other translations referenced are:

ASV	American Standard Version
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
CEB	Common English Bible
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
GW	God's Word Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
KIT	Kingdom Interlinear Translation (Greek-English)
KJV	King James version
KNT	The Kingdom New Testament by N.T. Wright
LXX	Septuagint (Greek Version of the Old Testament)
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
MOFF	The Moffatt Translation of the Bible
REB	Revised English Bible
UBS	United Bible Societies Interlinear

Amplified Bible

The New Testament by William Barclay

The Unvarnished New Testament by Andy Gaus

Young's Literal Translation of the Bible

ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

Please note: B.C.E means before our common era.

C.E. means in the common era and is equal to A.D meaning Anno Domini.

Introduction

This is the second in a two-book set concerning the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society as the providers of information and directives for the Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs). Indeed, it is clear from an analysis of Scripture that a certain amount of the Watchtower Organization's teaching presented to and by Jehovah's Witnesses is significantly correct. This includes their teaching against the following:

- The Trinity,
- An inherently immortal soul,
- Hell-fire eternal torture,
- Calvinistic predestinarianism,
- Modern-day speaking in tongues, and
- Any obligation to keep the Sabbath.

Also, their teaching of a coming paradise on earth and the gaining of everlasting life is a fully scriptural understanding. However, in relatively recent times, especially since the advent of the internet, many thousands of individual JWs have left the Watchtower Organization over various serious issues. These issues include:

- The "two witnesses rule" so that paedophiles do not get reported to the secular authorities and so allowing them to escape justice
- The blood transfusion life-or-death issues
- Extreme flip-flops in some teachings
- Various damaging practices and policies
- The very high control system operated by the Organization.

All of this is dealt with in my first book entitled, *The Shackled Mind of the Jehovah's Witness – Why They Surrender Their Lives to the Watchtower Organization*. Nevertheless, there are also some notably major and many lesser teachings of the Organization which are unbiblical or otherwise problematic and which bring the individual JW to an incorrect world-view about his or her relationship with God, future destiny, and expectations. These subjects are dealt with in this second book and, indeed, the thoughtful person may wish to examine these. In fact, there is

even much that the average JW does not know about the beliefs, teachings, and activities of the Watchtower Society. So, this book makes an in-depth biblical and background information analysis of these teachings in an endeavour to show the correct interpretation of these passages according to the Bible itself.

The Main Problem Teachings Presented Here

Regarding the subjects presented in this book, a careful and logical analysis of the Scriptures reveals many wrong assumptions made by the Watchtower Society. It also reveals their failure to understand the sequencing of biblical events. This has then led them into numerous false teachings and dangerous unbiblical positions. So, the main false teachings presented here have been found to be in the areas of:

- The separating of true Christians into two classes.
- The manner of Jesus' resurrection and of his return.
- The date-setting for his *Parousia* (second advent/coming) in 1914 and other problematic dates.
- The time of the end scenario.
- The Kingdom future hope for all Christians.
- The resurrection of Christians and its timing.

Furthermore, there are many more false teachings of lesser significance that are also covered in this book; yet the Organization, in classifying itself as “the faithful and discreet slave,” operates a very tight system of control over the thinking of its membership so that open and free discussion of biblical subjects beyond what is stated in Watchtower literature is strongly discouraged and may lead to one's being disfellowshipped. This is in contradiction of God's encouragement in Proverbs 27:17 that: “*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens his friend.*” Furthermore, the Holy Scriptures admonish all who want to serve Jehovah according to truthful teachings to examine all details before making decisions about what is actual biblical truth. This is why the Proverbs warn that: “*When anyone replies to a matter before he hears the facts, it is foolish and humiliating*” (Prov. 18:13).

There are many teachings and details which are very clearly stated in the Scriptures and about which one can be fairly certain when the known background is taken into account. However, there are also many subjects that are not so clearly stated and so require a lot of ‘digging’ to find the correct meaning. This makes it advisable to be cautious regarding any dogmatism. So, these studies are an attempt to draw together the many

Scriptures that have a bearing on the various relevant Bible teachings and no claim is made of being correct on all points, in spite of every effort having been made to express what is factual.

Although these studies present mainly single or partial verses, it is strongly recommended that the reader examine from his or her own Bible the context in which these verses are set. Of course, the reason for the single or partial verses is to focus on the point the text makes and hence to gain clarity.

At times it will be necessary to examine *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (no longer published by the Society), *The United Bible Society Interlinear*, and other translations. This is because there are some translation issues with the *New World Translation* as used by Jehovah's Witnesses (Please see the Appendix to my first book on factors concerning the NWT).

Also, it is hoped that the sub-headings, the highlighted key words and the comments will help to connect the related information and act as a guide to make the teaching of the Bible on each subject evident. This is called *exegesis* in contrast to *eisegesis*, which concerns a person's introducing of his or her own presuppositions, agendas, or biases into and onto a Bible text. This is commonly referred to as 'reading into the text.' So, part of the approach taken here is to use the plainly understood texts as the basis to understand the more difficult texts.

Along with the work of the professional scholars, I also acknowledge the research of many open-minded non-professional individual seekers of truth on these biblical subjects. Many of their scriptural presentations are to be found on the internet as well as in their books. Furthermore, I hope that these studies will be of benefit to other Bible students as truth seekers as well as to Jehovah's Witnesses who wish to make their own personal search.

In contradistinction to the Watchtower's attitude of affixing negative labels onto anyone who disagrees with any part of their teaching I encourage all Jehovah's Witnesses to have a truly open mind and to seek the proofs on all these biblical issues as did the Bereans in the Apostle Paul's time (Acts. 17:11). As he said: "*the spiritual man examines all things, but he himself is not examined by any man*" (1 Cor. 2:15).

NOTE: The main reason for the second edition of this book is because of my gaining greater clarity in the identification of the 144,000.

PART ONE

A Single Class of True Christians

1

Why There Are Not Two Classes of True Christians

The radical notion of the existence of two classes of true Christians was first expressed by Charles Russell, the first President of the Watchtower Society in the late 1800's with the claim that "*the great crowd*" of Revelation 7 is a separate class of true Christians as **distinct from the body of Christ** (a literal 144,000), but still with heaven as their destiny. Further development of the teaching came in 1935 when the second President, Joseph F. Rutherford claimed that "*the great crowd*" has a different destiny to that of the 144,000, that is, to have everlasting life (not immortality) on earth and to be ruled over by the 144,000 in heaven. These proposals were in spite of the fact that no late first or early second century Christians taught this idea. Yet today this two-class arrangement exists, so that, of the approximately eight million active Jehovah's Witnesses only some 18,000 (as of the year 2017) claim to be of the so-called 'anointed' remnant of the 144,000. Nevertheless, the Organization is suspicious of many who make the claim of being of this remnant because the number of them has been growing since the year 2006 rather than declining as the Watchtower Society anticipated.

There Is No Scripture Which Directly Teaches the Concept of Two Classes of True Christians

As with concepts such as the Trinity, the idea that there are two classes of Christians is not directly taught in the Scriptures i.e., there is no Scripture which says that there are two classes of Christians. Yet the

‘two classes’ concept has been illustrated by the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses with the idea that the Scriptures, especially the Christian Greek Scriptures, are **a letter written only to the 144,000** and, although of interest to “the great crowd,” it is not personally for them. This has the effect of leading “the great crowd” class, when reading the Christian Greek Scriptures, to say to themselves: “this does not apply to me.” These ones are required to receive their instruction from the Governing Body rather than directly from the Scriptures. Mostly, such a teaching uses certain Scriptures as a basis, but with the Organization’s unique interpretation and application of the relevant Scriptures without the full context being taken into account. However, not only are there no statements which even imply that there are two classes of true Christians, but there are actually a number of Scriptures which contradict this idea.

The Proofs Offered by the Watchtower Organization for This Teaching

These proofs are based on certain phrases in a variety of Scriptures. These are:

- “**The heavenly calling**” (Heb. 3:1) and so there must be a separate ‘earthly calling;’
- “**A little flock**” (Luke 12:32), therefore there must be a larger flock i.e., a second class of true Christians;
- “**Other sheep**” (John 10:16) in addition to the original sheep of the “**little flock.**”
- The “**144,000**” in John’s vision in Revelation 7 which shows a contrast between the 144,000 and “**the great crowd**” which crowd must therefore be a second class of true Christians, but not anointed.

These ‘Proofs’ Are Based on Incorrect Information or Unconnected Texts

A HEAVENLY CALLING

In fact, from the Greek text Hebrews 3:1 does not speak of “**the heavenly calling**” but of those “...*who share in a heavenly calling.*” So, it is pure conjecture to assume that there is a separate ‘earthly calling,’—a phrase which the Bible never uses. In fact, this is a calling that comes from heaven—it is God’s calling of individuals to become Christians. It is not a calling of Christians to go to heaven but is a calling to become “born of God” which is shared in at the relevant time for each individual. Neither is it a special calling of some elite group of Christians. God is

not partial! Indeed, “**everyone who believes** that Jesus is the Christ has been **born from God**” (1 John 5:1) which is why Acts 17:30 says: “...but now he [God] is declaring to **all people** everywhere that they should repent.”

“LITTLE FLOCK” DESCRIBES THE SMALL BODY OF DISCIPLES IN 30-33 C.E.

Jesus encouraged his followers to, “have no fear **little flock** because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Here he described his band of disciples at that time with the use of the double diminutive to indicate how small they were in number compared to Israel. But, according to Paul, eventually, “the children [Christians] of the desolate woman [Sarah = New Covenant] are **more numerous than** those of her who has the husband [the nation of Israel]” (Gal. 4:27). So, from this small band of followers who were with Jesus a great number would come. There is no biblical or logical reason to imagine that they would become two classes of true Christians.

“OTHER SHEEP” – DESCRIBES GENTILE ANOINTED CHRISTIANS

Jesus said, “I have **other sheep** which are not of this fold; those too I must bring in, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become **one flock, one shepherd**” (John 10:16). Here we must note that these “other sheep” listen to the voice of Jesus in obedience to God’s command to “Listen to him” (Luke 9:35). So, there must be no intermediary between the “other sheep” and Jesus i.e., no Governing Body. Furthermore, Jesus brought the Gentiles together with the Jews (“this fold”), so that he: “...made the two groups [Jews and Gentiles] one and **destroyed the wall** in between that fenced them off” (Eph. 2:14). Because of this action by Jesus, Paul was able to say:

“You are **all**, in fact, **sons of God** through your faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither **Jew nor Greek**...for you are **all one** in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26-28).

However, by its false teaching of “other sheep” as being a separate class of Christians, the Watchtower produces a contradiction concerning the inheriting of the Kingdom. In contrast to this the Apostle Paul stated regarding all true Christians that, “We must **enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations**” (Acts 14:22), but Jesus had earlier said, “Not everyone... will **enter into the kingdom of the heavens**” (Matt. 7:21, 22). However, this refers to those who are not worthy of God’s favour and not to an imagined separate class of true Christians.

So, when Jesus said, “**Unless anyone is born again, he cannot see**

the kingdom of God” (*John 3:3*), the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses is denying the so-called “other sheep” class the status of having been “born again” and that they would inherit the heavenly kingdom. This contradicts Paul’s statement that it is those not worthy of God’s favour who won’t inherit the kingdom when he said: “*Do you not know that **unrighteous people** will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be misled. Those who are sexually immoral ... and extortioners will not inherit God’s kingdom*” (*1 Cor. 6:9, 10*). Yet the Governing Body pressures the “other sheep” class with these same words to behave correctly, otherwise they will not inherit God’s kingdom, which they cannot actually inherit anyway according to Watchtower’s own teaching. The Governing Body’s argument is that it is only the **earthly domain** of God’s kingdom that will be lived in by the “other sheep” class; but this does not ring true because Matthew 25:31ff shows that the “sheep” will “*inherit the kingdom prepared for [them].*” Indeed, anointed Christians “*will inherit the earth*” (*Matt. 5:5*) just as Abraham had “*the promise...that heir he should be of [the] world*” (*Rom. 4:13* UBS interlinear) along with all faithful Christians (*Dan. 7:22*).

144,000 –NOT AN ELITE GROUP OF CHRISTIANS

As with the fact that “a heavenly calling” is for all true Christians so too, Jesus said that, “*all of you are brothers*” (*Matt. 23:8*) along with the rest of the Christian Greek Scriptures which give no hint of an elite class.

The next chapter will show that there is no secondary class of true Christians, but that all true Christians have the same standing before God and with the same destiny. Later I will show who the 144,000 most likely actually are.

§

2

True Christians Are Consistently Shown to Be of One Class

In the previous chapter the texts used by the Society to prove the idea of two classes of true Christians have been shown to be a matter of misapplication and with the false idea that the Christian Greek Scriptures

were written to only a literal 144,000 Christians. However, throughout these Scriptures true Christians are consistently shown to be of one class. There are no “second-class Christians”! They are all shown to be baptized into Christ, born again sons of God as Christ’s brothers and sisters, anointed with God’s spirit, declared righteous, a holy priesthood, members of the household of God who are in the New Covenant and are, therefore, branches in the True Vine, and with their prayers being offered to their Father as “Abba, Father.” This is because, “*God is **not partial**, but in every nation the man that fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him*” (Acts 10:34, 35). **All others described in the Christian Greek Scriptures are unbelievers** (which includes false brothers). Basically, the only two classes in the Scriptures are “the righteous” and “the unrighteous” (including false brothers). In fact, everyone who wants to be a Christian must accept Christ according to the terms he sets out. So now we will look at the details of those terms.

* All True Christians Are God’s Children

Jesus told Nicodemus that, “***unless anyone is born again** (lit. ‘born from above’), he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). So, the following verses show that everyone who believes and receives Jesus will experience the new birth as born from above so that they are “born from God” and are His children:

*“**Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God**” (1 John 5:1).*

*“...all who did **receive him**, he gave authority to become God’s children” (John 1:12).*

*“You are all **sons of God** through your faith in Christ Jesus”
(Gal. 3:26).*

*“For you have been given a **new birth**...through the word [i.e., the good news according to verse 25] of the living and enduring God...”
(1 Pet. 1:23).*

Therefore, it is only unbelievers who do not experience a spiritual rebirth because Jesus’ “*word makes no progress among*” them (John 8:37). If one is not a son of God then one has no right to address Jehovah as his or her Father. One cannot accept Christ unless one accepts him on the terms one is offered in the Scriptures. These include that one becomes a son of God, which is actually a new birth. If this is not the case then one will never experience the Kingdom of God according to Jesus’ words at John 3:3 and therefore have no prospect of everlasting life.

* All True Christians Are Baptized into Christ

Although the term baptism is sometimes used metaphorically, there is no mention of two distinct types of baptism in the literal sense; nor is there mention of two different destinies—one to the earth and one to heaven. Jesus offered all disciples entry into the kingdom of God which, as we will see later, will be on earth so that, *“One body there is, and one spirit, just as you were called to the **one hope** of your calling; one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; one God and **Father of all...**”* (Eph. 4:4). Nowhere do the Scriptures speak of a second and different calling with a different hope, but *“all of us who were **baptized into Christ** Jesus were baptized into his death?”* (Rom. 6:3). In fact, the Book of Acts shows that all baptisms were done *“in the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 2:38, 8:16: 10:48). So, Christians are not baptized into any specific organization or into any particular church, but only into Christ Jesus. There is no teaching anywhere in the Scriptures to indicate that there is a second class of Christians who are baptized into someone other than Christ or Christ’s body of Christians.

* Those Who Are Led by God’s Spirit (not just a Literal 144,000) Are God’s Sons

As will be demonstrated later in this study ‘anointed’ Christians are not limited to only 144,000, but all true Christians are anointed and are led by God’s spirit. So, there is not a separate group who receive God’s spirit in some different way; but if anyone has God’s spirit rather than the mindset of the flesh, then he is one of God’s sons as Paul explains:

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who **live according to the spirit**, on the things of the spirit. **For setting the mind on the flesh means death**, but setting the mind on the spirit means life and peace; because setting the mind on the flesh means enmity with God, for it is not under subjection to the law of God, nor, in fact can it be. So those who are in harmony with the flesh cannot please God. However, you are in harmony, not with the flesh, but with the spirit, if God’s spirit truly dwells in you. But if anyone does **not have Christ’s spirit**, this person does **not belong to him ...** ¹³for if you live **according to the flesh, you are sure to die ...** ¹⁴For all who are led by God’s spirit, are indeed **God’s sons**”*

(Rom. 8:5-9, 14).

Here Paul is writing to Christians who are all anointed. The context is: “All those...as God’s beloved ones, called to be **holy ones**” (Rom. 1:7). If this applies only to 144,000 of them then nothing in Romans applies to the “other sheep!” However, there is no indication in any of the Apostle Paul’s writings to indicate that there are two classes. Indeed, “living according to the spirit,” and “setting the mind on the spirit” are the same as being “led by God’s spirit,” so, we are **either** led by the sinful flesh leading to death or are led by God’s spirit and are God’s sons and daughters. One cannot be a Christian without being a child of God and without being anointed with God’s spirit. Paul said: “I certainly think I also have God’s spirit” (1 Cor. 7:40). This is why he said to his fellow Christians, “for **all** who are led by God’s spirit are indeed **God’s sons**. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: **Abba, Father!**” (Rom. 8:14-15). So, because all true Christians who are all “other sheep” refrain from setting their minds on the death-producing “flesh” they are God’s children and have a full relationship with Him.

IF ONE IS NOT LED BY GOD’S SPIRIT GOD IS NOT ONE’S FATHER

There is no disconnection between Romans 8:15 and Matthew 6:9 where Jesus said: “You must pray then this way: ‘**Our Father** in the heavens...’” If the so-called other sheep class are not allowed to “cry out: **Abba, Father!**” neither should they, for consistency, pray: “Our Father in the heavens.” They would then have no relationship with God. There is no basis for saying that a separate “anointed” class with a different destiny have a closer relationship with God.

THE TERM “ABBA” IS NOT TO BE USED ONLY BY A SELECT GROUP

The term “*abba*” is an intimate, informal but respectful term with a meaning part way between the English expressions, ‘dad’ and ‘my father.’ Yet it is recorded that Jesus used the term “*abba*” only once and in private prayer (Mark 14:36). However, Jesus gave the Lord’s Prayer to all Christians and were directed by him to use the term “Father” [Gk *pater* (Matt. 6:9)]. Is there really any difference in the meaning of these two terms? Also is there a distinction in who may use them? There are sixteen recorded instances of Jesus addressing his Father in prayer. So, are we to assume that out of all these instances Jesus’ used “*abba*” only on the one occasion recorded in Mark 14:36? This hardly seems likely, but according to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p.3 there is linguistic grammatical evidence showing that it is, “probable that the Aramaic “*abba*” was the original form of address used in each of these prayers,” So it is unlikely that Paul, in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 was giving ‘anointed’ Christians a more intimate term to

use in prayer to Jehovah than Jesus had already given in the Lord's prayer. So, to call God **Father** one must be a son or daughter of God.

* All True Christians Are Christ's Brothers and Sisters

Jesus stated that:

"Whoever does the will of God, this one is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35. Also Matthew 12:50 and Luke 8:21).

So, because the "other sheep" i.e., all Gentile true Christians do God's will by right living and preaching the Kingdom, they also must be related to Christ in the way he described; and in being a brother or sister of Christ one is therefore a son or daughter of God.

* All True Christians Must Be in the "New Covenant" with Christ as Mediator

The Questions from Readers in *The Watchtower*, 4/1/79, p. 31 asks:

Is Jesus the 'mediator' only for anointed Christians? ... At a time when God was selecting those to be taken into that new covenant, the apostle Paul wrote that Christ was the "One mediator between God and men" (1 Tim. 2:5). Reasonably Paul was here using the word "mediator" in the same way he did the other five times, which occurred before the writing of 1 Timothy 2:5, referring to those then being taken into the new covenant for which Christ is "mediator." So in this strict Biblical sense **Jesus is the "mediator" only for anointed Christians.** *The new covenant will terminate with the glorification of the remnant* who are today in that covenant mediated by Christ. "This great crowd" of **"other sheep" that is forming today is not in the new covenant.** However, by their associating with the little flock of those yet in that covenant they come under benefits that flow from that new covenant.

In fact, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses teaches that it is the attitude of the "other sheep" (in JW interpretation of "other sheep") toward the remnant of 144,000 that will determine whether or not they will gain everlasting life or will be destroyed. Because the Governing Body denies the "other sheep" entry into the New Covenant they deny them the actions of Jesus as their mediator and high priest. This denial puts "the other sheep" outside of a true relationship with Jehovah which can come only through Jesus (John 14:6).

ONE MUST BE IN A COVENANT TO BE ONE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

God has always dealt with people through various covenants. Paul explains that Gentile Christians must now be in a covenant for them to receive the promises of God and to be in relationship with Him. So, he says to the Gentile Ephesians:

*"...at one time you, people of the nations by fleshly descent, were called 'uncircumcision' by those called 'circumcision'...at that time you were **without Christ**, alienated from the state of Israel, strangers to **the covenants** of the promise and you had no hope and **were without God** in the world" (Eph. 2:11, 12).*

Hence, the "other sheep" also should be in a covenant so that they are not "without God." If one is not in the New Covenant, one is outside of the saving arrangement of God through Jesus Christ and this is where the Governing Body have positioned all those JW "other sheep!" However, if one decides that one should be in this covenant it is not a matter of a lack of humility, but that one recognizes this as God's arrangement for all true Christians.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO PRIMARY COVENANTS

Although there are a variety of different covenants noted in the Bible there are two of particular note for Christians. So, Paul speaks of Hagar as representative of the Mosaic Law Covenant and Sarah as representative of the New Covenant. He says,

*"...these women mean **two covenants**...Hagar means Sinai...in slavery (= Old Covenant)...the Jerusalem above is free...the children of the desolate woman (Sarah = New Covenant) are more numerous than those of her who has the husband" (Gal. 4:24-27).*

So, one must ask: in which of these covenants are the "other sheep"? To say one is a Christian, but deny that one is in the New Covenant with God is a contradiction of terms.

JESUS – THE MEDIATOR OF ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS

Just as there is only one God for all Christians so there is only one mediator between the one God and all Christians as Paul wrote to Timothy saying, "for there is one God and **one mediator** between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). However, this mediatorship is available to all of mankind if they wish to come into relationship with God. So, it does not involve only "men" of any literal 144,000. There cannot be one mediator for a select group of 144,000 only and then they

act as if they are an extra mediator for a different group of Christians—the “other sheep.” Furthermore, true Christians have an immortal human high priest in heaven acting as mediator i.e., Jesus rather than the 144,000 spirit beings supposedly resurrected in 1918.

Furthermore, “...now Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, because he is also the **mediator** of a correspondingly better **covenant...on better promises**” (Heb. 8:6) and “that is why he is a mediator of a **new covenant**, in order that, because a death has occurred for their release by ransom from the transgressions under the former covenant, those who have been called might receive the **promise of the everlasting inheritance**” (Heb. 9:15). So, the promises come to only those who have Jesus as their mediator rather than any governing body.

Because Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father **except through me**” (John 14:6) then access to the Father is only for those who have Jesus as mediator between them and the Father. Only then can a person, “**approach the throne of undeserved kindness with freeness of speech**’ so that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness to help us at the right time” (Heb. 4:16).

Jesus is the only mediator for all Christians and he alone acts as the greater Moses (Acts 3:20-23) to whom all Christians must directly listen. So, a body of men cannot replace Jesus as one’s mediator. If it is not Jesus as one’s mediator, then who is it that mediates one’s prayers to God? Does Jesus act as one’s High Priest and yet not as one’s mediator? Indeed, these “other sheep” listen to the voice of Jesus (John 10:16) and he is with them, “**For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst**” (Matt. 18:20). So even a small number of “other sheep” Christians who are isolated from any organization benefit from Jesus’ care.

IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN - YOU MUST BE IN THE NEW COVENANT

In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ command to celebrate the memorial he said regarding the cup of wine:

*“...Drink out of it, all of you, for this means my blood of **the covenant**, which is to be poured out in behalf of many **for forgiveness of sins**” (Matt. 26:27, 28).*

So, one cannot be in relationship with God and have one’s sins forgiven unless one is in the New Covenant and metaphorically feed on Jesus just as he said that:

*“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. Whoever **feeds on my flesh** and drinks my blood has **everlasting life**, and I will **resurrect** him on the last day” (John 6:53, 54).*

So, this involves partaking of the bread and the wine at the memorial. But because, according to the Governing Body interpretation, the “other sheep” do not feed on Jesus, but from the faithful and discreet slave i.e., the Governing Body, they cannot, on that basis, have everlasting life or be resurrected. There is, in fact, a faulty argument on this subject presented in the *Reasoning from the Scriptures* book p.268.

* All True Christians Are of God’s Household

The Apostle Peter made the connection between being a Christian and being part of God’s household when he said, *“if anyone suffers as a **Christian** ... For it is the appointed time for the judgment to start with **the house of God**. Now if it starts with us...” (1 Pet. 4:16, 17).* So, is one really a Christian if one is not part of “the house of God”? Yet, the so-called “other sheep” class are not considered by the Organization as part of the house of God. Neither are they considered to be “branches in **the True Vine**,” namely, Jesus, which makes it impossible for them to bear real Christian fruit (John 15:1-8).

* Those who Are Believers Are a Holy Priesthood

Rather similar to the arrangement in Roman Catholicism, the Watchtower Society has stated that only a select group are the priesthood within true Christianity. These are the remnant of a supposedly literal 144,000 anointed Christians. However, the apostle Peter shows that all who **exercise faith** by being believers are this holy priesthood:

*“...you...as living stones are being built up a spiritual house to be a **holy priesthood**: ... “Look! I am laying in Zion a chosen stone, a precious foundation cornerstone, and **no one exercising faith in it** will ever be disappointed.” It is to you, therefore, that he is precious, because **you are believers**”” (1 Pet. 2:5-8).*

Evidently, the contrast here is between those who **are believers**; and those not believing. The great crowd claim to be believers and therefore should accept that they are part of the holy priesthood and not of a separate class of Christians.

* All True Christians Are Declared Righteous
(not just 144,000)

The Watchtower Society teaches that only the literal 144,000 have been declared righteous. However, according to the apostle Paul, if someone accepts the ransom sacrifice of Christ through his death, then he is reconciled to God and so is “declared righteous” which simply means that he now has God’s approval i.e., he is accepted by God because: *“it is as a free gift that they are being **declared righteous** by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 3:24). Paul continued by stating that, *“For if, when we were enemies, we became **reconciled** to God through the death of his Son, how much more will we be saved by his life, now that we have become reconciled...”* (Rom. 5:10). So, one cannot be a Christian if one does not accept the ransom sacrifice of Jesus **as applicable to oneself**. Therefore, the moment a Christian accepts God’s gracious gift of the ransom he becomes reconciled to God by being declared righteous. So, a Christian’s being declared righteous cannot require the passing of any special test at a later date, for example, at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ as taught by the Society.

* All True Christians Are the Offspring of Abraham

The Society teaches that only the literal 144,000 anointed Christians are the spiritual offspring of Abraham. However, Paul stated, *“that he [Abraham] might be father of all those having faith”* (Rom. 4:11) and the “other sheep” certainly also have faith and so must also be the “offspring” of Abraham. Paul repeated this thought saying:

*“it is those who **adhere to faith** who are **sons of Abraham** ... So those who adhere to faith are being blessed together with Abraham, who had faith ... **the promises** were spoken to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say: ‘and to your descendants, in the sense of many. Rather, it says, ‘and to your offspring,’ in the sense of **one**, who is **Christ**”* (Gal. 3:7, 9, 16).

Paul wrote to the Galatians presenting the same thought connecting “faith” with one’s belonging to Christ and therefore being Abraham’s spiritual offspring (seed). He wrote that:

*“You are all, in fact, sons of God **through your faith in Christ Jesus**. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ...you are all one person in union with Christ Jesus.*

Moreover, **if you belong to Christ**, you are really **Abraham's offspring** with a promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

So "the great crowd" (other sheep) must "belong to Christ" through their **faith in him** which also makes them sons of God and therefore, Abraham's spiritual offspring—he being their spiritual father because they have faith. This blessing was already flowing to Christians in the first century.

* All True Christians Must Remain Written in "the Scroll of Life"

Both **the book of life** (Gk *biblos* = record book, according to *Bauer's Greek-English Lexicon*) and **the Lamb's scroll of life** (Gk *biblion* = a long-written composition, (*Bauer's*) rather than "little book" (as in KIT) imply the granting of everlasting life to all Christians. The Lamb's scroll is "the roll of the living" according to William Barclay. There is no significant distinction between the two books regarding whose names are written therein because the contexts for both concern all Christians. And so:

*"It [the wild beast] was permitted to wage war with **the holy ones** and conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And **all those who dwell on the earth will worship it**. From the founding of the world, **not one of their names has been written in the scroll of life of the Lamb** who was slaughtered" (Rev. 13:7, 8).*

All apart from the "holy ones" are found to be worshipping the "wild beast" and therefore fail to have their names "written in the scroll of life of the Lamb" so that they won't be granted life. Therefore, all true Christians must be "the holy ones" and therefore must be in the New Covenant. As Jesus said, "*He that conquers will thus be arrayed in **white outer garments**; and I will by no means blot out his name from the book of life, but I will make acknowledgment of his name before my Father and before his angels*" (Rev. 3:5). This is why John saw all end-time Christians as anointed and as:

*"**a great crowd**, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, **dressed in white robes**; and there were palm branches in their hands ... So right away I said to him: "My lord, you are the one that knows." And he said to me: "**These [the great crowd]** are the ones that come out of the great*

tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9, 14).

The fatal result of not being an anointed Christian is that, “*whoever was not found written in the book of life was hurled into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).* So, the **great crowd** of other sheep must also be **dressed in white robes** (7:9, 14) which stand for the righteous **acts of the holy ones** (19:8). Having these **white outer garments** enables them to keep their names in **the book of life** (3:5). If they don’t then they will be hurled **into the lake of fire** (20:15). So evidently, all Christians must keep their names written in “the scroll of life of the Lamb”.

* All True Christians Will Have the Same Quality of Future Life

The idea that 144,000 Christians will receive immortality and that “the great crowd” of Christians will only receive everlasting life makes a false and unnatural distinction between the two terms and with no foundation for this idea in the Scriptures. For someone to live everlastingly they would need the “**imperishable (incorruptible) body**” that is described in 1 Corinthians 15:52 for those having immortality. The term ‘everlasting life’ is *zoe aionion* meaning ‘life of the coming age.’ This was the term Jesus applied to **all** who would follow him. He also gave one statement showing that **immortality** was involved when he said:

*“...those who have been counted worthy of gaining that system of things and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. In fact, **neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels**” (Luke 20:35-36).*

Later, Jesus, through the apostle Paul, revealed more about the quality of ‘the life of the coming age’ and its endlessness because of one’s having an imperishable body along with power and glory (1 Cor. 15:43, 54). However, even this is a derived immortality because only God has absolute immortality (1 Tim. 6:16; 1:17). In fact, being *incorruptible* is the prime quality of immortality which gives everlasting life.

So now we will consider the biblical factors which show that “*the great crowd*” of Revelation 7 are not only true Christians but are also the same as “*the holy ones*” which is a biblical term for ‘anointed’ Christians i.e., those who have been anointed with God’s holy spirit.

3

“The Great Crowd” Are Anointed Christians

Revelation 7:9-17

John is given a picture of a different group to the 144,000, namely the great crowd from all ethnicities. So, John says:

*“After this I saw, and, look! a **great crowd**, which no man was able to number, out of **all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues**, standing **before** (Gk enopion) **the throne** and before the Lamb, **dressed in white robes**; and there were palm branches in their hands. And they keep shouting with a loud voice, saying: “Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.” All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell facedown before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Let the praise and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” In response one of the elders said to me: “These who are dressed in the white robes, who are they and where did they come from?” So right away I said to him: “My lord, you are the one who knows.” And he said to me: “These are the ones who come out of **the great tribulation**, and they have **washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**. That is why they are **before** (Gk enopion) **the throne of God**; and **they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple** (Gk naos); and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat down upon them nor any scorching heat, because **the Lamb**, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and **will guide them to springs of waters of life**. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes.”*

This passage informs us that “the great crowd” are the **end-time Christians** who undergo “the great tribulation” and so this body does not include those Christians who died before the beginning of the great tribulation and will be resurrected after it is over. (Please see my book:

Messiah's Future Triumph).

However, when one compares some of the key details in Revelation concerning “the holy ones,” it becomes evident that those of “the great crowd” are the same as “the holy ones,” namely, anointed Christians.

Comparison of the Great Crowd with the Holy Ones

THEY HAVE THE SAME LOCATION FOR WORSHIPPING GOD

The holy ones are to be made **pillars “in the temple** (Gk *naos* = *sanctuary*) and **will by no means go out from it anymore”** as “**those who worship there in the naos.**” (Rev. 3:12). They are also seen as cleansed priests “standing beside the **sea of glass.**”

The great crowd “are also **before the throne** of God, and are **rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple** (Gk *naos* = *sanctuary*).” (Rev. 7:15). These factors strongly indicate that they must all be of the same group of people.

.....

THEY HAVE THE SAME RIGHTEOUS CLOTHING

The holy ones wear “**bright, clean, fine linen**” which is interpreted as “the righteous deeds of the holy ones” (Rev. 19:8)

The great crowd who also are dressed in priestly “**robes made white in the blood of the Lamb**” (Rev. 6:11) and who therefore must also display such righteous deeds as holy ones. (Rev. 9:12).

In contradiction of Watchtower Society teaching, it is evident that the great crowd and the holy ones are one and the same, namely, anointed Christians. This shows the unlimited number of true and anointed Christians that will “come out of the great tribulation.”

The Total of All Anointed Christians Must Be More Than 144,000

In Paul’s allegory using Sarah and Hagar he says: “...for the **children** [all Christians] of the desolate woman are **more numerous than those** [the Israelites] of her who has the husband” (Gal. 4:27). However, a figure of 144,000 is not more numerous than the millions of Israelites whether according to any census in ancient times or at the time John wrote Revelation or even at the time of the end. Therefore, the full number of anointed Christians will be vastly more than 144,000. Even in the first and second centuries there were already 100’s of thousands of Christians all anointed with holy spirit. In fact, history shows that the

figure of 144,000 for anointed Christians was reached within five years of the historic Pentecost speech by the Apostle Peter. So, if the Organization's interpretation was correct then all 144,000 positions were clearly filled long before the 19th and 20th centuries. The fact that 144,000 is a fixed number in contrast to "a great crowd which **no man** was able to number" may be because the use of such an organizational structure is simply God's way of saying that it is complete with not a single Christian missing.

The historical fact is that there were 52,465 of this so-called elite class of JW's alive in 1935 according to the Society. This means that in all the previous years of Christianity only 91,535 (91,535 + 52,465 = 144,000) were chosen as true Christians in more than 1,800 years; whereas within only a few decades of early Watchtower history God was supposedly able to choose 52,465. This is a quite unreasonable proposal in view of the dynamic work of the apostles and other early Christians (Acts 2:40-47; 5:12-16). All 144,000 **positions should have been filled** by the end of the second century.

The actual history of Christianity shows that even in the first and second centuries there were already 100's of thousands of anointed Christians. B. Reike gives one of the conservative estimates that there were about 40,000 Christians by A.D. 67, with a total of 320,000 at about the turn of the first century. Some give the higher estimates of up to 100,000 in Jerusalem before the diaspora and upward of 26,000 in Ephesus alone.

So, if the Watchtower Society's interpretation was correct then all 144,000 positions were clearly filled long before the 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, the explanation by the Organization that the foretold great apostasy meant that not many remained as anointed Christians in the early centuries falls down because the apostasy noted in Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2 is a future event and did not apply to the early centuries. Furthermore, how could the Society have known that there were any vacancies by the 19th and 20th centuries let alone knowing the exact number? Nevertheless, it must be asked: Why would God deny the vast majority of early century Christians the same locational destiny as the 144,000 so that this destiny may be granted only to those living between 1879 and 1934?

Other Factors Showing That There Will Be More Than 144,000 Anointed Christians

- There is no account of the apostles or the early Christians keeping records to know when the number of 144,000 was completed. Why

didn't Jesus let his disciples know that there were only going to be 144,000 in total? However, he never even hinted at such an idea.

- If Jesus returned invisibly in 1914 why didn't the remaining ones of the 144,000 stop the taking of the memorial emblems at that date or at least by the arbitrary date of 1935. This is what Paul says should happen, that is, "*For whenever you eat this loaf and drink the cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord **until he comes** (Gk *elthe*)" (1 Cor. 11:26). Chapter 34 of this book shows that Jesus returns just once. So, if his *parousia* began in 1914 then he has already arrived (Gk *elthe*) and Christians no longer need to continue "proclaiming the death of the Lord" in the memorial celebrated by JW's.*
- In Revelation 7 the 144,000 appear on the scene after the opening of the 6th seal, prior to the pouring out of God's wrath on the wicked and so do not picture all of anointed Christians since the first century.
- Each individual Christian is "sealed with holy spirit" the moment he is baptized as a Christian; yet the Society's Revelation book (p.115), states that the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7 is that of being "sealed with holy spirit" as anointed Christians from the time of Pentecost of A. D. 33. However, Revelation 7 is set in a **time-of-the-end context** and does not show this particular sealing by the angel to be a long process as would be needed if it were the sealing by holy spirit. Hence, it is more likely that this sealing is a symbolic marking of the 144,000 for identifying them as belonging to God so that they will be protected during the time when God's wrath is poured out on the wicked. This mirrors the description in Ezekiel 9:4-6.
- Although, as most commentators show, it is not easy to identify the 144,000 as either Christians or as ethnic Jews I hope to demonstrate that the 144,000 is actually a picture of a remnant of ethnic Jews. This represents a change in my position on this subject

The Number 144,000 Is Most Likely Symbolic

The Watchtower Society's argument that the number 144,000 is literal is based on several arguments. These are:

- That in Revelation 7:4 and 7:9, 144,000 must be a literal number because it is contrasted with "a great crowd, which no man was able

to number.” On the surface this may seem logical and has some merit. However, this in fact is not necessarily a contrast between a fixed number and an undetermined number, but rather it could be between a symbolic number and an undetermined number as will be shown.

- That because Revelation 21:14 speaks of a literal “12 apostles” therefore multiples of this must also be literal. However, this is not the case, because the number 12 is also used of: 12 gates, 12 angels, 12 tribes, 12 foundation stones, a measurement of 12,000 stadia, and a wall of 144 cubits (12 x 12). All of this strongly indicates the use of the number 12 as symbolic.
- That Revelation 14:4 describes the 144,000 Christians as “firstfruits” and therefore they must be separate from the “great crowd” and of a literal number. However, at most this might indicate that the 144,000 is a separate group to the great crowd, but is no proof that the number 144,000 is actually literal or even concerning Christians.

So, none of the Society’s points are absolute proof that the number is to be viewed as being literal. However, there are other factors that completely mitigate against the Watchtower’s interpretation. In fact, because the Book of Revelation has a large amount of symbolism in it, Chapters 7:4-8 and 14:1-5 are also noted as having a certain amount of symbolism in them.

Indeed, analysis of the various descriptions in Revelation indicate that the number 144,000 is to be taken as symbolic rather than literal as most commentators recognize.

Reasons for a Symbolic Interpretation of the Number 144,000

The Watchtower actually teaches some of the following details in Revelation as being symbolic:

- In Revelation 7:3 the sealing of this number is not a literal physical sealing, but is symbolically so.
- In Revelation 7:4-8 it is a clear contradiction to say that 144,000 is a literal number, but that each of the tribes is figurative. This would make the number 12,000 become meaningless. Therefore, the number 144,000 must be symbolic as is the number 12,000.

- In Revelation 14:1 the marking of Jesus' name and that of the Father on them is not a literal marking, but is a symbolic action.
- In Revelation 14:4 the 144,000 are described as "*ones who did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins.*" This is clearly a symbolic description as is given by the Watchtower itself. Indeed, many anointed Christians are either married or have been married and so are not virgins. This fact, therefore, indicates that the number is also symbolic.
- In Revelation 14:5 these ones could not be literally "*without blemish*" because they are imperfect people and so, they could never literally have "*no deceit in their mouths*"—even if accidentally so!
- It seems rather contradictory for the Society to take the number 144,000 as literal when they, in fact, take the 144 cubits of Rev. 21:17 as figurative as also they take many other numbers as figurative in Revelation e.g., 12,000 furlongs.

So, in Revelation 7 John hears a number which is twelve squared then multiplied by a thousand—numbers with significant figurative meaning. In Revelation 21:16, 17 the 12,000 furlongs measurement of the New Jerusalem and the 144 cubits thickness of the wall are taken in Watchtower literature to be figurative numbers. (*Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand!*, p. 307). So, for consistency the number 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14 should also be understood as a symbolic number. Certainly, in its early years the Watchtower Society connected texts together where there was no biblical or logical connection. So, there is no biblical reason for the Governing Body to teach that there is an elite class of Christians with a different locational destiny to all other true Christians. Other Christian groups can understand this, but sadly each new Jehovah's Witness is introduced to this false concept early in their study of Watchtower information and so accept it without proper understanding of the texts or consideration of the rest of the Scriptures on this issue.

So now we must begin to examine exactly who are the 144,000. These are stated to be "*sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel*" (Rev. 7:4).

NOTE: Unlike the Watchtower's teaching the Scriptures never speak of a remnant of 144,000 but rather of a remnant of Israel (Micah 2:12; Hosea 3:5; Romans 9:27).

The Future Restoration of a Remnant of Ethnic Israel

As will be shown later in this book the Hebrew Scripture prophecies for Israel should not be allegorized so as to produce a theology which completely replaces ethnic Israel with spiritual Israel. This is because neither Jesus or his followers did this in regard to those many dozens of prophecies showing that there would be a future for ethnic Israel. This will begin with a god-fearing remnant of Israel who at the end of the time of the great tribulation accept Jesus as Messiah.

Paul explains in Romans 11 that, although unbelieving Israel is now excluded from being among God's people because of unbelief, this will not be permanently so because Jehovah foresees a substantial remnant of natural Israel who will accept Jesus as Messiah at the time of his future return. Concerning Paul's statement of the "partial dulling of senses" of Israel, he goes on to say:

*"True, with respect to the good news they [the unbelieving Jews] are enemies for your sakes; but with respect to **God's choosing** they are beloved **for the sake of their forefathers**. For the gifts and the calling of God are not things that he will regret ("not irrevocable" in many versions)" (Rom. 11:28-29).*

In fact, much of our understanding of this subject comes from an examination of the many quite literal prophecies on the restoration of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures and which are later confirmed in Romans 11. So, Bible scholar Dr. Robert Shank states that:

There are in the Old Testament more than a hundred prophecies concerning the national restoration of Israel, a restoration that will involve regathering to the land, reconstruction as a political state, reception of the Messiah and spiritual renewal ("circumcision of the heart"), restoration of the Davidic kingdom, and a golden age of peace and prosperity under the reign of the Messiah. The passages are not to be interpreted as finding their fulfilment in the Church, for

they speak of specific matters which could only have reference to Israel. They are not to be interpreted as having reference to heaven rather than the earth, for they pertain specifically to the earthly land of Israel and city of Jerusalem.

Until the Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom, p. 79.

Certainly, this does not mean that every single Israelite will be saved; but that natural Israel as a people will be saved. The *New International Bible Commentary* (p.1338) states that: “**All Israel** means the Jews as a collective whole, not the arithmetical sum of all individual Jews.” This is because the term ‘Israel’ can be fulfilled in the sense of a remnant as Jehovah says: “*I will surely assemble **all of you**, O Jacob; I will gather the **remnant** of Israel*” (*Micah 2:12 ESV*). This is Hebrew parallelism showing that “**all of you**, O Jacob” = “the **remnant** of Israel;” and, in fact, a number of the prophecies concerning Israel’s restoration concern only a remnant who will be survivors. Nevertheless, unbelieving Jews will not be saved because:

*“...in all the land,” declares Jehovah, “**two parts in it will be cut off and perish**; and the third part will be left remaining in it. And I will **bring the third part through the fire**; and I will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘Jehovah is our God’” (*Zech. 13:8-9*).*

So, the Apostle Paul summarizes these statements in showing that it will be a future remnant of Israel that will be saved. He says:

*“Moreover, Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Although the number of the sons of Israel may be as the sand of the sea, only **the remnant will be saved**. For Jehovah will make an accounting on the earth, concluding it and cutting it short”” (*Rom. 9:27, 28*).*

However, this does not refer to “the remnant” of Israel which accepted Christ “at the present time” i.e., in Paul’s day (*Rom. 11:5*), but rather it refers to the saving of a remnant of natural Israel at the future time when Jehovah judges and destroys wicked mankind. In the ancient prophecies Jehovah states: “*Then I will gather together **the remnant of my sheep from all the lands** to which I have dispersed them, and I will bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and become many” (*Jer. 23:3*).*

Is there really a ‘Remnant’ in the Sense Applied

by the Watchtower Society?

Because of using the Catholic allegorical approach with its Replacement theology, the Society mistakenly applies the term ‘remnant’ as used in the Hebrew Scriptures to those supposedly ‘anointed’ Christians who are still on earth (the majority of the 144,000 were supposedly taken to heaven in 1919) as if these are the remaining ones of the 144,000. If based on the annual memorial partakers this would amount to 18,000 Christians. However, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the term ‘remnant’ is consistently applied to either literal Israelites or the remaining ones of the nations. Also, in contrast to the way the Society applies this term or its concept, **the Christian Greek Scriptures** apply it in several ways such as:

- 1) A repentant remnant of **Jews** responding to John the Baptizer’s message (Matt. 3:1-12).
- 2) The relatively “few” **Jews** that responded to Jesus’ message (Matt. 7:14).
- 3) Only a remnant of natural **Israel** will be saved according to Paul (Rom. 9:27).
- 4) Paul’s statement that “*at the present time there is a remnant [of **Jews**], chosen through undeserved kindness*” (Rom. 11:5).
- 5) The remnant of the congregation in Thyatira (Rev. 2:24-29) and “*a few names in Sardis*” (Rev. 3:4); are those **Christians** who have remained faithful. Clearly, the majority prove to be unfaithful.
- 6) The “remaining ones” of the woman’s offspring is a body of **Christians** faithfully enduring the time of the end fierce persecution (Rev 12:7-17).

The only occurrences of the possible concept of a remnant noted above that are not with reference to natural Israelites are: a remnant of Christians in Thyatira and “**the remaining ones** of the woman’s seed.” However, they are only “**the remaining ones**” for that short period and not for over 105 years as per Watchtower teaching. Furthermore, the Greek word used here is rendered in modern translations and Greek-English lexicons as “**the rest of her offspring**” because they are not necessarily a minority as is the usual indication of the term “remnant” i.e., ‘what is left over.’

Therefore, no Scriptures portray a remnant in the way the Society portrays it. Indeed, the general concept of “remnant” refers to natural Israel in the Scriptures.

Further Reasons Why Natural Israel Still Has a Future

In spite of Israel's temporary dulling of its senses, Jehovah illustrates that he still cares for them, saying, "*Can a woman forget her nursing child ...? Even if these women forget, I would never forget you*" (Isa. 49:15). This would also be because Jehovah honours His unconditional covenants and therefore commits to Israel vowing that, "*I will never completely reject them nor cast them away to the point of exterminating them, which would violate my covenant with them; for I am Jehovah their God*" (Lev. 26:44-46). Yes, this covenant involves inheritance and possession of the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18; 17:7, 8; Ps. 105:8-11). So, Israel's temporary failure to adhere to the terms of this covenant makes no difference to God's being faithful to His word. He would never deny them possession of the land. However, the terms would have to be kept by Israel if they also wanted security (Lev. 25:18). Indeed, literal Israel will eventually be the leading nation among the mortal nations in the future Millennium because, "*Jehovah will make you the head, and not the tail; and you will be on top, and not on the bottom, if you keep obeying the commandments of Jehovah your God, that I am commanding you today to observe and to do*" (Deut. 28:13). Indeed, the writer to the Hebrews shows how dependable God is concerning all of His promises, saying:

*"In this same way, when God decided to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise the **unchangeableness of his purpose**, he guaranteed it with **an oath**, in order that through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to the refuge may have strong encouragement to take firm hold of the hope set before us"* (Heb. 6:17-18).

Evidently the restoration promises made to Israel were not fulfilled at the time of the Israelites release from Babylon back in 538 B.C.E. Also, it is clearly wrong to allegorize the plain literal statements of the Scriptures because it would be left to the human interpreter to decide what is and what is not allegorical. Therefore, because full Replacement Theology is based on allegorizing, it tends to undermine God's faithfulness to His literal promises and therefore impugns His character. A corollary to this is that if Israel is not going to get what Jehovah has unconditionally promised it, then perhaps even Christians will not get what Jehovah has unconditionally promised them. Replacement Theology also means that the real and full import of the Abrahamic Covenant is lost in contravent-

ion of the statement made by Paul when he states that:

*“The Law, which came into being 430 years later, does **not invalidate** the [Abrahamic] covenant previously made by God, so as to abolish the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God **has kindly given it to Abraham through a promise**” (Gal. 3:17-18).*

The Bad Effect of the Misuse of Replacement Theology

Sadly, full Replacement Theology allowed some of the early church fathers to discount Israel and to blame her alone for the death of Jesus rather than the Jewish religious leaders—Caiaphas etc. and Pilate as equally responsible. This attitude continued through much of early church history accompanied by the many instances of anti-Semitism, along with separation from Jews and hatred of them generally. With Constantine’s declaring of the church as the official religion of the Roman Empire in A.D. 321 outright persecution of the Jews began and culminated in the 20th century holocaust.

Also, sadly, the Watchtower Society fell into this trap with the writings of Joseph Rutherford from 1946 onward by his discounting any future for Israel and so applying all Hebrew Scripture prophecies to the so-called ‘anointed’ class of Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, if one tries to read entire sections of these prophecies, for example from Isaiah, in this misapplied way it tends to be difficult and eventually becomes meaningless, so that the reader does not get the real benefit of these amazing prophecies concerning promises made to Israel.

§

5

The 144,000 Are the Remnant of Ethnic Israelites

As commented on in Chapter 1 of this book the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses teaches that there are two classes of Christians with

only one class going to heaven. The literal number of 144,000 are claimed to be the ‘anointed’ Christian “holy ones;” but “the great crowd” of Christians are not “the holy ones.” Indeed, there are two passages in the New Testament directly concerning the 144,000. Firstly, Revelation 7:1-8 along with the passage about the great multitude (7:9ff), which I previously thought were different perspectives on the same end-time Christians. Secondly, Revelation 14 expands on the details of the 144,000.

Although a good case has been presented by many commentators that the 144,000 are not ethnic Israelites, but are Christians of all ethnicities and are the great multitude, a further examination of the details of Revelation and other biblical details leads me to understand (but not dogmatically so) that the 144,000 are to be end-time god-fearing Israelites (Jews) who have only accepted Christ at the time of his return. So, John writes in the Revelation:

*“After this I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding tight **the four winds of the earth**, so that no wind could blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrise, having a seal of the living God; and he called with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying: “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.” And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 sealed out of **every tribe of the sons of Israel**” (Rev. 7:1-4).*

This is an end-times scenario because these “*slaves of our God*” are sealed as protected from what is about to come upon the earth when the seven trumpets are blown (Rev. 8:7–9:21 and 11:15) and the seven bowls of God’s wrath are poured out (Rev. 16).

Then a list of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes follows starting with the tribe of Judah. Clearly, each 12,000 is separated from the larger tribe and is contrasted with the “*great crowd which no man was able to number*” (Rev. 7:9). However, the list of each tribe is different from other lists of the twelve tribes of Israel given in the rest of the Bible. The differences are:

- a) Joseph is listed instead of Ephraim.
- b) Dan is missing altogether.
- c) Levi is included. This is unusual.

This has led many commentators, including myself previously, to assume that the list must be referring to spiritual Israel i.e., Christians of

all ethnicities. However, this assumption is not necessarily correct and there are good reasons for these minor anomalies: Firstly, Dan is missing possibly because that tribe led ancient Israel into idolatry with the setting up of calf-worship (Judges 18:1-31) as well as not accepting the land that was allotted to them, but were eventually wiped out and not listed in 1 Chronicles 4-7 although listed later. So, a possible way to understand this is that all twelve tribes listed are the same as the mothers of the sons born to Jacob (listed in Gen. 35:23-26), but with Manasseh replacing Dan and Judah placed first because that is the tribe from which kings were to come. These minor anomalies now appear to give insufficient reason to deny that the 144,000 are ethnic Israelites although accepting Jesus as Messiah when he returns. Furthermore, there are several other strong reasons to view these ones as ethnic Israelites who have become believers at the moment they see the returning Jesus. These are:

- 1) The natural reading of the list indicates that it refers to ethnic Israelites. It does not lend itself easily to allegorization.
- 2) Zechariah 12:10 gives the end-time scenario that Israel, *“will look to the one whom they pierced and they will wail over him...”* and so showing repentance on the part of ethnic Israelites for previously rejecting Jesus as Messiah. This is as he is returning.
- 3) Similarly, the Apostle John is told that Jesus *“is coming with the clouds and **every eye will see him**, and those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will **beat themselves in grief because of him**”* (Rev. 1:7).
- 4) Zechariah 13:8-9 shows that God, *“will bring the third part through the fire...I will say, ‘They are my people’”* in reference to an end-time Israelite remnant.
- 5) In Romans 11 Paul predicted that there would be an ethnic Israelite remnant who would be saved in the end-times saying, *“with respect to **God’s choosing they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers**. For the gifts and the calling of God are not things that he will regret (“not irrevocable” in many versions)”* (Rom. 11:28-29).
- 6) In the description of the New Jerusalem the gates of the city bear the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). Once again, the natural reading refers to ethnic Israel.
- 7) It would appear very strange to think of the Christian congregation as being split up into the 12 different tribes of Revelation 7.

According to Zechariah 12:10, this Jewish remnant become Christians only after they see Jesus at his return and after the first resurrection and

therefore are not granted immortality at that time, but become the firstfruits of the new nation of Israel during the Millennium. They are further described with a later end-time event when, in vision, John sees:

*“...the lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a 144,000 who have his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. I heard a sound coming out of heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; and the sound that I heard was like singers who accompany themselves by playing on their harps. And they are singing what seems to be a new song **before** (Gk enopion) **the throne** and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one was able to master that song except the 144,000, who have been **bought from the earth**. These are the ones that did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins. These are the ones who **keep following the Lamb** no matter where he goes. These were bought from among mankind **as firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb, and no deceit was found in their mouths; they are without blemish.”*

(Rev. 14:1-5).

As will be shown in chapter 7 of this book the number 144,000 is likely symbolic because of the details shown here in Revelation 14 as well as other reasons detailed in chapter 7.

Here Mount Zion is quite literally Jerusalem on earth because this city, as described in Hebrews 12:22-24 concerns a present condition of Christians just as in Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 where **Christians on earth** are seen as **being in heaven representatively** through their union with or incorporation into Christ Jesus. Indeed, the adjective “heavenly” is **qualitative** and is not referring to a location, but rather it has reference to things which originate with God. Hence the “*heavenly Jerusalem*,” to be situated on a literal Mount Zion on earth, is the glorious city of the **future** which Christians have figuratively approached now because, “*they desire a better, that is, a heavenly (country)*. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has **prepared a city** for them” (Heb. 11:16). This heavenly (country) was called “*the land of the promise*” in Hebrews 11:9 and so speaks of the land of Canaan beautifully restored. So, the city prepared for them in God’s mind is a Jerusalem on earth, but yet future as the writer says, “*For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come*” (Heb. 13:14).

Similar to this description of “*heavenly Jerusalem*” by the writer to the Hebrews is the Apostle Paul’s description of “*the Jerusalem above*.” Paul writes: “*The Jerusalem above is free, and she is **our mother***” (Gal. 4:26). This is quoted from the LXX Psalm 86:5 which

says: “A man shall say, Sion is **my mother**; and such a man was born in her.” “And of Zion it shall be said: ‘This one and that one were born in her’” (*Hebrew Psalm 87:5*). Certainly, men are not born in heaven. But this is a Messianic text and focuses on the future capital city of the Kingdom. It is “above” because it is vastly superior to other cities as well as the fact that it originates with God.

In fact, there is no scriptural reason to understand this city as referring to anything other than the “heavenly Jerusalem” which originates from “above.” So, Professor Richard Longenecker explains that:

The idea of a “heavenly Jerusalem” (“the Jerusalem that is above”) has a rich Jewish background. The concept has to do with the culmination of God’s redemptive purposes in human history, the realization of God’s reign in its totality. As such, it is an eschatological concept that **describes Jerusalem as it will be** at the end of time, often in contrast to what the city is at present. References to a “heavenly Jerusalem” are to be found in embryonic form in the Jewish scriptures (e.g., Ps. 87:3; Isa. 54 the opening verse of which Paul quotes in 4:27; Ezek. 40-48).

Word Biblical Commentary on Galatians.

So, in these passages from Galatians, Hebrews, and Revelation there really is no thought of going beyond the clouds from the time of one’s death as some kind of spirit being. This is certain from the fact that Jesus never promised such a thing and Paul never expected such a thing. Indeed, the promises for Christians concern the land i.e., the earth; but how are we to understand the term “*the Kingdom of heaven*”?

So, as difficult as it is to identify the 144,000, it appears that the most reasonable identification of them is as natural ethnic Israelites in the end-times who become saved at the return of Jesus (see later). They are later shown to be with Jesus on the literal Mount Zion.

§

6

144,000 Will Be in the Same Location as the Great Crowd

As shown in the second chapter of this book true Christians are consistently shown to be of one class and the great crowd are anointed Christians. This is equally true of the 144,000 ethnic Jewish Christians. The simple difference is the timing of when the 144,000 actually become Christian. For them this will be at the return of Jesus so that they enter the Kingdom at the beginning of the millennium as mortals, but will be granted immortality at a later time. So having shown in chapter 3 that the great crowd are anointed Christians we can now make a further comparison with the 144,000.

Just as the great crowd “are **before the throne** of God, and are **rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple** (Gk *naos* = *sanctuary*)” (Rev. 7:15) so too the 144,000 are also “**before the throne**” in the temple (14:3), even though they are Jewish, but become Christians immediately after Jesus’ appearance in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).

So, whatever location “the great crowd” will have in the future, it will be the same as that of the 144,000 (Please see Part Four concerning the destiny for all true Christians). To try to make a distinction of destinies between them, as the Governing Body does, just because the Greek phrase in Revelation 14:3 of *enopion tou thronou* translated “before the throne” means literally “in sight of the throne” (*Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand!*, p. 123) is patently misleading. The fact is that the 144,000 standing upon the literal Mount Zion are also “*in sight of the throne*” (Rev. 14:3). Furthermore, the angels, the 24 elders, and the four living creatures are also “*in sight of the throne*” (Rev. 7:11). This demonstrates that the great crowd are positioned in the same place as the 144,000 in the spiritual temple: the great crowd are “*in sight of the throne*” (Rev. 7:9). This is a unique description used by the apostle John only in Revelation. The throne is also associated with: the seven lamps, the glassy sea, the golden altar, the seven spirits, the four living creatures, the 24 elders, the angels, and the 144,000.

However, to further justify the Governing Body’s false distinction of future separate locations for the 144,000 and “the great crowd” an article was written in the Watchtower magazine of August 15, 1980 which tried to promote the idea that “the *naos*” could also be the entire temple complex. It was presented thus:

“The Greek word *naos* refers often to the inner sanctuary representing heaven itself

1. BUT it was the entire temple (*naos*) that had been 46 years in the building.
2. It was the entire temple (*naos*) that was destroyed as a judgment from God.

3. It was from the courts of the outer temple (naos) that Jesus drove the money changers.
4. It was in the outer temple (naos) that Judas threw back the 30 pieces of silver.
5. HENCE it is consistent that the "great crowd" serve God in the earthly court of the spiritual temple."

However, an examination of all the relevant verses from the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* reveals:

POINT 1. This is probably correct. Evidently it was not just the sanctuary that took 46 years to build as mentioned by the Jews in John 2:20. However, it may be that the Jews or Matthew used the word *naos* rather than *hieron* in response to Jesus' statement; "*Break down this temple (naos) and in three days I will raise it up*" in reference to his body. Or the Jews may still have focused on the actual sanctuary building as being part of what took 46 years to complete.

POINT 2. All the accounts (Matt. 24:1, 2, Mark 13:1-3, Luke 21:5, 6) concerning the entire temple that Jesus prophesied would be destroyed use the Greek word *hieron* and not the word *naos*. So, point two from the Governing Body is false.

POINT 3. All the accounts (Matt. 21:12, Mark 11:15, Luke 19:45 and John 2:14, 15) concerning the event when Jesus drove out the money changers show that it was from the *hieron* and not the *naos* that they were driven. So, this third Watchtower point is also false.

POINT 4. In Matthew 27:5 the *New Jerusalem Bible* correctly translates *naos* as sanctuary: "And flinging down the silver pieces in the sanctuary he [Judas] made off, and went and hanged himself." Because Judas intended to hang himself, he may have thought nothing of breaking the Law and entering the courtyard of the priests so that he might throw the money into the sanctuary as the NJB describes. So, this fourth Watchtower point is very weak.

The NWT is inconsistent at one particular point in its translation of the Greek word *naos*. There are 19 occurrences where *naos* is translated as "sanctuary" e.g., Matthew 23:35, but at **Revelation 7:15** it is translated simply as "temple" e.g., "...they [the great crowd] are rendering him sacred service day and night in **his temple.**" However, in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* the Greek word *naos* in 7:15 is translated as "divine habitation," as meaning "sanctuary" and therefore consistent with all the other occurrences. So, it appears that the reason the NWT chooses to translate *naos* in 7:15 as simply "temple" is because

the Governing Body applies Revelation 11:2 to the “great crowd” so that they were viewed as spiritually “*in the courtyard outside the temple sanctuary.*” Therefore, in Watchtower theology, Revelation 7:15 must match with that application. However, this is the courtyard of the Gentiles according to the description, the context, and all scholarly commentary. So, this, misapplication actually portrays the “great crowd” as of “the nations...who trample the city underfoot” and are therefore enemies of true worship.

The Governing Body’s Modified View

The February 1, 1998 issue of the Watchtower magazine noted the fact that Solomon’s temple did not have a court of the Gentiles. From this it was reasoned that, in relation to the spiritual temple the great crowd are not in a separate Court of the Gentiles. This modified view is expressed thus: “The great crowd worships with anointed Christians in the earthly courtyard of Jehovah’s great spiritual temple (Rev. 7:14, 15; 11:2).” So by the citing of these two Scriptures the Governing Body has firmly linked the *naos* in 7:15 with the courtyard that is outside of the *naos* in 11:2. The reference to the lack of a Court of the Gentiles in Solomon’s temple has no legitimate bearing on the explanation because the command concerning the court that is outside of the *naos* in Rev. 11:2 is: “*leave it out and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations (Gentiles), and they will trample the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.*” So now both of these artificially distinguished classes are worshipping in what is evidently the spiritual equivalent of the Court of The Gentiles which God has now rejected. However, this is not the *naos* that the great crowd are shown to be inhabiting according to Revelation 7:15. To fit their own theology the Governing Body has tried to adapt the meanings of terms. The fact is that throughout the book of Revelation the word *naos* consistently refers to the sanctuary (Holy and Most Holy). It refers to no other temple area. The Governing Body cannot get away from the fact that it is in this sanctuary that the great crowd are shown to be serving God according to Revelation 7:15.

If One Is a True Christians One Is a Child of God

As stated earlier the Scriptures show that:

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God” (1 John 5:1).

“...all who did receive him, he gave authority to become God’s

children” (John 1:12).

“You are all **sons of God** through your faith in Christ Jesus”

(Gal. 3:26).

“For you have been given a **new birth**...through the word [i.e., the good news according to verse 25] of the living and enduring God...”

(1 Pet. 1:23).

If you are a true Christian then you:

- Are baptized into Christ
- Are led by God’s Spirit
- Are Christ’s brother or sister
- Are in the “New Covenant” with Christ as one’s mediator
- Are part of God’s household
- Are part of a holy priesthood
- Are declared righteous
- Are the offspring (seed) of Abraham
- Remain written in “the scroll of life”
- Will have life of the age to come which means that you will have been granted immortality when Jesus actually returns.



PART TWO

Biblical Truth About the Resurrected Jesus

7

The Resurrected Jesus Is Not an Intangible Spirit

The teaching of the Watchtower Society and the various Bible Student groups that Jesus was resurrected as an intangible spirit creature is based mainly on an incorrect understanding of 1 Peter 3:18 which will be examined later in this study. Furthermore, it is argued that Jesus' post-resurrection appearances were as a spirit who could materialize a flesh body. Yet any supposed disposal of Jesus' actual dead body is contrary to the biblical description of his resurrection and subsequent events. This incorrect belief in resurrection as a spirit is supported by the speculative proposal that angels have the ability to materialize flesh bodies. However, such a concept is nowhere described or implied in the Scriptures. Furthermore, the scriptural evidence that the resurrected Jesus is a human who is now immortal and whose body has been glorified is overwhelming.

Misunderstanding Concerning the Appearing of Angels

In the following example there is no mention of any change in the substance of the angel, but rather it was the eyes (perhaps mental blindness, see *Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 1, p. 343) of the beholder that had to be opened to see the angel: "*The ass saw the angel...then Jehovah **opened Balaam's eyes***" (Num. 22:23, 31). A further example is that, "*Jehovah **opened [Elisha's] servant's eyes** and he saw...chariots ... Elisha went on to pray to Jehovah and say: 'Please, strike this nation with blindness'*" (2 Kings 6:17, 18). Yet these Syrian soldiers could still see to follow Elisha. This indicates that it was most probably some form of mental blindness.

NO NEED FOR MATERIALIZATION

Although angels were seen as "men" in the Hebrew Scriptures, they were never called "sons of man," but were only similar in appearance. They were only manlike as Gabriel is described in **Daniel 8:15**: as "...one who looked like a man" (NASU, NJB) or "...someone who appeared to be a man" (NWT). Although Gabriel is later called "a man" (Dan. 9:21) he is clearly only manlike and is revealed in Luke 1:26 as an angel. So, angels had manlike bodies, therefore, they did not need to materialise human bodies, otherwise, for example, the children (the Nephilim) of the rebellious angels of Genesis 6 would have been normal rather than having been the violent giant abnormal hybrids that they, in fact, were. Additionally, angels are sometimes depicted as in 'dazzling or shining clothing' (Luke 24:4, Acts 10:30). At other times they are described simply as men (Gen. 18:2) evidently indicating that they have in some way modified their appearance at these times. But this does not mean

that they have changed their substance as in the teaching of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

NOTE: The shining face of Moses and that of Jesus and with clothes “as white as light” (Luke 17:2) at the transfiguration were only single event demonstrations of God’s glory.

Jesus Was Described as Fully Human after His Resurrection

Throughout the Scriptures, each time an angel is described as a man or manlike it is clear from the context or the parallel accounts, in the case of the gospels, that an angel is in view. However, in the case of Jesus in the statements that he is a man after his resurrection there is no context indicating him to be an angel. Even in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 where, “*the Lord will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice and with God’s trumpet...*” it does **not say that the Lord is an archangel**; but rather this phrase is either a metaphorical description of the power of Jesus’ voice when he returns or it concerns the literal voice of an accompanying archangel, indicated by the fact that “*the Lord descends **with...***” i.e. being accompanied by an archangel who makes a commanding call and blows God’s trumpet.

Nevertheless, a metaphorical description of the power of Jesus’ voice e.g., like the roar of a lion is possible because three-point phrases were commonly used by Bible writers for emphasis and intensification. So, the phrase “*with a **commanding call**, with **an archangel’s voice** and with **God’s trumpet***” works the same way. This would then indicate that Jesus will come with great power and authority as shown in other Scriptures (Matt 24:30, 31). Factually, Jesus cannot be an archangel for the reasons stated in Hebrews 1 and the further reasons given in my book, *Can There Be Three Persons in One God? - Why You Should Question the Trinity Doctrine*. However, if one says that by Jesus’ coming with an archangel’s voice means that he must be an archangel, then one must also say that his coming with the blast of God’s trumpet must make him God! In fact, the following texts show that after his resurrection Jesus is clearly fully human, although glorified because of having had his physical body changed to be indestructible and immortal:

- “*There is one mediator...**a man** Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5).
- “*...Jesus...**a man** having been attested to you*” (Acts 2:22, 13:38).
- “*...resurrection is also through **a man***” (1 Cor. 15:21).
- “*...he [God] has set a day...to judge the inhabited earth by **a man** whom he has appointed*” (Acts 17:31).

Sadly, the Watchtower’s answer to these texts is that Jesus was only **called** a man after his resurrection because that is how he was known when alive on earth. However, this is not sound reasoning and **implies that the Bible is less than accurate in its statements**. As an example, when in Lystra, the apostles Barnabas and Paul corrected the incorrect view held by the crowd that they were gods that had become human, by saying “we are also humans” (Acts 14:11, 15). Furthermore, the Watchtower’s teaching would mean that both Paul and Peter were misleading their listeners and readers if in reality Jesus had returned to being the archangel Michael. Such Watchtower reasoning flies in the face of the statement that Jesus is “the last Adam” after resurrection and so must remain in his ‘kind’ because the phrase “the first **man** Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) implies that “the last Adam” is also a human after resurrection—albeit glorified.

No Human Ever Came from Heaven in the Past

First Corinthians 15:47 is often wrongly used to prove a literal pre-existence of Jesus. (see, *Can There Be Three Persons in One God?-Why You Should Question the Trinity Doctrine*). So, this verse states that: “The second **man** (Gk *anthropos*) is out of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47). However, please note that the verse concerns a “man”—a human. Yet, the Scriptures never teach that in the first century, a **man** (*anthropos*)—a mortal human Jesus literally and physically came from heaven. This is because mortal humans never literally come from heaven. However, they can “come from heaven” in the sense of originating with God in His purpose. Nevertheless, verse 47 is shown to be anticipatory because the context of, “we shall bear the image of the heavenly one” in verse 49 indicates that the event of verse 47 will occur at Jesus’ *parousia* (*advent*) when the first resurrection occurs so that Christians can “bear the image of the heavenly one.” This event will reveal ‘**man**’ **mark two**—“the last Adam”—an immortal human. In fact, the following texts in the next chapter also demonstrate that, in Jesus’ case, a human body is what was resurrected, but one that was now glorified and immortal.

§

8

Jesus' Own Physical Body Was Resurrected

Jesus' Body Was Not Disintegrated by God

In his statements to a crowd in the temple grounds Peter applied the words of Psalm 16:9 to Jesus as if Jesus were saying: “*and I (Lit. “my flesh) will reside in hope” (Acts 2:26)*. So how could Jesus’ **flesh** reside in hope if it were not going to be resurrected, but be disintegrated by God as taught by the Organization? Yet in Acts Peter goes on to show that Jesus’ body would not be destroyed when he said: “*...nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31)* and, “*...the one whom God raised up did not see corruption” (Acts 13:37)* as meaning his body did not decay.

These texts refer to the complete person of Jesus. He cannot exist apart from his body—his flesh. In fact, flesh in this instance refers to Jesus’ literal body and if his body had been purposely disintegrated or destroyed by God, in any way at all, then his flesh would have seen corruption. The result is the same whether by slow decay or immediate destruction. The teaching that God must have destroyed Jesus’ dead body because he was resurrected as a spirit is not found in Scripture.

NOTE: What part of God’s purpose would have been served for Jehovah to have waited three days before resurrecting Jesus if the physical body was now of no consequence because it had been destroyed by God?

Jesus Was Still Tangible After His Resurrection

Long after the resurrection of Jesus, in about 61 C.E., Paul could say: “*...in him [Jesus] all the fullness of the divine quality dwells **bodily**” (Col. 2:9)*. This shows that Jesus currently has a real physical body since his resurrection, because the term “bodily” had no connotation of anything intangible. Also, there is no statement anywhere in the Bible that anyone could materialize a body, but rather that, “*God allowed him to become manifest...to us, who **ate and drank with him** after his rising from the dead” (Acts 10:40, 41)*.

This text does not mean that Jesus was invisible and then literally materialised in front of the disciples, but rather that he ‘appeared’ or ‘moved into their sight’ just as any other tangible solid-bodied human would. This is what a plain reading of these words means as verified when Jesus said, “*It is **I myself**, touch me and see, for **a spirit** does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39)*. On this

point the second century Christian Ignatius is quoted as referencing Jesus' words in Luke 24:39 when he said:

...that he (Jesus) was **in the flesh even after the resurrection**; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: 'Take hold of me; *handle me* and see that I am not a **disembodied demon**.'

Clearly, Ignatius believed in the actual **same body physical resurrection** of Jesus as were all biblical resurrections e.g., Lazarus' being raised physically. The fact that the disciples thought they saw a **demonic manifestation**—a spirit of a demon (*see Luke 4:33 KIT*)—does not detract from Jesus' words showing that he was real and solid-bodied. The use of the term "disembodied" by Ignatius is probably a reference to 'the manifestation.' However, the disciples simply mistook the solid but glorified bodied Jesus for an intangible manifestation of a demon until he showed them who he was. They had done a similar thing before when Jesus had walked on water in the dark and they had mistaken him for an apparition—a phantom (Matt. 14:26). So, if Jesus had been a spirit and he had materialized then, by his words, he would have been deceiving his disciples. In fact, Thomas had emphatically stated: "*Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and stick my finger into the print of the nails and stick my hand into his side, I will not believe ... Next he [Jesus] said to Thomas: Put your finger in here, and see my hands, take your hand and stick it in my side, and stop being unbelieving*" (John 20:25b, 27). So, if Jesus had really been an intangible spirit then he would have been further deceiving his disciples, because the wounds on this different body would not have been the actual wounds caused by the Romans. Such would all have been a fabrication.

A Temple Not Made with Hands?

It has been argued that in John 2:21-22 the body that Jesus spoke about was not his same body. However, we must examine what Jesus actually said in contrast to the statements of false witnesses. The account says:

"Jesus replied to them: "Tear down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said: "This temple was built in 46 years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was talking about the temple of his body. When, though, he was raised up from the dead, his disciples recalled that he used to say this, and they believed the Scripture and what Jesus had spoken"

(John 2:19-22).

Yet in **Mark 14:57-58** the false witnesses said, "We heard him say, **‘I**

will throw down **this temple** that was **made with hands**, and in three days I will build **another not made with hands.**” So, the argument is made that Jesus would have another body, a non-human body, one “not made with hands.” However, Jesus’ actual words in John 2 were: “Tear down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” He did not say ‘I will throw it down.’ In fact, Jesus spoke of **them**—the Jews—as breaking it down. Neither did Jesus mention a temple not made by hands let alone a body not made with hands. If we allow the assumption that Mark added a detail of something that was actually said by Jesus, but was never later recorded by John, then we must ask: According to the Scriptures can humans ever have a **non-human body**? Also, what is meant by the phrase “not made by hands.” So, to answer the first question the following Scriptures illustrate the continuity of the Christian’s body in relation to resurrection when Jesus said: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just one grain; but if it dies, it then bears much fruit” (John 12:24). Later Paul explained that:

*“You sow, not the body that will develop, but just a bare grain...but God gives it a body...to each of **the seeds its own body**” (1 Cor. 15:37, 38).*

So, these verses show the continuity from grain (seed) to full plant; and therefore, the continuity from the dead mortal (natural) human body to the alive immortal (spiritual) human body of the Christian (1 Cor. 15:46). In terms of the Genesis ‘kinds’ humans always remain humans.

The Refashioning of the Same Human Body

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, Christians are: “...awaiting the release by ransom **of the body**” (Rom. 8:23 KIT. This is not “release from” as in the NWT). The Greek text and most other translations render the phrase in Romans 8:23: “as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption **of our bodies.**” So, it will be a change in our bodies which takes place according to Paul because:

*“We will not all fall asleep [in death], but **we** [the living] will all be **changed**, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, during the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised up incorruptible, and **we will be changed**” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).*

Indeed, there is nothing in any Bible text to indicate that it will be a change into a non-human body, but it will be a changing from mortal to immortal because: “[Jesus] will **transform** our humble body to be like

his glorious body..." (Phil. 3:21). These verses show that it is not our receiving of a completely different body, but that it will be our *mortal humble body* that will be changed (not exchanged). How this will be accomplished for the dead at resurrection time the Scriptures do not say. Nevertheless, all resurrections in the Bible record are of individuals whose *own body* was made alive. So, because the above scriptures demonstrate that Christians will be changed from mortal to immortal with no disconnection from their bodies, **the same must have been true of Jesus at his resurrection when he said:** "*It is I myself, touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have*" (Luke 24:39). Yet, if this were by materialization then Jesus would have been deceiving his disciples.

The false teaching that Jesus was given a non-human alien body and that Christians will be given non-human bodies is based on the concept that *you* can be separated from your *body* and transferred into another body of a different type (non-human). This is the pagan Greek dualist belief of the Gnostics, rather than the biblical holistic belief. To translate Romans 8:23 as "releasing **from** the body", as the NWT does, is plainly dualistic Gnosticism; unless the intention is to interpret it according to Romans 7:24 where Paul asks: "who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death." However, he is not asking to be given a non-human body, but to be no longer "a slave to sin's law" (verse 25). In fact, the NLT paraphrases Romans 8:23 as: "*we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.*" So, the following Scriptures give examples showing that redemption is also, from *sheol* or death but never from one's body: "God will redeem me (Lit. "my soul") from the power of the Grave." (Ps. 49:15) and so, not from one's body. And "From death I will recover them" (Hosea 13:14b)" i.e., not from their bodies.

So, to answer **the second question** concerning **Mark 14:58** of: "What is meant by the phrase "not made by hands" we note that this phrase also appears in **2 Corinthians 5:1** which says: "...we are to have a building from God, a house **not made with hands.**" Clearly, from the foregoing, there is continuity between the natural and the spiritual body. So, in line with 1 Corinthians 15 the statement in 2 Corinthians 5:1 simply contrasts the temporary nature of "this tent" as the **before** bodily state i.e., weak, perishable and mortal that does not last as received through Adam and the permanent building as the **after** bodily state as a gift from God and therefore "**not made with hands**" which lasts forever having "put on incorruption and immortality." Indeed, the *Word Biblical Commentary*, states that:

This permanent dwelling, this spiritual body, is one that is "made without hands." To say that this new house was made without hands

is not to negate that God created man (Gen 2:7). It is to say that the tent is of the earth and that there is both a need (1 Cor 15:22) and a desire (5:8) for something else, wholly from God.

So, according to 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54 the corruptible/mortal nature will put on an incorruptible/immortal nature. This is similar to clothing oneself with an overcoat rather than having a completely different body. Therefore, if the Mark 14:57-58 description did apply to Jesus' body (*which it may not have because it was said by false witnesses*) it, too, may be making the same contrast and is in no way a reference to becoming non-human. Of course, the bodily contrast from mortal to immortal is dramatic, as in the difference between a seed grain and the fully-grown plant.

The Return of Jesus Will Be as a Man

According to the *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* as well as the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* the term “Son of man” = The representative **Human**. So, the term “Son of man” means a human and this term is applied also to Jesus at his return as he says: “...*they will see **the Son of man** coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt. 24:30) and, “*You will see **the Son of man** sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds heaven*” (Mark 14:62). Hence, Jesus, in returning as **the Son of man**—a human, must have been resurrected as fully human.

§

9

Misapplied Texts Concerning Jesus' Body

The key texts that the Watchtower Society and the Bible Student groups rely on in their attempt to prove that Jesus was not resurrected as an immortal human are: 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:46 and 50; and 2 Corinthians 5:16. Also 1 Timothy 6:14-16 is used in an attempt to prove that Jesus could never return to the earth. So, we start with **1 Peter 3:18** which says:

*“He was put to death in the flesh, made alive **in** the spirit.”*

The first point to note is that this verse does not say ‘made alive as a spirit;’ but rather it means, in basic terms, **put to death in weakness** (as a mortal) **made alive in power** (as an immortal) because “spirit” basically means power (Luke 1:35). It is unscriptural to speak of spirit substance which thought comes from pagan Greek thinking. A similar phrase is in 1 Timothy 3:16 where it states of Jesus that, “*He was...declared righteous (or ‘vindicated’) in spirit*” as meaning “*vindicated in power.*” Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 15:42, 43 describes the dead who are resurrected as being “*sown in weakness...raised up in power*” (verse 44). The same contrast is being made here in 1 Peter 3:18 with reference to Jesus which does not say, ‘*as a spirit,*’ as if to speak of Jesus’ substance, but rather that he was no longer a weak and perishable mortal person (1 Cor. 15:43, 44). In other words, he is no longer “flesh and blood” metaphorically (*verse 50 i.e., weak, mortal and subject to corruption*). He now has a glorified powerful, imperishable, immortal body which can be touched (Luke 24:39) and can eat (verse 43). It is a body that has been changed (1 Cor. 15:51) **not exchanged for another**. Therefore, Jesus has a *tangible, visible* human body that can apparently defy the laws of nature. However, he is not disembodied with a supposed ability to materialize. This concept is nowhere described in the Scriptures and, in fact, comes from pagan Greek philosophy. So, his is a body that is motivated and sustained by spirit (God’s power) as is shown by Paul regarding glorified Christians because, “*He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through His spirit that resides in you*” (Rom. 8:11).

NOTES:

- The basic meaning of **spirit** is breath or air in motion and denotes a **dynamic** form of breathing or the natural **power** of the wind. Luke 1:35 puts holy spirit and power in parallel.
- The context of **John 4:24** shows that it should be rendered “God is spirit” and means that **God is dynamic power** and must be worshipped with dynamic power. This is a metaphor in the same way “God is love” and “God is light” are metaphors. Therefore, “God is spirit” refers to the mediation of God’s active presence on earth. The incorrect rendering “God is a spirit” (as if a reference to His substance) is rare in translations (only in those with a KJV background, but corrected in the NKJV).

1 Corinthians 15:44-49:

*“It is sown a physical (KIT **soulical** = “natural”) body (Gk soma), it is raised up a spiritual body. If there is a physical (natural) body,*

there is also a spiritual one. ⁴⁵So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living person.” The last Adam **became a life-giving spirit**. ⁴⁶However, what is spiritual is not first. What is physical (natural) is first, and afterward what is spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man is from the earth and made of dust; the second **man** (*Gk anthropos*) from heaven. ⁴⁸Like the one made of dust, so too are those made of dust; and like the heavenly one, so too are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we will bear also the image of the heavenly one.”

Here the NWT rendering of “physical,” although not wrong, is not the best choice. This is because the Greek word *psuchikon* means “soulical” as in the Kingdom Interlinear. It refers to the “natural” mortal body and is so rendered in almost all translations. The Greek word for body is *soma* and always refers to materiality, physicality and substance. Almost all commentators take this view. So, when 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of “the spiritual **body** (*soma*)” it is one of materiality, physicality, substance and is fully tangible as demonstrated by Jesus (Luke 24:37-43). This is very different from the pagan Greek concept of intangible disembodied spirits. **Jesus would have, in fact, had to have been disembodied for him to have become embodied by materialization.** Yet every creature is material of one sort or another. There is nothing known to be immaterial. *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, pp. 348-9 shows that **all** have bodies, including Jehovah. Yet, Watchtower teaching about Jesus produces the contradiction of saying that the resurrected Jesus had a material body and yet he materialized. One option is to say that the so-called angelic spiritual material of Jesus’ new body is capable of reorganizing itself into human substance. This, however, is not materialization but is along the lines of the science fiction concept of shape-shifting, and is speculative with no basis in the Scriptures for such a concept.

Verse 46: The phrase “*The last Adam became a life-giving spirit*” means that he became a **dynamic life-giving power** i.e., one with life in himself (John 5:26). But Romans 5:14 says that it is: “...*Adam who is a type* (*Gk typos*) *of the one coming.*” So, Adam, who should have been the everlasting father of mankind, was replaced by Jesus who therefore must always remain human (yet with a glorified body). The term spirit does not refer to bodiless or intangible creatures as is the view of Greek mythology. Spirit has several meanings including the **whole human**. It parallels “soul” as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 where the phrase “spirit, soul, and body” is used to describe the **totality of a person** or a body of people as a unified whole (i.e., not meaning that there are separate parts).

Hence, Jesus in his new totality in glory and power is a life-giving person or power because he has power in himself to give life and has been appointed to resurrect the dead.

Verse 47: “*The first man is out of the earth and made of dust; the second man is out of heaven.*”

Does “made of dust” imply physicality in contrast with “out of heaven” implying non-physicality or of spirit substance? Although “made of dust” does speak of the very substance of which humans are made, this is not the point of the contrast because this section of chapter 15 concerns the contrast between mortal/immortal, perishable/imperishable, and in weakness/in power. As with most of the Bible’s terminology this verse is not ontological (of substance) but contrasts the representative first man’s weakness, perishability and mortality with the second representative man’s power, imperishability, and immortality. Indeed, the Jews had a view that there is an *inferior Adam* and a *superior Adam*. John A.T. Robinson expressed this saying:

That the reference in this passage, as the context shows, is not to Adam and to Jesus Christ as individuals, but to two different ‘bodies’ or **conditions of humanity**, *adam* and *anthropos* being ways, in Hebrew and Greek, of referring to ‘man’ with a capital M...The first level of living Paul sees as having been initiated in Adam, the second as having been opened up through Christ...is the life-giving spiritual corporeity ... Thus I believe the contrast in 1 Cor.15:44-49...is between the *soma psychikon* (the natural body) and the *soma pneumatikon* (the spiritual body), the **solidarities or states of humanity**, both of which Jesus shared and both of which we shall share...” *The Human Face of God*, pp. 167-8.

Furthermore, *The International Critical Commentary* notes that “from heaven” (*ex ouranou*) refers to the Second Advent.” Also H.A.W. Meyer says that the phrase *ex ouranou* is used of “heavenly derivation” and applies to the glorification of the body of Christ. This glorification originated from heaven or, in other words, it was a work of God.

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1 Corinthians 15:50:

“*flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*”

Here the phrase “flesh and blood” is being used figuratively. It represents the natural mortal body described as existing in *corruption*. This is not a reference to the body’s physicality as if to contrast it with the “spiritual

body.” This means, as expressed in the NJB, “...mere human nature cannot inherit the kingdom of God: what is perishable cannot inherit what is imperishable” i.e., the Kingdom. So “flesh and blood” (mere human nature) is perishable, which means also that it is weak and mortal. What is required to inherit the Kingdom is a body that is not perishable. Verse 53 describes how, “...this which is corruptible **must put on incorruption, and this which is mortal must put on immortality.**” In fact, this highlights the “change” from perishability of the body to imperishability of the same body (verses 52, 53), so that now it is immortal, powerful and glorious. Only in this sense does it become a new body. There is no indication here of an exchange so as to become “a spirit” in the pagan Greek sense of intangibility or of any special spirit substance e.g., “You are not in flesh but in spirit, if spirit of God is dwelling in you” (Rom. 8:9) according to the KIT Greek interlinear. So, this shows that, in this present life, being “not in flesh” does not mean that one is not physical.

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2 Corinthians 5:16:

*“So from now on we know no man from a fleshly viewpoint. Even if we once knew Christ **according to the flesh**, we certainly no longer know him in that way.”*

Here “flesh” does not refer to human substance or essence as if Christ would never again be seen physically as taught by the Watchtower Society, but refers to worldly sinful human standards as shown by most of the general translations, e.g., the REB renders it: “With us **worldly standards** have ceased to count in our estimate of anyone; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so no longer.” Other renderings are: “...even if we were once familiar with Christ **according to human standards...**” (NJB), “There was a time when we evaluated Christ **by human standards...**” (William Barclay), “If we did think of Christ from **a human point of view**” (GW), “Even though we have known Christ from such **a human point of view**” (NET Bible), “At one time we thought of Christ merely from **a human point of view**” (NLT). Evidently these translators have correctly grasped the meaning of the Greek phrase *kata sarx* as not meaning ‘according to human substance’ but “according to **a worldly or human point of view**” or “**standards.**” Hence, this verse cannot be used to say that Jesus will never be seen again.

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1 Timothy 6:14-16

“...until the **manifestation** (*Gk epiphania = appearing*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the happy and only Potentate **will show** in its own appointed times. He is the king of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords, the one **alone having immortality**, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom **no man has seen or can see.**”

This is the text used by the Watchtower Society in its attempt to prove that Jesus will never return to the earth. The Society mistakenly teaches that the title “only Potentate” applies to Jesus rather than to Jehovah and so he could not have been resurrected as a human. This application lends support to the Watchtower’s teaching that Jesus will never return to the earth. Because Jesus is called “Lord of lords and King of kings” in Revelation 19:16 the Watchtower’s application may seem feasible. However, all other translations render 1 Timothy 6:14-16 so that it can be seen that **it is God who is the “Only Potentate.”** Also, most Bible commentators make this same application to God. Why?

- A careful reading of this passage in context shows that “the only Potentate” refers to Jehovah.
- Indeed, 1 Timothy 6:16 speaks of the Potentate “whom **no man** has seen,” but thousands of people saw Jesus and upward of 500 brothers saw Jesus after his resurrection. Therefore, this term must apply to Jehovah.
- Jesus must visibly appear because that is the meaning of the Greek word *epiphania* (noun) = **an appearing** or manifestation. Any appearing must be *visible* because the Potentate **will show** this “manifestation” of Jesus.
- The *NIV notes* state that: “Just as Jesus’ first coming occurred at the precise time that God wanted (Gal. 4:4), so also his second coming will be at God’s appointed time.” So, it is Jehovah who is the Potentate who “**will show**” the manifestation of Jesus “in its own appointed times.”
- On a number of occasions details applied to Jehovah in the Hebrew Scriptures are applied to Jesus in the Christian Scriptures e.g., Psalm 102 and Hebrews 1:10. So, because Jesus is God’s representative he functions as God and has the same prerogatives as God and therefore bears some of the same titles. Therefore, it is no surprise if Jehovah’s title of “King of Kings and Lord of lords” (Deut. 10:17, Dan. 2:47) is

later applied to Jesus in the future scenario of Revelation. (Please see *Can There Be Three Persons in One God? - Why You Should Question the Trinity Doctrine* concerning divine titles).

- Although Jesus was resurrected as an immortal it is a **derived** immortality i.e., he didn't have the ability to become immortal. God gave immortality to him; whereas God alone has underived immortality.
- The Scriptures show that Jesus does not stay in heaven forever, because Peter spoke of him as one "*whom heaven must hold within itself **until** the times of restoration of all things*" (Acts 3:21). It is this appearance of Jesus that God **will show** in its own appointed times "*that **He** may send Jesus*" (Acts 3:21).

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Galatians 1:1:

"Paul, an apostle, neither from men nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father..."

Some take this text to mean that Jesus cannot now be human. However, Paul was here discussing the need to assert his authority with the Galatians. So here he was demonstrating that he was not commissioned by any Jewish High Council or council of the apostles at Jerusalem—a mere human authority—but by divine **authority of God as represented by the exalted Christ**. Paul's calling was not a common one but an extraordinary call from heaven. So, as shown in most commentaries, this was not about Christ in terms of his physical make-up, but concerns his authorization of Paul. Jesus is clearly shown in the rest of the Scriptures to be part of humanity even in his exalted position.

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In the Scriptures the terms "*flesh (Gk sarx), spirit, and soul,*" do not always refer to what someone is made of i.e., their substance, but rather to different aspects of human nature, the whole person. The distinction is ethical rather than ontological (essence, substance). The basic meaning of flesh, as used figuratively, is "human character in its weakness and mortality."

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Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearances

The Watchtower Organization teaches that post-resurrection Jesus was an intangible spirit and therefore he materialized in different bodies so that he could be seen. However, if someone is not immediately recognized it does not automatically mean that they have become intangible or disembodied or that they have reappeared in different bodies (an idea that comes from Greek mythology and used in science fiction). The “**spiritual body**” noted in 1 Corinthians 15:42, 44 is immortal, imperishable, raised in glory and power. It is, however a tangible body of substance. This is shown by the fact that, according to 1 Corinthians 2:15, “*the **spiritual man** indeed examines all things*” and the spiritual man is obviously a tangible physical person, but guided by holy spirit rather than by his natural impulses and so indicating that the ‘spiritual body’ is also physical and tangible but ruled, dominated, and directed by holy spirit.

The Organization presents several texts and scenarios to prove its teaching, but is its interpretation of each of these texts correct? There are three biblical aspects to this issue.

1. Mental Blindness Caused Some to Not Recognize Jesus

There are three details in Luke 24 concerning Jesus which the Organization uses to indicate that he was a materialized spirit. These are:

- “...**their eyes** were prevented from recognizing him”
(Luke 24:16).
- “After Jesus broke the bread **their eyes** were fully opened and they recognized him” (Luke 24:31).
- “Then they related the events on the road and how he became known to them **in** (not ‘**by**’ as in NWT) the breaking of the bread”
(Luke 24:35 KIT).

However, for the first two of these texts it can be seen that it was the observer’s eyes that were either prevented or opened for seeing Jesus, but no change in Jesus’ body is mentioned. For the third text the Organization has used the faulty rendering in the NWT in its attempt to prove their teaching. However, no other translation has the word ‘by’. In fact, most translations render this as “in.” The NJB has “at,” the NIV has “when,” and the NLT has “as he was.” So, this text simply links **the timing** of their recognizing him with the breaking of the bread, not that it was the **manner** in which he broke it that enabled them to recognize him.



2. Physical Circumstances Caused Some to Not Recognize Jesus

The Apostle John informs us that, “[Mary] did not recognize that it was Jesus” (John 20:14, 15). However, the context given in verse one shows that, “she came early to the tomb while it was still dark.” Additionally, Mary was weeping (verse 13) and so perhaps this initially clouded her vision. Furthermore, she was **not expecting** to see Jesus in the near future and, no doubt, his glorified **immortal appearance** would be significantly different to his dreadfully torn up appearance at his execution. There is no reason here to suppose that Jesus materialized a different body. There are plenty of natural factors which would have prevented Mary from discerning that it was Jesus.

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In John 21:4b there certainly were reasons why the disciples did not initially recognize Jesus when he: “...stood on the beach.” Here it tells us that, “the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus;” but the context is given in 21:4a which says “just as day was breaking” i.e. there was not much light. Additionally, verse 7 tells us that John recognized that, “it is the Lord! Hence Peter upon hearing that it is the Lord...plunged into the sea.” So, probably the **distance** out from the shore and the **reduced light** would prevent Peter and John from initially recognizing that it was Jesus until the one perhaps with the better eyesight, namely, John recognized him as the dawn broke. Again, there is no logical reason to suppose any kind of materialisation of Jesus into a different body.

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Also, in John’s account we learn that, “Not one of the disciples had the courage to ask him: “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord” (John 21:12). As before perhaps it was his **glorified appearance** that made them unsure or even causing them to mistake him for an angel.

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In John 20:19 we find that, “...the doors were locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst.” Again, there may be a natural explanation for this. But more likely the glorified body is not subject to the laws of nature. However, this still does not require materialization. Even in the natural body miraculous things happened such as with Jesus’ walking on water and Philip’s being snatched away to Ashdod (Acts 8:39, 40).



3. Jesus Was Simply Out of Public View

Acts 1:3, 4 indicates that Jesus spent most of his post-resurrection time instructing his disciples about the kingdom and eating with them **throughout** (Gk *dia*) 40 days. Why would he spend time elsewhere? So, when it is stated that, “*God allowed him to become manifest, **not to all the people**, but to witnesses appointed beforehand by God...*” (Acts 10:40, 41) this does not mean that he was invisible to these other people, but, perhaps this was all done where there were no outsiders that might see him; and yet this does not require that he be invisible. In fact, the ideal human, “the Son of man,” was later seen in vision in heaven as reported by Stephen who said: “*Look! I see the heavens opened up and **the Son of man** standing at God’s right hand*” (Acts 7:56).

Nevertheless, someone may ask: Won’t the value of Jesus’ sacrifice be lost if his original body is resurrected?

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11

Jesus’ Sacrificed Life in Relation to His Body

Is the Value of Jesus’ Sacrifice Lost If He,
In His Original Body, Is Resurrected?

Jesus repeatedly said, “*I surrender my life in behalf of the sheep ... I surrender my life, so that I may receive it again ... I have authority to surrender it, and I have authority to receive it again. This commandment I received from my Father*” (John 10:15, 17, 18). Now, if we say that this is only Jesus’ physical life that he surrenders then clearly it is his physical life that he *receives again* by means of resurrection. But to say that he would not have his own body would be an artificial distinction not described in the Bible where life is always associated with the same body, as it is in all resurrections. The Scriptures use many terms in reference to Jesus’ sacrifice—death, blood, life, himself, as well as body, as in the following examples:

“...because a **death** has occurred for their release by ransom from their transgressions” (Heb. 9:15).

“...unless **blood** is poured out no forgiveness takes place”

(Heb. 9:22).

“Because he poured out his **life** even to death” (Isa. 53:12).

“We have the release by ransom through the **blood** of that one”

(Eph. 1:7).

“...set free...with precious **blood**...Christ’s” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

“who gave **himself** for us to set us free” (Titus 2:14).

Therefore, it was his life, as represented by his blood, that was sacrificed for mankind not just his body as if it were something separate from his life. It was his death that paid for our sins. So, when in Hebrews 10:5 (quoted from Psalm 39:6 in the LXX) it is stated that God had “*prepared a body for me [Jesus]*” and “*we have been sanctified by the offering of **the body** of Jesus Christ once for all time*” (verse 10), it clearly refers to his whole person, which after being sacrificed, was brought back to life as his same body just as with all previous resurrections, although Jesus is now glorified. So, the body was prepared when Jesus was conceived and it obviously came with its life. The writer of Hebrews was certainly not trying to separate Jesus from his life. It was a living person, not a dead body that was the sacrifice. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any indication that Jehovah destroyed the dead body of Jesus.

Summary of Scriptural Points Showing that Jesus Is Always a Human

1. JESUS DIDN'T MATERIALIZE

Because it was the eyes of the beholder that had to be opened to see certain angels, there is no indication in the Scriptures that angels materialized. Therefore, such a concept gives no basis to imagine that after his resurrection Jesus **materialized** from an intangible spirit body. In fact, “*the ass saw the angel...then Jehovah **opened Balaam’s eyes***” (Num. 22:23, 31) and “*...**the** [disciples’] **eyes** were prevented from recognizing him ... After Jesus broke the bread **their eyes** were fully opened and they recognized him*” (Luke 24:16, 31).

2. JESUS' OWN BODY WAS NOT DESTROYED BUT RESURRECTED

In Acts 2:26, 31 as literally presented, Peter repeats the Messianic prophecy that, “*...even **my flesh** will reside in hope ... nor did **his flesh** see corruption.*”

3. JESUS WAS NOT AN INTANGIBLE SPIRIT

It would have been deceptive of Jesus to display the scars on his hands and side if they were not in the actual body which experienced such wounds. Indeed, as Jesus said: “*It is **I myself**, touch me and see, for a **spirit** does not have flesh and bones as you see I have*” (Luke 24:39). Also, the phrase “*made alive in the spirit*” (1 Pet. 3:18) does not say ‘as a spirit,’ but means “made alive **in power**” and relates to resurrection.

4. JESUS IS CALLED “A MAN” AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

There are a half dozen Scriptures which show that Jesus is termed “a man” after his resurrection, thereby showing that he was fully human, albeit now immortal and incorruptible. For example: “...*he [God] has set a day...to judge the inhabited earth by a **man** whom he has appointed*” (Acts 17:31)

5. THE RETURN OF JESUS WILL BE AS A HUMAN

In Jesus’ great end-time prophecy he notes that, “...*they will see **the Son of man** (this term is always defined as a human) coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt. 24:30).

6. Furthermore, Jesus is not to be compared to angels according to Hebrews 1:5, 13; 2:5.



PART THREE

How and to Where Does Jesus Return?

12

How Could Jesus Have Returned

Invisibly?

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) seems to have been the first to propose the idea that Jesus would return and rule as “invisible to mortals.” In 1856, the Lutheran minister Joseph Seiss spoke of an invisible *parousia* or presence, followed by a visible manifestation. After Jesus had failed to visibly return in 1874 as expected by C.T. Russell, his associate B.W. Keith directed Russell’s attention to the idea that Jesus must have returned invisibly. This was in line with the then newly popular two-stage view of Jesus’ coming as espoused by many denominations of the time. Later Russell changed the date of the return from 1874 to 1914. The teaching of an invisible return of Jesus does not mean that he has been literally but invisibly on the earth since 1914, but rather that, in the teaching of the Watchtower Organization, he still appears to sit at God’s right hand in heaven and ‘comes’ in the sense that he **has turned his attention** to the executing of God’s judgments on the nations.

Jesus Was Already Spiritually Present

Of the several mistakes with this Watchtower teaching, one fact that is missing is that Jesus has been spiritually present with his disciples right from the time he was taken to heaven. As he said: *“I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things”* (Matt. 28:20). This was fulfilled when he sent *“the spirit of the truth”* (verse 17) which is *“the spirit of Jesus”* (Acts 16:7). This is also God’s spirit. However, Jesus promised to also physically and literally return.

Jesus Is Only in Heaven for a Certain Time as Christians Await His Literal Return from Heaven

Contrary to the Watchtower teaching that Jesus will never return to earth the Scriptures show that he will be in heaven only for a certain time as when Peter shows that:

*“...Heaven must hold this one [Jesus] within itself **until** the times of restoration of all things”* (Acts 3:21).

In fact, Christians must, *“wait for [God’s] Son **from** the heavens”* (1 Thess. 1:10) and know that, *“Our citizenship exists in the heavens, and we are eagerly waiting for a saviour **from** there”* (Phil. 3:20). Clearly, Christians are waiting for Jesus’ physical return as he said he literally would.

Jesus Does Not Return for an Invisible Presence

Certainly “presence” is one of the possible meanings of the Greek term *parousia* as when an ordinary person turns up in a particular location. However, Adolf Deismann showed that *parousia* has a technical meaning when a dignitary (king etc.) is coming to visit a township i.e., an official visit. So *parousia* then refers to the “coming” of that person as meaning their entire visit including their journey to the place—as someone could say “the king is coming.” So, with Matthew 24:3 the context, especially “the sign of your *parousia*” indicates that “the king” i.e., Jesus **is on his way**—he is approaching and not actually directly present yet—he has not fully arrived. Indeed, the first indicator is that, “*when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation...*” (Matt. 24:15) then the great tribulation (24:21), then all goes dark (24:29), and then “*they will see the sign of the son of man appearing in the sky*” and finally “*they will see the son of man coming on the clouds...*” (Matt. 24:30). All of this makes one notable composite sign, after which Christians are caught up to meet Jesus in the air as he continues his descent (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Only at this point can we say he is fully present. So *parousia* means “advent,” “arrival,” “coming as king” in Matthew 24:3 as N.T. Wright renders it in his New Testament version. *Parousia* simply does not mean that invisibility is involved. Indeed, Jesus comes like “lightning” which is also accompanied by thunder; so that Jesus’ return will be visible and loud.

A Literal Physical Return of Jesus

In Watchtower thinking there has been a misunderstanding of the meaning of some of the verbs used regarding Jesus’ return or second advent. However, other verbs used in this regard make it clear that Jesus will physically return to earth as he said, “...*hold fast to what you have until I come*” (Rev. 2:25). Jesus also stated that, “*the Son of man is to come (Gk erchesthai) in the glory of his Father with his angels*” (Matt. 16:27) and:

“*I will come (Gk erchomai) again and will take you to myself*” (John 14:3 ESV). Or “will receive you home to myself” (NWT).

However, the word “home” is not in the original Greek and many other Scriptures show that this is not a promise to take them to heaven. So, unlike Jesus’ spiritual presence his literal return would be visible because it would be “**in the glory** of his Father.” Such glory is only glory if it is

seen. Also, if a person says that he will return it usually means coming back to the place that he is about to leave. This is clearly the case with these sayings of Jesus.

Jesus' Return Will Be in Person

In spite of the Watchtower's denial, Jesus' visible personal return to earth is a very clearly stated teaching of the Scriptures:

*“And after he [Jesus] had said these things, while they were looking on, he was **lifted up** [from the Mount of Olives vs. 12] and **a cloud caught him up from their [the disciples] sight**. And as they were gazing into the sky while he was on his way, suddenly two men in white garments stood beside them, and said: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who was taken up from you into the sky will come **in the same manner as you have seen him going into the sky**” (Acts 1:9-11).*

Quite wrongly, the Watchtower Society teaches that the phrase “in the same manner” refers to the point where Jesus passes beyond the cloud and beyond **their vision** and therefore becomes invisible. But this is not what is said in verse 11. What the disciples actually saw was Jesus' initial physical ascent from the Mount of Olives and toward the cloud. His return will be “as you have **seen him going into the sky**,” so that “the same manner” must mean: as they physically saw him so he will return and so it must involve a physical and visible descent back to the ground. In fact, Hebrews 9:28 even speaks of “...*the second time that he **appears*** (Gk *ophthesetai* = ‘made visible’ KIT)...”

In the teachings of the Organization, it is mistakenly assumed that in the Scriptures ‘clouds’ are figurative for invisibility. However, reputable Bible commentaries make it clear from the Scriptures that ‘clouds’ are figurative for God's presence (note the cloud in the Exodus experience and also the one which hovered over the tabernacle). So, as God's representative Jesus' being caught up in a cloud after “he was lifted up” pictures God's presence as represented by him. Furthermore, verse 9 does not say that Jesus became invisible at this time, but simply that he went beyond “**their sight**.”

NOTE: the angels' question of: “why do you stand looking into the sky?” is asked for the purpose of encouraging the disciples to get on with accomplishing Jesus' mandate (vs. 8) of witnessing rather than peering into the now empty sky.

The Prophesied Physical Return of Jesus

Several times in the Hebrew Scriptures Jehovah is stated to return to his people in the future. An example of this is the time-of-the-end prophecy in Zechariah that: *“In that day his [Jehovah’s] feet will **stand on the mount of the olives, which faces Jerusalem**” (Zech. 14:4).* However, as Jehovah’s representative it will actually be the feet of Jesus that once again stand on the Mount of Olives from where he had much earlier ascended to heaven. Certainly, Jesus showed that he would be back on the earth at a future time by describing entirely physical, tangible conditions of his presence, such as: *“I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when **I drink it new with you in the kingdom**” (Matt. 26:29) and “I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may **eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the 12 tribes of Israel**” (Luke 22:29, 30. See also Matthew 19:28).* These are obviously descriptions of future physical events with a tangible Jesus’ being in the Kingdom with his tangible disciples. Indeed, “The idea of a Messianic banquet is reflected in verse 30” says *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, p. 1028.

We will now look at further evidence that Jesus comes right back to the surface of the earth.

§

13

Jesus Will Come Right Back to Earth

Several notable points make it clear that Jesus comes right back to earth to be on it and to remain on it. These are:

1. When Jesus said in John 14:3, “I will come again” he could only have meant that he would come back to the place that he was going to leave, that is the earth, as a return from heaven in his case.
2. As previously noted, at the ascension of Jesus the angels told the apostles that Jesus would come in the same manner as they **saw him** depart. This meant that it will be visible and back to where he ascended from, namely the earth (Acts 1:11).
3. Furthermore, the descent of Jesus described in 1Thessalonians 4:16-

17 is shown to be a descent that is all the way to earth because the Greek noun *apantesis* used in verse 17 refers to a meeting for the purpose of being escorted. This is shown by the way the word is used in its two only other occurrences in the Christian Greek Scriptures, that is:

- When the wise virgins went out to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1, 6) and, following the custom, escorted him by torchlight to the house for the wedding feast.
- When the brothers in Rome travelled down to “the Market place of Apius” to escort Paul back to Rome (Acts 28:15, 16).

So, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is not referring to Christians’ being “caught away” to meet Jesus so that he can take them to heaven; but rather to a meeting in the air (earth’s atmosphere) so that they can escort him to earth’s surface to take up his rulership of earth.

4. THE TRANSFIGURATION. Matthew 17:9 tells us that this event was a vision and therefore was a prophetic outline of a future event, that event being the glorious coming of God’s Kingdom. The fact that Moses and Elijah were shown with Jesus in the vision strongly indicates that when Moses and Elijah are **resurrected on this earth, Jesus will be with them** and will, therefore, also be on this earth. This also shows that the event will be at one particular time, that is at Jesus’ coming (Gk *parousia*).

Jesus’ *Parousia* Is the Same Event as His Visible Appearing

The Watchtower Society teaches that Jesus’ *parousia* occurs invisibly and long before his “revealing” or “manifestation,” which is still supposedly also invisible. So, it is vital that we understand the meaning of all the relevant Greek words connected with his statements that he will return. The following Greek words used with reference to Jesus’ return and the following scriptures show that Jesus returns visibly and just once so that there is no two-stage ‘coming’ of Jesus.

THE GREEK WORDS ARE:

Apokalypsis = a revealing,

Eiphania = an appearing, a manifestation. This term strictly concerns visibility.

Phaneroo = to appear, to be manifested,

Ophthalmos = eye — Primarily of the physical organ of sight and

therefore of literal sight. *Opsetai* = to physically see.

These are all accepted in normal English as terms concerned with physical visibility.

Parousia = a coming to be present. There is nothing about this term that implies invisibility.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states concerning **Parousia**:

Someone's coming in order to be present. Technically the noun was used for the arrival of a king, emperor or ruler. (The corresponding Latin term is *adventus*)... With Jesus' death and resurrection, the idea of the *parousia* becomes bound up with the church's expectation of Christ's appearing at the end of the age...Note that other words are used to describe the *parousia* of Christ (e.g., Gk. *hemera*, day 2465; *epiphania*, appearance, 2211).

Also, the *Bauer-Danker Greek-English Lexicon* notes concerning *parousia*: "of Christ, and nearly always of his Messianic Advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age: Mt 24:3." Hence it was translated as **adventus** in the old Latin Bibles and as **coming** nowadays.

EXAMPLES OF THE USAGE OF THESE WORDS

It is rather obvious that if something is physically 'manifest' or 'is revealed' then it is visible to the eyes. One example is:

"...*the Flood...the same way it will be on that day when the Son of man is revealed (apokalyptetai)*" (Luke 17:27, 30).

The parallel account in Matthew 24:39 concerns the events of Jesus' return where he speaks of how, "*they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence (parousia = coming) of the Son of man will be.*" So, the two words of *parousia* and *apokalypsis* concern the same event when Jesus returns. Most importantly both passages show him to be visible because his advent will be visible like lightning (Matt. 24:27), so that Christians are: "...*waiting for the revelation (apokalipsin) of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 1:7).

Furthermore, according to the Apostle Paul the Greek words *apokalypsis*, *epiphania*, *phaneroo*, and *parousia* all refer to the same event. He refers to this future time concerning:

"...*the manifestation (epiphaneia) of his presence/coming (parousia)*" (2 Thess. 2:8).

"...*you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation (apokalypsei) of the Lord Jesus from heaven*" (1 Thess. 1:7, 8).

“...that you observe the commandment...until the manifestation [i.e., appearing (epiphaneias)] of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14).

So, because *epiphania* means an “appearing” and *apokalypsis* means a “revealing” and therefore visible, *parousia* must also refer to what is visible. So, just as Paul says, “When Christ is made manifest (*phanerothe*)” or as in the NIV “When Christ appears...” (Col. 3:4). So too the Apostle John used these terms as concerning the same future event, saying: “When he is made manifest (*phanerothe*)...at his presence/coming (*parousia*)” (1 John 2:28). Indeed, the Apostle Peter used *phanerothe* for Jesus’ first manifestation or appearing which was obviously visible and personal (1 Peter 1:20) and then refers to Jesus’ second appearing when he says: “And when the chief shepherd has been made manifest (*phaneronthentos* i.e., appears) you will receive the unfading crown” (1 Peter 5:4) clearly showing that Jesus’ second advent will be entirely visible.

Literally Seeing Jesus at His Return

Jesus himself said concerning his return, “...then they will see (*opsontai*) the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). This Greek word *opsontai* means “to physically see” with “the organ of sight, namely, the eye. Additionally, clouds do not picture invisibility, but in the Scriptures clouds picture God’s presence (Exodus 33:9). In the future this will be with Jesus as His representative when he comes on clouds. This also includes God’s coming in a war chariot (Psalm 104:3) – *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* p. 157. So, when John writes that, “He [Jesus] is coming with the clouds, and every eye (*ophthalmos*) will see (*opsetai*) him” (Rev. 1:7) it is clear that Jesus’ return will be seen quite literally as is further confirmed by the writer to the Hebrews who reports that, “...the second time that he appears (*ophthesetai* = ‘made visible’ KIT) he will be seen by those eagerly awaiting him for salvation” (Heb. 9:28). So, it is very clear that if someone is “coming to be present” i.e., an advent, they will be visible. Especially is this so when the words used to describe how they will appear or be revealed show that it will be as visible as lightning and everyone will see them. This is just how the return or advent of Jesus is described. One would have to badly distort language in an attempt to understand all these terms any other way and so to produce an invisible return.

NOTE: “Those waiting for him” are not just 144,000, but all true Christians. This is because this is a time of the end scenario. (Please see chapters 1-6).

Jesus Warned Against Those Who Would Teach an Invisible Return

In his great time of the end prophecy Jesus said that, “...*if people say to you...Look! He is in the inner rooms, do not believe it. For just as **the lightning** comes out of the east and shines over to the west, so the presence (Gk *parousia* = coming or advent) of the Son of man will be” (Matt. 24:26, 27). Certainly, lightning is a totally visible and dramatic feature in earth’s atmosphere and is usually followed by loud claps of thunder. If Jesus says that he will be present like something dramatically visible, then we can hardly imagine that he means invisibly and silently. So those who promote an “in the inner rooms” i.e., hidden away concept should not be believed. Please note that the Greek word of *parousia* for presence (or coming) is what will be “just as the lightning comes.”*

§

14

Jesus Will Be on Earth Where the Kingdom Will Be

It seems natural that a JW may well ask: How can Jesus return literally and physically to the earth when the Kingdom of God is to be in Heaven? After all it is called “the Kingdom of Heaven!” This is a legitimate question and which I will endeavour to answer from the Scriptures and with a certain amount of historical information as follows.

In fact, the earliest Christians did originally view God’s Kingdom as being established on earth. However, when it did not come within the first few centuries after Jesus’ ascension the church officials made a change in what was meant by the kingdom, so that it now became attached to the idea that at the moment that a Christian dies his soul departs for heaven which is the Kingdom. Apart from this idea being based on the further unbiblical view of an immortal soul that lives on after death, we must ask: is this idea even vaguely connected to God’s promises to faithful Christians? So, the purpose of this chapter is to

demonstrate that, according to the Bible, the coming Kingdom of God will be set up on earth with a returned Jesus as King in the literal Jerusalem of the future when he, with his associate rulers, will immediately set about the task of bringing about paradise conditions so that all war, crime, poverty and pollution are quickly eradicated. Increasingly the nations will be living in harmony. This is in contrast to the invisible kingdom that the Watchtower declared was set up in heaven in 1914 but with worsening conditions on earth.

The Kingdom Is Described as and Foretold to Be on Earth

As will be shown later in this book no Christians are promised a destiny of going to heaven according to a proper analysis of all relevant Scriptures. Therefore, the Kingdom they will inherit, although originating with God in heaven, will be a kingdom established on earth as Daniel's first end-time prophecy in vision shows where Daniel, under inspiration from God, interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the huge image, saying:

“a stone [the kingdom]...struck the image on its feet ... the stone that struck the image became a large mountain and it filled the whole earth ... the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed ...” (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44).

The feet of this image were firmly placed on earth and therefore when this stone, as picturing the Kingdom under Christ, strikes the image and then expands over the whole earth it is clearly to be a kingdom on earth. Daniel further reveals that, *“the kingdom and the rulership and the grandeur of the kingdoms **under** all the heavens were given to the people who are the holy ones” (Dan. 7:27)*, so that, according to John's Revelation, *“The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our lord and of his Christ...” (Rev. 11:15)*. This all fits with the fact that the “stone” i.e., the kingdom expands throughout the earth.

The Kingdom Is to Be an Earthly Paradise Connected with Israel

The Genesis creation account tells us that, *“God planted a **garden** (paradeison in the Greek LXX) in Eden” (Gen. 2:8, 9; 2:10, 15; and 3:2)*. This Greek rendering gives us the definition and default meaning of the word ‘paradise’ for the rest of the Scriptures as an earthly park of great

beauty. Therefore, living in such a future **earthly paradise** is what Jesus offered the dying criminal, and what Paul had a vision of, as well as being the promise in the Book of Revelation

'PARADISE' IN THE CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES

Of these three occurrences of 'paradise' the first concerns the seditious man hung next to Jesus pleading with him to, "...remember me when you get into your **kingdom!** And he [Jesus] said to him: "Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in **paradise**" (Luke 23:42-43). Here, Jesus equates the Kingdom with paradise, and paradise was thought of by first century Jews only as related to the earth. So, this criminal is to be resurrected into paradise on earth and so showing that the Kingdom will be on earth.

The second occurrence in the Christian Greek Scriptures of the word "paradise" was when Paul described how, "...a man [probably Paul himself]...was caught away as such to the third heaven ... he was caught away into **paradise**" (2 Cor. 12:2, 4). But where is the location of this "third heaven/ paradise" in Paul's mind? It seems most likely to be the third "heavens and earth" that Peter later described in 2 Peter 3:5, 7, 13 as "new heavens and a new earth" and was therefore Paul's vision of the coming paradise on earth which is, as already noted, the default meaning given in Genesis

The third occurrence in the Christian Greek Scriptures of the word "paradise" is where Jesus makes the promise to faithful Christians that: "To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in **the paradise** of God" (Rev. 2:7). Therefore, because Jesus equated the Kingdom with paradise (Luke 23:42-43), and paradise is on earth according to Genesis 1 and 2 clearly the Kingdom must also be on earth. Indeed, the Scriptures consistently use the term paradise in a setting that is of the earth and there is no thought of it as being relocated to heaven as the following verses show:

- "the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them...they will inherit the **earth**" (Matt. 5:3, 5).
- "Let your **kingdom** come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also **on earth**" (Matt. 6:10).
- "...they will reign upon **earth**" (Rev. 5:10 KIT, but not 'over' as in the NWT).

A further aspect of this is that Israel is involved when the disciples ask: "Lord, are you restoring the **kingdom** to **Israel** at this time?" (Acts 1:6). However, Jesus did not correct the disciples as regards the location of the Kingdom in Israel on earth, but only showed that the time of its

appearance would not be known.

THE PHYSICAL CONDITIONS IN THE KINGDOM

Jesus taught that, “...*many from east and west will come and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob **in the kingdom of the heavens***” (Matt. 8:11). So, here, Jesus showed the physical conditions of “the kingdom of the heavens” as being on earth and clearly Abraham will be resurrected onto the earth. Further physical aspects of the kingdom are shown by Jesus in teaching that he, “*will not **drink again from the product of the vine until the kingdom of God arrives***” (Luke 22:18) and “...*just as my Father has made a covenant with me for a kingdom, that you may **eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel***” (Luke 22:29, 30). All of this is very physical and never applies to activities in heaven. So, after discussing the *Parable of the Soils* in relation to the Kingdom... Professor W.C. Allen stated that: “There is nothing here nor elsewhere in this Gospel to suggest that **the scene of the Kingdom is other than the present world renewed**, restored and purified.” So here he summarizes the New Testament teaching and shows that the Bible writers did not expect believers to ‘go to heaven,’ but that Jesus will return to the earth to rule with Christians on a renewed earth as the rest of the Scriptures show.

So why is it called “the kingdom of the heavens”? It is simply because it originates from “heaven,” namely with God Himself and parallels the term “Kingdom of God.”

§

15

“Kingdom of the Heavens” Means “Kingdom of God”

Christians sometimes use the term “kingdom of the heavens” as if it meant a kingdom in heaven. However, of the gospel writers, this term is used only by Matthew who wrote for a Jewish audience. The other gospel writers used the term “kingdom of God.” Nevertheless, Matthew did use the two terms together in Matthew 19:23, 24 and by a comparison of parallel accounts it is evident that the two terms are exact

equivalents i.e., they refer to the one kingdom. In particular, one can see this fact if one compares the parallel account of Matthew 19:14 with Mark 10:14; and the account of Matthew 8:11 with Luke 13:28-29. In fact, Matthew's use of the word 'heaven' in "kingdom of the heavens" is what is called a 'periphrastic', where the common Jewish practice was to use the word "heaven" as an indirect reference to God Himself, rather than saying the word "God." In contrast the other gospel writers wrote for predominantly Gentile readers and so were not restricted to such a periphrastic. So, the parallel accounts concerning the young children in Matthew and Mark show that the two phrases are synonymous:

*"But Jesus said: "Let the young children alone, and do not try to stop them from coming to me, for **the kingdom of the heavens** belongs to such ones" (Matt. 19:14).*

*"Jesus...said to them: "Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them, for **the kingdom of God** belongs to such ones" (Mark 10:14).*

These parallel accounts show that "the kingdom of the heavens" means "the kingdom of God." However, for some unknown reason, Matthew did use the two terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" together in Matthew 19:23, 24 and by a further comparison of the parallel accounts it is evident that the two terms are synonymous i.e., they refer to the one kingdom as Jesus said:

*"Truly, I say to you that it will be difficult for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of the heavens**. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God**" (Matt. 19:23-24).*

Furthermore, a comparison of the account of Matthew 8:11 with Luke 13:28-29 shows the same synonymous meaning for "the kingdom of the heavens" and "the kingdom of God."

"KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS" MEANS THAT IT ORIGINATES WITH GOD

In the phrases "the kingdom of the heavens/the kingdom of God" the preposition 'of' is the possessive and means that it belongs to God because He is its originator and it is superior to all other kingdoms. It does not say "the kingdom **in** the heavens." Therefore, it does not refer to a location in heaven as can further be seen from all of its descriptions in the Bible as being a kingdom on earth.

NOTE: Biblically "kingdom of God" i.e., "my kingship" refers to God's throne on earth (2 Sam. 7:12-19; 1 Chron. 17:12-14): "And Solomon sat on Jehovah's

throne as king..." (1 Chron. 29:23).

The Usages of the Term "Heaven" As a Reference to God

Jesus often used the term "heaven" as a replacement term as meaning "God" as for example, "*The baptism by John, from what source was it? **From heaven** [God] or from men?*" (Matt. 21:25) and "*A man cannot receive a single thing unless it has been given him **from heaven***" i.e., from God" (John 3:27).

'HEAVEN' WAS NOT PROMISED TO THE DISCIPLES

Additionally, at no time did Jesus offer his followers a life in heaven, but he came to "*to confirm **the promises made to the fathers...***" (Rom. 15:8) and those promises concerned only the earth which is humankind's natural home even as Paul said: "*So we are declaring to you the good news about the **promise made to the forefathers***" (Acts 13:32) i.e., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This promise concerned only things on earth, and never in heaven.

Even Jesus was resurrected on earth and it was only after the 40 days that he ascended to heaven and even then, only to be there for a certain length of time when, "*...he [Jehovah] may **send** the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. Heaven must hold this one **until the times** of restoration of all the things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old*" (Acts 3:20, 21). In fact, the concept of going to heaven originated entirely within pagan Greek philosophy to fit in with the idea of an immortal soul—a teaching which the churches of Christendom further developed. So "*the Kingdom of the Heavens*" means that it is a kingdom belonging to or originating with God and is superior to all other kingdoms. It does not mean that it is located in heaven as can be seen from all of its descriptions in the Bible as being a kingdom on earth.

What the Prophets of Old Foretold about Kingdom Rulership

The future King of the Kingdom will rule on earth according to the prophets who were referring to the Messiah, saying, "*He will have subjects from sea to sea...to the ends of **the earth***" (Ps. 72:8) and "*a king will reign and show insight and uphold justice and righteousness **in the land***" (Jer. 23:5). The strong indication given in these two verses is that Jesus must also be "*in the land*" to act as ruler. Furthermore, they state that it will be on David's throne, which was in Jerusalem, as the

place from where he will rule, noting that, “The **rulership** will rest on his shoulder...**On the throne of David** and on his kingdom” (Isa. 9:6, 7). This is reiterated in the Christian Greek Scriptures by Luke showing that: “God will give him [Jesus] the throne of David his father” (Luke 1:32-35). Indeed, “God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne” (Acts 2:30). So just how can an intangible spirit qualify to be the seed of David? Certainly, David’s throne is an earthly one and will be re-established: “When the Son of Man **comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, then he **will sit down on his glorious throne**. And all the nations will be gathered before him” (Matt. 25:31). Evidently, Jesus is here prophesied to reign on David’s throne, which no Jew of the time would have imagined to be anywhere but on earth (Luke 1:32, 33). This totally excludes any thought of a Kingdom as being located in heaven as further emphasized in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 1986 edition stating that:

The coming of God’s kingdom is an eschatological event when the kingly reign of God...will be manifested on earth *de facto*, so that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. This means two things: negatively, the judgement of the wicked and the **subjugation of every hostile power**: positively, the salvation of the righteous and the redemption of a fallen creation from the burden of evil.

Again, one must ask: How can an intangible spirit qualify to be the seed of David? David’s throne was clearly on earth and so Messiah Jesus’ throne or rulership is clearly foretold to be one that is on earth. In fact, the disciples’ question concerning where this rulership will be was not disputed by Jesus when they asked, “Are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this the time?” (Acts 1:6). Rather, Jesus’ earlier statement was that, “In the re-creation, when the Son of man sits down on his glorious throne, you...will...sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28) and then in the Revelation John states that he, “saw and look the Lamb standing upon **the Mount Zion**” (Rev. 14:1). Certainly, this visionary scene is on earth because the voice that John hears is **from** heaven. Therefore, the King and the Kingdom will be on earth (Isaiah 2:1-4) and its centre will be in Jerusalem.

§

16

The Holy Ones Do Not Rule from Heaven

The Greek phrase *epi tes ges* occurs 19 times in Revelation and always has the meaning of “on the earth” rather than ‘over the earth’ as in the NWT rendering of Revelation 5:10. Indeed, the Watchtower’s own *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (no longer published) renders this verse as, “...and they are reigning **upon** the earth.” So various Bible passages show the connection between the Kingdom and the earth such as:

- “...*the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them ... The mild-tempered...will **inherit** the earth*” (*Matt. 5:3, 5*).
- “...*the kingdom...of the kingdoms **under** the whole heaven were given to the holy ones*” (*Dan. 7:27*).
- “...*they marched over the breadth of the earth and encircled the camp of the holy ones and **the beloved city** (centre of the Kingdom)*” (*Rev. 20:9*).

The “holy ones” here are not different from those mentioned in the rest of the Scriptures. The phrase simply means ‘God’s people.’ Clearly, all holy ones will be on earth as the above scriptures show and so they inherit “the earth.” They are also described as inheriting the Kingdom because of the invitation to: “Come...**inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the founding of the world” (*Matt. 25:34*). If one inherits a property, it is generally normal to live in it. In this case the inheritors of the earth do not lease or rent it to earth’s inhabitants but benefit by living on it.

The Physical Presence of Those in the Kingdom

The Watchtower Society teaches that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do not go to heaven, but will live on a future paradise earth. However, please note that the Scriptures show that this will be in “the Kingdom of the heavens.” Indeed, as Jesus said, “...*many from east and west will come and recline **at the table** with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob **in the kingdom of the heavens***” (*Matt. 8:11*). On this basis shouldn’t they be classified as being of the Watchtower’s version of the 144,000 and have heaven as their destination (according to Watchtower teaching)? But as we noted earlier, **the kingdom of the heavens**” is the same kingdom as the “Kingdom of God” which is shown to be a kingdom on earth according

to all the promises given in the Hebrew Scriptures. Furthermore, Jesus gave an entirely physical earthly picture of the Kingdom saying, “*I will by no means **drink** again any of this product of the vine **until** that day **when I drink it** new with you in the kingdom of my Father*” (Matt. 26:29) and, “*I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the 12 tribes of Israel*” (Luke 22:29, 30. Also see Matthew 19:28). Additionally, it is to no purpose for the Organization to say that these phrases simply and only show the joy of these 144,000 as being reunited with Christ. These passages show the absolute physicality of living in the Kingdom. Also, there is nothing said anywhere in the Scriptures about an ‘earthly domain of the Kingdom’ as separate from a Kingdom in heaven. The Kingdom will be entirely on the earth.

More About Ruling “On the Earth” – Revelation 5:10

In spite of the fact that ten lesser known translations by individuals render the Greek word *epi* as “over” (including Weymouth and Goodspeed), all examples of the Greek phrase *epi tes ges* in Revelation 5:10 are translated as ‘upon’ or ‘on’ in the NWT in Revelation except in 5:10. These examples are in: 5:3, 5:13, 6:10, 7:1, 10:5b, 10:8, 11:10a, 11:10b, 13:8, 13:14, 14:6, 14:16, 16:18, 18:24, along with Hebrews 11:13, “*in the land* (Lit. “*on the earth*”).” There are also many similar phrases such as:

- Rev. 3:10: “*upon the entire inhabited earth*”
- " 10:5a: “*on the sea.*”
- " 14:14: “*on the cloud.*”

The Greek word *epi* is also many times translated as *over* but not properly for the phrase *epi tes ges* or similarly structured phrases. Indeed, the NWT reference Bible footnote for 5:10 says: “*epi* with the genitive, as in 9:11; 11: 6.” This is given by the NWT notes as proof of the translation “over” in 5:10. However, both of these verses are with reference to authority/power and are the same in all translations. Hence, for the correct choice of translation in 5:10 one has to decide whether the immediate and broader contexts are substantial enough to translate as “over” while flying in the face of almost all other committees of translators and the overwhelming evidence as to the way the phrase is translated in the rest of Revelation in the NWT. For instance, in Revelation 11:6 although the two witnesses “*have authority over the waters*” they are still on the earth. In fact, “the holy ones” are later

described as being attacked by the **misled nations** when the 1,000 years have ended. This is clearly on earth because John reports that, “*they advanced over the whole **earth** and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city*” (Rev. 20:9). Only an unwarranted interpretation, to the effect that these are a **different class of holy ones** at the end of the Millennium than before it, can make 20:9 lose its force to show that 5:10 refers to these ones reigning “on” earth during the Millennium.

Furthermore, one cannot interpret the Greek word *ges* figuratively as *the earthly society of humans*. The Greek word for this is *kosmos*. So, because *ges* refers to the earth as the planet or the land then these ones will rule “on the earth” and not from heaven. Of course, all of this simply means that they will reign over the mortal population of earth as any King or Queen can rule over their populations whilst sitting on a throne on earth. These holy ones are certainly to reign with Messiah who is himself prophesied in many Scriptures to reign on earth e.g.: “*a king will certainly **reign** and show insight and uphold justice and righteousness **in the land**. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will reside in security*” (Jer. 23:5-6). So, Jesus is here prophesied to reign on David’s throne, which no Jew of the time would have imagined to be anywhere but on earth (Luke 1:32, 33).

§

17

God’s Kingdom Is Yet Future

Although Paul, in Colossians 1:13, says that Christians have been “*transferred...into the Kingdom of [God’s] beloved Son*” and so are experiencing the Kingdom now, the vast majority of texts show that the full experiencing of the Kingdom is yet future. However, Jesus made it plain that the Kingdom in its full expression will arrive when he himself returns. So, he said: “*in **the re-creation**, when the Son of man sits down on his glorious throne...*” (Matt. 19:28). The term “the re-creation” is expressed as “the new world” or “the regeneration” in other versions. So, in his great prophecy concerning the time of the end Jesus said: “*When you see these things [The disgusting thing that causes desolation and the great tribulation] happening, know that the Kingdom*

of God is near” (Luke 21:31). Now, because “the disgusting thing that causes desolation” (which is provably not identified with the United Nations organization - please see Chapter 50) and the great tribulation have not yet occurred it is evident that the Kingdom is still not here. So, Christians must wait for the time when: “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he will rule as king forever*” (Rev. 11:15). This will be at the future second coming of Christ.

Indeed, Christians must be patient while anticipating Jesus’ return to establish the Kingdom with its centre in literal Jerusalem. This was why Jesus gave the parable of the nobleman who goes: “*to a distant land to secure kingly power for himself and to return*” (Luke 19:12). Verse 23 then indicates that there would be a long time-lag. Here the master says to the wicked slave, “*why did you not put my money in the bank? Then on my coming, I would have collected it with interest.*” In fact, at his last Passover Jesus went on to say: “*I will not drink again from the product of the vine until the kingdom of God comes*” (Luke 22:18), and so showing that the kingdom has not yet arrived because we do not yet see Jesus as drinking “from the product of the vine.”

In What Sense Is the Kingdom Present Now?

So, what is meant by this statement in Colossians 1:13? It is simply that Christians since Jesus’ time live their lives in harmony with the precepts of the coming Kingdom and in preparation for it and to know its power with God working through Jesus as he said to the Pharisees, “*But if it is by means of God’s spirit that I expel the demons, the kingdom of God has really overtaken you*” (Matt. 12:28). This gives Christians a taste of the power of the coming kingdom because Jesus defeated Satan on numerous occasions including his expelling of demons. This fact is emphasized by the writer to the Hebrews who spoke of, “*those who have once been enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift...and have tasted the...powers of the age to come*” (Heb. 6:4, 5 ESV). Also, Paul explained that, “*the Kingdom of God...means righteousness and peace and joy with holy spirit*” (Rom. 14:17). So, only in these particular ways is the kingdom seen as present now.

Conditions in the Full Experience of the Kingdom

The conditions in the Kingdom can be summed up in the following Scriptures:

“New Heavens and New Earth...I create Jerusalem for rejoicing

(the capital of the kingdom will be on earth)...no longer the voice of weeping...no longer an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days ***(natural death of mortals at very old ages still occurs in this quasi paradise)***; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought of as accursed. They will build houses, plant vineyards...for as the lifetime of a tree so will be the days of my people”

(Isa. 65:17-25 NASB).

Also, the following peaceful relationships will exist in God’s Kingdom:

- “wolf/lamb; leopard/young goat; calf/young lion; cow/bear; a little boy will lead them’ *(Isa. 11:6-9).*
- “...the wicked one will be no more” *(Ps. 37:10).*
- “...the righteous will sprout, and abundance of peace” *(Ps. 72:7).*
- “...plenty of grain” *(Ps. 72:16)*
- “...for all the peoples...a banquet of well-oiled dishes” *(Isa. 25:6).*
- “...everlasting life to those who are seeking...incorruptibleness” *(Rom.2:7).*

Conclusion

Because the Watchtower Organization teaches that an invisible kingdom was set up by God in heaven in 1914, they are not expecting Jesus to really come back, even though he said “*I will come again*” *(John 14:3)*. Furthermore, they are preaching about a kingdom that has made no progress in bringing the nations of the world to be weapons free *(Isa. 2:4)*. Clearly, Jesus must return as promised and set up a real tangible kingdom that will actually bring paradise. Furthermore, the Kingdom cannot be paradise *in heaven* because it is shown biblically to be paradise *on earth* and one that is promised to all God’s faithful people.

§

18

Jesus Will Rule from Literal Jerusalem

Jesus’ Rulership Begins in Literal Israel

When Jesus literally and physically returns he will begin his rule, not in a “heavenly Zion” as if it were located in heaven, but, “*From you [Bethlehem] will come out for me the one to be ruler in Israel*” (Mic. 5:2-4) and whom the Apostle John sees in vision as, “*the Lamb **standing upon the Mount Zion***” (Rev. 14:1). This scene is on earth on a literal Mount Zion because the voice that John hears comes from heaven. In fact, the parables given by Jesus of the nobleman in Luke 19:11-27 and of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 both show that Jesus will return to where he left, namely the earth as shown in Zechariah’s prophecy that, “*in that day his feet will **stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem...***” (Zech. 14:4). So, as God’s representative it will be the literal physical feet of Jesus which stand on the Mount of Olives.

Physical Jerusalem Will Be the Capital City of the Kingdom

Jesus spoke of “*Jerusalem...the city of the great King*” (Matt. 5:35). Indeed, Revelation 21:10ff describes the “*new Jerusalem*” in all its glory further indicating that the term “heavenly” in Hebrews 12:22 is descriptive of Jerusalem rather than a statement about its location.

The fact is that we are to connect the arrival of the Kingdom with the future return of Jesus to literal Jerusalem. This is understood because, “*[Jesus] told them another illustration, because he was near Jerusalem, and because **they thought that the kingdom of God was to appear instantly**. So he said: “A man of noble birth traveled to a distant land to secure kingly power for himself and to return. Calling ten of his slaves, he gave them ten minas...When he eventually **got back**, having secured the kingly power...” (Luke 19:11-12, 15). Now Jerusalem was situated on Mount Zion and many Bible passages foretold how Jerusalem on Zion would be the central city of the future. Indeed:*

*“Jehovah will extend the scepter of your power **out of Zion**, saying, ‘Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.’” (Ps. 110:2).*

“I will restore your judges for you as at the first...After this you will be called City of Righteousness, Faithful Town” (Isa. 1:26).

*“For law will go out of Zion, and the word of Jehovah out of **Jerusalem**” (Isa. 2:3c/Mic. 4:2).*

*“For Jehovah of armies has become king in Mount **Zion** and in **Jerusalem**” (Isa. 24:23b).*

*“At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all of the nations be brought together to the name of Jehovah at **Jerusalem**” (Jer. 3:17).*

The permanence of Jerusalem is shown in the prophecy that, *“Jerusalem will reside in security” (Jer. 33:16)*. If it were in heaven there would be no need to mention residing in “security.” Indeed, the fact of Jerusalem’s centrality to the Kingdom is also recognized by the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures; for instance, *“Abraham...was awaiting the **city** having real foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Heb. 11:8-10)*. Also, *“they are reaching out for a better place, that is, one belonging to heaven” (“a **heavenly one**” KIT and UBS Interlinears) (Heb. 11:16)*. This means a city described in glorious terms as in Revelation 21:12ff.

All of these Scriptures clearly show that the beloved future capital city of **Jerusalem** will be on **earth**. Even after the Millennium the “city” is shown to be on earth when enemies, *“advanced over the breadth of the **earth** and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city” (Rev. 20:9)*. In confirmation of these scriptural statements second century Christian Justin Martyr in his Dialog with Trypho said:

But I and others who are right-minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a **thousand years in Jerusalem**, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah and others declare ... And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him that *those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem*; and that thereafter the general and eternal resurrection of all men would take place.

“Heavenly Jerusalem” Is Not Located in Heaven

But doesn’t the term “heavenly Jerusalem” noted in Hebrews 12:22 mean a kingdom in heaven? Indeed, it does not! If it did then it would contradict all of the prophecies just mentioned. So, regarding this phrase, the adjective “heavenly” is **qualitative** and is not referring to a location. In fact, it is a present condition of Christians just as in Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6. Hence the “heavenly Jerusalem” is the glorious city of the **future** which Christians **have now approached because Hebrews says:**

“But you have approached a Mount Zion and a city of the living

God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of **angels** in general assembly and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and **God** the Judge of all, and the spiritual lives of righteous ones who have been made perfect, and **Jesus** the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb. 12:22-24).

- Here the verb phrase “**have approached**” shows this to be a present condition of Christians just as in Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 where **Christians on earth** are seen as **being in heaven representatively** through their union with Christ.
- The adjective “heavenly” is **qualitative** and has reference to things which are glorious because they originate with God. Hence “the heavenly Jerusalem,” means the glorious Jerusalem of the future situated on a literal Mount Zion.

So, Christians on earth have figuratively approached this glorious city of the future now—in the present. It is the city they desire as also shown by the writer to the Hebrews who says:

*“But now they are reaching out for a better place, that is, one belonging to heaven (“a **heavenly one**” KIT and UBS Interlinears). Therefore, God is not ashamed of them, to be called on as their God, for he has **prepared a city** for them” (Heb. 11:16).*

This “better place”—“a heavenly one” was called “the land of the promise” in Hebrews 11:9 and so speaks of the land promised to Abraham, but restored. So, the city prepared for them in God’s mind is a literal Jerusalem yet future, “*for we do not have here a **city** that remains, but we are earnestly seeking **the one to come***” (Heb. 13:14).

So, these Bible statements all refer to the future Jerusalem on earth, and Galatians 4:25 contrasts the “Jerusalem today” with the future Jerusalem as “the Jerusalem above” because it originates with God, saying, “*The Jerusalem above is free, and she is **our mother***” (Gal. 4:26) as quoted from the LXX Psalm 86:5 where: “*A man shall say, **Sion is my mother**; and such a man was born in her.*” Also, “*and of Zion it shall be said: ‘This one and that one were born in her.’*” (Hebrew Psalm 87:5). Certainly, men are not born in heaven. But this is a Messianic text and focuses on the future capital city of the Kingdom. It is “above” because it is vastly superior and originates with God. Yet figuratively the Apostle John, “*...saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, **coming down** out of heaven **from** God and prepared as a bride*” (Rev. 21:2). However, there is no scriptural reason to understand this city as referring to anything other than the “heavenly Jerusalem”

which originates from “above.” So, Richard N. Longenecker in the *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 41: Galatians* states:

...The idea of a “heavenly Jerusalem” (“the Jerusalem that is above”) has a rich Jewish background...the realization of God’s reign in its totality. As such, it is an eschatological concept that describes Jerusalem as it will be at the end of time, often in contrast to what the city is at present...This concept of a “*heavenly*” or “*new*” Jerusalem also epitomized the hopes of Jewish Christians, as in Heb 11:10, 14–16; 12:22; 13:14; and Rev 3:12; 21:2, where the full realization of God’s kingdom and Christ’s reign is set out in terms of a “heavenly” or “new” Jerusalem that was looked forward to by the patriarchs and is now experienced by Christians in inaugurated fashion. Since, therefore, “the Jerusalem that is above” is an eschatological term expressing a reality that will exist in the future, Paul’s use of it here for the experience of the Galatian believers implies that, as Paul understood matters, the Galatian believers had come into the eschatological situation of already participating in that future reality, in that the promise made to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ (cf. 3:16; 5:1).

§

PART FOUR

What Is the Destiny of True Christians?

19

Christ Never Promised Heaven as His Disciples’ Destiny

Heaven as Man's Destination Originated with Pagans

The theory of going to heaven at death resulted from the development of pagan Greek philosophy. Because all matter was viewed as evil in such philosophy it meant that one must escape it. According to this theory when the body dies the so-called immortal soul separates and goes off to heaven. However, the Bible presents a holistic view of man; so that body, soul and spirit are inseparable at death. (Please see my book *Delusions and Truths Concerning the Future Life*). The Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215) and Origen (c.185-254) seem to be the first who studied the theoretical roots of this pagan Greek Stoic asceticism which renounced earthly things. By the third century, Christian asceticism was entrenched and led to the idea that the everlasting home of the believer was heaven, a spiritual place devoid of earthly influences.

Heaven Is Not the Destination for Humans According to the Scriptures

A search of an exhaustive concordance reveals that the word “heaven” is never shown to be the destination of Christians. The texts of John 14:2; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:21-23; 3:14 and Hebrews 6:19-20 are only assumed by tradition to refer to going to heaven. In fact, the word “heaven” is not mentioned in these texts. Furthermore, it has been assumed that because Jesus offered his disciples “the kingdom of heaven” he was offering heaven as a destination. Yet, as shown earlier, the ‘kingdom of heaven’, that is ‘the kingdom of God’, was linked with things that to a Jew, which most Christians were for many decades, would be on earth—paradise, Israel and Jerusalem. This is because God never intended for humans to live in heaven, just as he stated: “*As for the heavens, they belong to Jehovah. But **the earth** he has given to men*” (Ps.115:16) and the following texts also make it very plain that the earth is to be the home of **all of faithful mankind**: Proverbs 2:21, 22; Psalm 37:9-11; Matthew 5:5; 6:9, 10; and Romans 4:13.

NOTE: There is no statement in the Scriptures indicating that God turns men into spirit creatures so that they can live in heaven.

God's Original Promises to Faithful Ones

Having noted at the beginning of this book that there is **only one body** of Christians rather than two bodies or classes and that there is only

one hope and destiny for Christians (Eph. 4:4) most will imagine that this one destiny will be that of going to heaven. This is what the churches of Christendom have taught for centuries. But is this really what the Bible teaches? As shown earlier the promised reward for Christians is entry into God's Kingdom which is to be on earth. This is the same promise that was made to the patriarchs i.e., the Jewish ancestors, as Paul said:

*"...Christ became a minister of those who are circumcised in behalf of God's truthfulness, so as to **verify the promises He made to their forefathers...**" (Rom. 15:8).*

So here we must ask: Did any of these promises ever include a promise of going to heaven? Exactly what were these promises to the forefathers and which Jesus came to verify? Indeed, when we reference **God's promises** in Genesis (12:2, 3; 13:14-17; 17:7, 8; 26:2-4; 28:13-14) as given to the forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob we find that the promises are about inheriting the land, producing progeny and being a blessing to all nations:

*"He [God] remembers his covenant forever, The promise he made to a thousand generations, The covenant he made with Abraham, and the oath he swore to Isaac, which he established as a decree to Jacob, And as a lasting covenant to Israel, Saying, I will give you **the land of Canaan as your allotted inheritance**"*

(Ps. 105:8-11).

*"I will continue with you [Jacob]...and to your offspring I will give **all these lands...I will multiply your offspring...and by means of your offspring, all nations of the earth will obtain a blessing for themselves**" (Gen. 26:3-4).*

*"...that Abraham or his offspring had **the promise** that he should be **heir of a world**" (Rom. 4:13).*

So, these are exactly the same promises that Jesus verified or confirmed and Paul and others preached as the good news. But you may say didn't Abraham and his offspring already receive those promises given in Genesis when Abraham dwelt in Canaan and later when Israel entered "the land of milk and honey." Apparently not!

Abraham and Others Have Yet to Receive the Promises

At the time the faithful disciple Stephen was about to be stoned for

his Christian beliefs and what he proclaimed as the truth, he recounted much of biblical history. In doing so he made this interesting statement about Abraham that: “[God] caused him to resettle in this land in which you now dwell. And yet he did not give him any inheritance in it, no, **not even enough to put his foot on;** but he promised to give it to him as a possession, and after him to his offspring, though as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:4b-5). Later, after giving a definition of faith, the writer to the Hebrews gave a synopsis in chapter 11 of those of the past who demonstrated such faith in God’s promises, but interestingly he shows that the fulfilment of those promises for them was still future when he said: “In faith all these died [including Abraham – verses 8, 9], although they **did not receive the fulfilment of the promises,** but they saw them from a distance” (Heb. 11:13). Indeed, they, “**did not obtain the fulfilment of the promise,** because God had foreseen something better for us, so that they might not be made perfect apart from us” (Heb. 11:39-40). So, these are the very same promises verified by Jesus and preached by the first Christians (Rom. 15:8; Acts 13:2) and therefore must be still future for Christians and must concern the inheriting of the land, producing progeny and being a blessing to all nations.

Although not named, Daniel is mentioned in Hebrews 11:33 as one “who stopped the mouths of lions.” So, he, too, “did not receive the promise” but will receive it at the same time as other Christians receive it just as the angel told him: “But as for you, go on to the end. You will rest, but you will stand up for your **lot** at the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13). The “lot” for Daniel will be: “of land assigned by lot...a share in the Messianic consummation” according to the *Hebrew-English Lexicon by Brown, Driver and Briggs*, p.174. So, these ancient patriarchs will receive the fulfilment of **the same promises** at the same time as Christians who also are “**really Abraham’s offspring**” Furthermore, this blessing of Abraham will also be conferred upon believing Gentiles:

*“This was so that the blessing of Abraham would come to the nations by means of Jesus Christ ... Now **the promises** were spoken to Abraham and to his offspring ...in the sense of one who is Christ ... Moreover, if you belong to Christ, **you are really Abraham’s offspring,** heirs with reference to a promise”*

(Gal. 3:14, 16, 29).

The Means to Fulfil the Promises

To fulfil those promises of land, progeny and blessing of the nations, Jehovah promised a **Messianic prophet** (Deut. 18: 15-19) ruling as **king**

over a **substantial and visible kingdom** (2 Sam. 7: 12-19, 2 Chron. 17:13-14) to bless the nations and to turn the earth into paradise. All of this describes fully what was being offered to Christians and is what Christ verified. At no time did Jesus offer any other destiny such as heaven. So, Bible Scholar William Strawson notes in his book *Jesus and the Future life* (p. 38): “The gospel records do not speak of ‘going to heaven’...there is no suggestion that Jesus is offering to his disciples the certainty of ‘heaven’ after this life.” Furthermore, theologian J.A.T. Robinson states in his book *In the End God*, (p. 104) that: “Heaven in the Bible is nowhere the destination of the dying.”

Only Christ Went to Heaven, But Only Temporarily

If heaven is not ever to be the place for humans, then we must ask, why did Christ go to heaven? Of course, he could not have gone to heaven as a mortal human! However, Romans 1:4 and 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 53 show that Jesus, now as an immortal human, had a body which was incorruptible and “in power” and so could withstand being transported to heaven and being in God’s presence. Nevertheless, this was for certain purposes and was not to be a permanent situation as the apostle Peter stated that: “...*he [God] may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. Heaven, indeed, must hold this one within itself **until the times** of restoration of all the things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old*” (Acts 3:20, 21). So, Jesus is to be in heaven only “until the times of restoration of all the things.” Furthermore, the purpose of Jesus’ temporary residence in heaven is so that he may act as our advocate and high priest while awaiting the time when his Father makes his enemies “a footstool for his feet” (Ps.110:1).

The Apostle Paul Did Not Expect to Go to Heaven

As mentioned earlier, the apostle Paul expected and promoted the hope of receiving the promises that were made to the Hebrew forefathers. So just as Jesus came, “*to verify the promises made **to their forefathers...***” by Jehovah so too, Paul stated that: “*we are declaring to you the good news about **the promise made to the forefathers...***” (Acts 13:32). In fact, when Paul was brought before King Agrippa, he said to him: “*But now for the hope of **the promise** that was made by God **to our forefathers**, I stand on trial; this is the same promise **our 12 tribes** are hoping to see fulfilled...Concerning **this hope** I am accused by Jews*” (Acts 26:6-7). Later, to the Jewish

religious leaders in Rome he said that it was: “...because of **the hope of Israel** that I have this chain around me” (Acts 28:20). This is “**the one hope**” (Eph. 4:4) **which Christians have**, and as previously noted God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David were about inheriting the land, producing progeny and being a blessing to all nations by means of the Messianic king ruling this kingdom on earth—this was “the hope of Israel” for which Paul was imprisoned—not because of any concept of going to heaven. In fact, no later forefather changed the meaning of that promise. As with Jesus, at no time does Paul hint at any other destiny such as heaven even though his desire to be with Christ is often misconstrued as a desire to be in heaven. Rather, Paul seeks for the promised inheritance as he wrote saying: “You know that it is from Jehovah you will receive the inheritance as a reward” (Col. 3:24). Similarly, in the letter to the Hebrews the writer counsels them to: “be imitators of those who through faith and patience **inherit the promises**” (Heb. 6:12).

So just as Abraham and all the faithful people of ancient times have not yet inherited these promises, so, too, Christians, as “Abraham’s offspring” have, up to now not yet inherited such promises of land i.e., the world (Rom 4:13). As the writer to the Hebrews said: “For it is not to angels that he has subjected the **inhabited earth to come**, about we are speaking...” (Heb. 2:5). Indeed, if heaven were the destination for inheriting the promises for the readers of the letter to the Hebrews one wonders why the subject here is “the inhabited earth to come” rather than going to heaven.

Later we will examine several Bible passages which are often misapplied to the going to heaven concept for Christians.

§

20

Biblical Usage of the Words “Heaven” and “Heavenly”

“In or from Heaven” Primarily Means
“With or from God”

Apart from the normal usage of the word heaven to refer to God’s location or to the earth’s atmosphere the word “heaven” is used as an indirect reference to God Himself. This is because “heaven” itself is called God’s throne. So, the term “heaven” is often used as a substitute for the term “God” as in the books of Daniel and Matthew. Especially by the first century was this substitute linked with the Jewish practices of not using the divine name and being rather cautious regarding even the use of the word “God.” This practice is called the use of **periphrastic**. The following are examples of the word “heaven” as being used as a reference to God:

- The prodigal son says: “*Father I have sinned against **heaven** [i.e., God] and against you*” (Luke 15:21).
- “*The baptism by John, from what source was it? **From heaven** [i.e., from God] or from men?*” (Matt. 21:25).
- “*A man cannot receive a single thing unless it has been given him **from heaven***” [i.e., from God] (John 3:27).

“Heavenly” Means “of Heavenly Origin or Nature” - the Transcendent Nature of Something

The Greek word *epouranios* translated “heavenly” means: “of heavenly origin or nature” according to *Thayer’s Greek/English Lexicon*. This means that it is used as an adjective to describe the *transcendent nature of things that originate with God*. The word is also used of God himself as “the heavenly Father” to describe His transcendent nature. Only in the phrase “heavenly places” is a location referred to and then “heavenly” simply describes those locations. However, Paul simply seeks to be in God’s kingdom when he states that: “...*the Lord will...save me for his **heavenly kingdom***” (2 Tim. 4:18). This is, of course “the kingdom of God” which originates with God i.e., comes from God and will be superior to all other kingdoms. Similarly, Hebrews speaks of Christians as: “*partners in a heavenly calling*” (Heb. 3:1 UBS).

NOTE: It is rendered “**a** heavenly calling” in all literal translations (not KJV or NKJV) because there is no word for “the” in the Greek text here – see KIT.

So, this is not a calling of a specially selected group of Christians to go to heaven as if there were a separate earthly calling. (Please see Chapters 1-3). This is a calling that comes from heaven—it is God’s calling of individuals to become Christians. It is not a calling of Christians to go to heaven, but is a gift which can be partially experienced now when one

receives God's spirit. Yet some turn away from their calling i.e., some of:

*"...those who were once enlightened, and who have tasted the **heavenly free gift**, and who have become partakers of holy spirit, and who have tasted the fine word of God and powers of the coming system of things" (Heb. 6:4, 5).*

Commentators variously state the superior free gift that originates from heaven [God] as: Christ the living bread, the whole plan of salvation in Christ, the new life in Christ, the remission of sins because of Christ's sacrifice or eternal life. Yet there is no thought of going to heaven as the free gift. Nevertheless, the Watchtower Organization correctly teaches that when Abraham and other men of faith, are resurrected they will be on earth as also noted in the Hebrew Scriptures; and yet **Hebrews 11:16** in the NWT says: "...now they are reaching out for a better place, that is, one **belonging to heaven**." However, the word-for-word in the KIT renders this as: "**of heavenly one**" which is why all other translations correctly render it similarly to the NASB: "*But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a **heavenly one**.*" So just as the 'heavenly place' that Abraham and others were reaching out for is on earth, so, too, is the "heavenly kingdom" which Abraham will be in because Jesus spoke of "**Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens**" (Matt. 8:11) and paralleled with "**Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God**" (Luke 13:28).

"HEAVENLY JERUSALEM"

So, when the writer to the Hebrews says: "*But you **have approached** a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and myriads of **angels** in general assembly, and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and God the Judge of all, and the spiritual lives of righteous ones who have been made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant...*" (Heb. 12:22-24), this is not about going to heaven because, in fact, this is a present condition of Christians just as in Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 where **Christians on earth** are seen as **being in heaven representatively** through their union with Christ. The adjective "heavenly" is **qualitative** and has reference to things which originate with God. Hence the "heavenly Jerusalem," to be situated on a literal Mount Zion, is the glorious city of the **future** which Christians have figuratively approached "now."

This "better place a heavenly one" noted in **Hebrews 11:16** was called "*the land of the promise*" in Hebrews 11:9 and so speaks of Canaan restored. So, the city prepared for them in God's mind is a Jerusalem yet future, "*for we do not have here a **city that remains**, but we are*

*earnestly seeking the one **to come***” (Heb. 13:14).

THIS SAME CITY COMES DOWN FROM GOD

There is no scriptural reason to understand this city as referring to anything other than the “heavenly Jerusalem” which originates from “above.” This is just as in John’s vision saying: “*I also saw **the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband***” (Rev. 21:2). Indeed, Professor Richard Longenecker explains that:

The idea of a “heavenly Jerusalem” (“the Jerusalem that is above”) has a rich Jewish background. The concept has to do with the culmination of God’s redemptive purposes in human history, the realization of God’s reign in its totality. As such, it is an eschatological concept that **describes Jerusalem as it will be** at the end of time, often in contrast to what the city is at present. References to a “heavenly Jerusalem” are to be found in embryonic form in the Jewish scriptures (e.g. Ps. 87:3; Isa. 54 the opening verse of which Paul quotes in 4:27; Ezek. 40-48).

Word Biblical Commentary on Galatians.

In these passages from Galatians, Hebrews, and Revelation there is really no thought of going beyond the clouds as some kind of spirit being from the time of one’s death. From these details we can understand that Jesus never promised any going to heaven for his followers and Paul never expected such a thing, but the promises for Christians concern the land—the earth.

§

21

**Uniting with Christ Occurs When
He Returns**

Christ Returns to Earth,
So Why Would Christians Leave It?

Numerous Scriptures show that Jesus ascended to the right hand of

Jehovah in heaven. As stated in Psalm 110:1 this was to be only “*until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.*” This temporary situation was to last only “**until the times of restoration**” (Acts 3:21) when Jesus would then leave heaven. So, Christians are: “...to wait for his Son **from the heavens**” (1 Thess. 1:10). This shows that Christ is to return to earth—coming in glory which must be visible as he said: “*For the Son of man is to come in the glory of his Father with his angels*” (Matt. 16:27). Then he will take his place as earth’s ruler: “...in **the recreation** (*Gk palingenesia*), when the Son of man sits down on his glorious throne...” (Matt. 19:28). The Greek word *palingenesia* is variously rendered: “new world” ESV, “regeneration” NASB, NKJV; “renewal of all things” NRSV, NIV; “new age” NAB; “when everything is made new again” NJB. Clearly this “renewal of all things” at “**the times of restoration**” occurs on earth because Jesus has come “from the heavens.” No holy prophets of old time ever spoke of renewal or **restoration** of the heavens where God dwells.

What about “Great Is Your Reward in Heaven” in Matthew 5:12?

Some have interpreted Jesus’ words concerning the Christian’s reward “in heaven” as meaning that “heaven” is the actual reward and they must go there to enjoy it. However, Jesus said that the reward is in heaven and not that the reward ‘is heaven.’ In fact, the reward is reserved in heaven as both the apostles Peter and Paul inform us concerning the Christian’s hope of: “...an inheritance...**reserved in** the heavens for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). This is “...because of the hope that is being **reserved for you in the heavens**” (Col. 1:5) which is what was promised to the forefathers just as Christ verified and Paul expected (Rom 15:8; Gal 3:16; Acts 13:32 and 26:6-7).

So, in his book *Jesus’ Resurrection and Christian Origins* Theologian N.T. Wright explains:

What then do the New Testament writers mean when they speak of an inheritance waiting for us in heaven? This has been much misunderstood...The point of such passages, as in 1 Peter 1.4, 2 Corinthians 5.1, Philippians 3.20, and so forth, is not that one must ‘go to heaven’, as in much-popular imagination, in order to enjoy the inheritance. There it is rather that ‘heaven’ is the place where God stores up his plans and purposes for the future. If I tell a friend that there is beer in the fridge, that doesn’t mean that he has to get into the fridge in order to enjoy the beer. When the early Christians speak

of a new body in heaven, or an inheritance in heaven, they mean what St John the Divine means in Revelation 21: the new identity which at present is kept safe in heaven will be brought from heaven to earth at the great moment of renewal. Yes: the great majority of Christian expressions of hope through the middle ages, the reformation, and the counter-reformation periods have been misleading. ‘Heaven’ is not the Christians ultimate destination.

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So clearly, if the reward of inheriting the kingdom is, “reserved for you in heaven” it is not necessary to live in heaven to receive it. This is because Jesus as God’s representative is “*coming quickly, and my reward is with me*” (Rev. 22:12) i.e., coming to earth.

Christians Get Their Reward When Jesus Returns to Earth

All relevant Bible texts show that all true Christians (not one special class of Christians) will be rewarded only when Jesus appears at his return to earth:

*“When the Christ, our life, is made manifest (**appears**), then you also will be made manifest with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).*

*“...set your hope upon the undeserved kindness that will be **brought to you** at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13).*

*“...when the Chief Shepherd has been made manifest (**appears**), you will receive the unfadable crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4).*

*“For the Son of man is **to come** in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he **will repay** each one according to his behavior” (Matt. 16:27).*

So, the reward, crown of glory, and repayment will be brought by Jesus from heaven when He returns to earth in his future glory. Therefore, there is no reason for any Christians to go to heaven.

The Promised Rewards for the Faithful Will Be on Earth

The Abrahamic Covenant promises **the land** as an inheritance for believers (Gen. 12:2, 3; 13:14-17; 17:7-8; 26:2-4; 28:13-14). This reward will be, “...that Abraham or his offspring had the promise that he

should be **heir of a world**" (Rom. 4:13 UBS). So, Christians, as "the [spiritual] offspring of Abraham" are party to the Abrahamic Covenant and so benefit from what was promised to Abraham. However, they must "...be imitators of those who through faith and patience **inherit the promises**" (Heb. 6:12). Jesus confirmed this when he stated in the Sermon on the Mount: "**Happy are the mild-tempered, since they will inherit the earth**" (Matt. 5:5 quoted from Psalm 37:1). Does this mean, in WT theology, that only a literal 144,000 are mild tempered? Psalm 37 is entirely about the inheritors living on the earth and so, too, for Matthew 5:5. It will, indeed, be on earth that God's will shall be done through the kingdom as in the Lord's Prayer: "**Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth**" (Matt. 6:10). So, by inheriting the Kingdom, those of the faith of Abraham i.e., Christians will be granted the land of Israel as well as the whole world. It is God's decision, not ours, concerning what the Christian destiny is. So, it is God who chooses to give the earth to Abraham and his spiritual offspring which is primarily Christ Jesus. There is never any mention in the Scriptures of a giving of heaven to Christians. Therefore, by inheriting the Kingdom, those of the faith of Abraham will be granted the land of Israel and then the entire world. There is no scriptural reason for them ever to go to heaven, although entering the kingdom does involve struggle as Paul said: "**We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations**" (Acts 14:22) which is not particularly true of those who simply die of old age. Indeed, this passage does not fit with the Watchtower's teaching that many anointed Christians will simply grow old and die without suffering significant tribulation and then go to heaven. Those Christians who are alive when Christ returns will have to go through the great tribulation, after which the first resurrection takes place.

The Kingdom and the Holy Ones Ruling in It, Will Not Be in Heaven

Jesus was not resurrected to heaven, but rather he was resurrected on earth. It was only after 40 days that he ascended to heaven. Even then it was only to be there for a certain length of time. In the book *Jesus' Resurrection and Christian Origins* Theologian N.T. Wright explains:

I have often heard it said, sometimes by people who should know better, that Jesus died and was 'resurrected to heaven', but that is precisely not what the early Christians said. Raised from the dead, yes; exalted to heaven, yes; but resurrection never did mean 'going

to heaven when you die’.

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So, as with Jesus, all faithful Christians will be resurrected on the earth so that they can inherit it just as Jesus promised that: “...*the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them ... They will inherit the earth*” (Matt. 5:3, 5) and proleptically “...*they are reigning upon the earth*” (Rev. 5:10 KIT). Indeed, in Revelation the Greek phrase *epi tes ges* is rendered 19 times as “**on** (not ‘over’) the earth.” Furthermore, in prophecy: “*a stone [kingdom - verse 44]...struck the image at its feet [therefore on earth] ... it [the stone] became a large mountain and filled the earth*” (Dan. 2:34-35).

The Joyful Reunion with Christ

When the Apostle Paul writes for Christians that: “*Our citizenship exists in the heavens, and we are eagerly waiting for a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (Phil. 3:20) he is not saying that the Christian must be in heaven to be a citizen. He is saying that this citizenship already exists currently for them here on earth. So, N.T. Wright reasons that:

The point of being a citizen of a mother city is not that when life gets tough, or when you retire, you can go back home to the mother city. The people to whom Paul was writing in Philippi were Roman citizens, but they had no intention of going back to Rome...If when the going got tough there, *the emperor would come from Rome* to deliver them from their enemies in Philippi...this is more integrated with a theology of a coming new heaven and new earth.....

The fact that this is what is meant in Philippians 3 is confirmed when Paul also wrote that Christians must, “...*wait for his Son from the heavens*” (1 Thess. 1:10).

Being “Caught Away” Does Not Mean Going to Heaven

Because of the “any moment” pre-tribulation rapture theory of the Dispensationalists with their destiny as being heaven, Christians can sometimes have a mistaken picture of what this being “caught away,” commonly called “the rapture,” will mean. The key text states:

“...*we **the living** who survive to the presence of the Lord will in*

*no way precede those who have fallen asleep in death; because the Lord himself will descend from heaven...and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first. Afterward we the living who are surviving will, together with them, be **caught away in clouds** to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:15-17).*

In fact, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation* renders this as: “We the living the (ones) being left around at the same time as them will be **snatched** (Gk *harpagmon*) in clouds into meeting of the Lord in the air.” This Greek verb *harpagmon* was translated in the early Latin bibles as *rapere* from which we get the English noun ‘rapture.’ Indeed, this being caught up (away) is **in the air** (Gk *aera*) that is: ... “**the atmosphere immediately above earth’s surface**” according to *Bauer’s Greek/ English Lexicon*. However, these verses mainly concern the resurrection, yet Paul adds the extra aspect by speaking of the being “caught away...in the air.” This gives no thought of going to heaven and the fact that “*we shall always be with the Lord*” is because Christians will accompany Jesus as he continues his descent to earth at his return. Indeed, Jesus speaks of his own return when he says in John 14:3, “*I am coming again.*”

SO, THE SEQUENCE AT THE LAST DAY IS:

1. The descent of Jesus.
2. The resurrection to immortality of dead Christians.
3. The change to immortality of living Christians—“*We shall be changed*” (1 Cor.15:52, 53).
4. The being “snatched up” into **earth’s atmosphere** of both the resurrected and the living “changed” to immortality Christians so as to meet the descending Lord.

The *Reasoning from the Scriptures* book uses a straw man argument on p. 314 by saying that the claimed rapture involves **going to heaven**. It clearly does not, as just shown. By misapplying 1 Corinthians 15:36 which says: “What you sow is not made alive unless first it dies.” the *Reasoning* book on pp. 312/3 states that all living Christians must die before **gaining** immortality. However, although “the seed” here is a reference to the living mortal body, the context of verse 36 is that of those who are already “**the dead**” (verse 35) and who will need to be resurrected. So what Paul is saying is that resurrection is a miracle in just the same way that a seed which **decomposes**, so as to germinate and become a plant, is also a miracle. It is not the living body which is the decomposing “seed” but the already dead body. **Living Christians**, at the time of the last trumpet, are not mentioned until verse 51 where Paul reveals a sacred secret when he says: “*We will **not all fall asleep** in*

death, but we will all be **changed**, in a moment...”

Does Romans 6:3-5 Prove That One Must Die to Gain Immortality?

In their teaching that anointed Christians must die before they can gain immortality the Watchtower Society quotes the *Revised Standard Version* noted on p. 314 of the *Reasoning from the Scriptures* book: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus **were** baptized *into his death*? ... For if we **have been** united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (*Rom. 6:3-5*).

However, the mistake here is that Paul’s subject in these verses is ‘**being dead to sin**’ (verse 2). Note that verse 4 of Romans 6 says: “So we **were buried** through our baptism into his death, in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead...we also should likewise walk in a **newness of life**.” Therefore, baptism into Christ is here being used as **an illustration** of one’s death to sin, so that the “old personality” has been buried and raised to “newness of life” at the point of conversion. This death to sin is further symbolized in the words of verse 6 noting that: “...our old personality **was nailed** to the stake along with him in order for our sinful body to be made powerless.” Similarly, Paul says to Christians that: “you **were buried** with him in his baptism, and by your relationship with him you **were also raised up** together...Further- more, though you were **dead in your trespasses**...God **made you alive** together with him” (*Col. 2:12-13*).

Returning to the Issue in Romans 6:5 which says: “For if we **have been** united with him in a death like his, **we will** certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his,” we can understand that because of one’s conversion one has ‘died to sin’ “in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead...we also should likewise walk in a **newness of life**” **now** as illustrated by “a resurrection like his.” So, these verses are not about Christians having to physically die so as to be granted immortality. Indeed, such an idea would contradict Paul’s words at 1 Corinthians 15:51 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Furthermore, Jesus said that: “...everyone that is living and exercises faith in me **will never die at all**” (*John 11:26*).

The Faultiness of the Watchtower’s Teaching That Christians are Resurrected as Spirits

This belief raises some serious problems because:

- All resurrections recorded in the Bible are of the whole person i.e., a solid bodied person.
- For someone to have died and been buried, what part of them would be resurrected if they did not present as a solid bodied person? The answer is: nothing! This is because a person is a unity, not having separating parts: body, soul, and spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 15:37-38 explains that: *“...you sow, not the body that will develop, but a bare grain, whether of wheat or some other kind of seed; but God gives it a body just as it has pleased him, and gives to **each of the seeds its own body.**”*

In Paul’s analogy of the seed there is a change of attributes from seed to plant, but the plant must be of the same genetic material as the seed. So too, the glorified body is as a result of dramatic qualitative changes that occur in its seed. It is not an exchange of bodies but a change by glorification of the person. The transfiguration of Jesus was a glimpse of this glorification.

NOTE: The word “body” in a literal sense always refers to what is tangible.

§

22

Scriptures Misapplied to the Concept of Going to Heaven

As stated earlier the texts of John 14:2; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:21-23; 3:14, and Hebrews 6:19-20 are only assumed by tradition to refer to going to heaven by the earlier false teaching of the immortality of the soul and the false assumption that Jesus remains indefinitely in heaven (Acts 3:21). This heaven-going tradition originated with the acceptance of the pagan teaching that humans have a naturally immortal soul. In fact, neither is the word “heaven” mentioned in these texts nor is there any implication that Christians go to heaven in these texts. We will now examine these more difficult passages in light of our understanding of the earlier Scriptures that have a plain meaning.

Philippians 1:21-23

Paul writes:

*“For in my case to live is Christ, and to die, gain...I am torn between these two things; for I do desire the releasing (‘departure’ in NASB etc but meaning **the return** of Christ) and the being with Christ, which is, to be sure, far better.”*

THERE IS A THIRD OPTION FOR PAUL

The context is Paul’s impending trial at the hands of Nero. Yet if Paul did not know whether he preferred to live or to die, could he really be saying that he prefers to die? So, could his statement of his “desire to depart and be with Christ” as being “far better” be a *third option*, rather than either living on now or dying? Evidently it is “*the being with Christ*” that counts for Paul. Yet this being with Christ only happens when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:22).

The Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses explains this passage in the ‘appendix’ to the NWT Reference Bible and the KIT. The reason for dealing with this passage here is for the benefit of those who hold the view that a separate immortal soul goes straight to heaven at death.

As well as ‘departure’ the Greek word *analsai* can also mean “loosing,” “releasing, “breaking away,” or “return.” This departure/releasing or return cannot be at the moment of death but on “the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6, 10); “that [Paul] may have cause for exultation in Christ’s Day” (Phil 2:16). This is a statement showing that for the Christian his **relationship** with Christ remains unbroken even with the event of death. Those who die are sleeping “in Christ” in the sense that they are not aware of the passage of time up to the instant of their “being with Christ” by means of resurrection **at the parousia**. At that point, for them “**to die, is gain**” (1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:21, 23).

PAUL’S PREFERENCE

After noting the two alternatives of living on or dying Paul presents a third option which refers to either the releasing from heaven of Jesus to return or Paul’s own later releasing from the grave which both occur at the *parousia* i.e., Christ’s second advent.

The problem for the Watchtower’s teaching on this subject concerns their concept that the main part of the first resurrection is proposed to have already occurred in 1918. (Note that this is still a significant gap of 3½ years from the supposed time of Jesus’ return in 1914) and that the remainder of the supposedly literal 144,000 are instantly resurrected at the **various later times** when they naturally die. This concept would contradict the clear statements in **1 Thessalonians. 4:16-17** concerning the resurrection of the dead where verse 17 says in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*:

“thereupon we the living the ones being left around at the same time together with them we will be snatched in clouds into meeting of the lord in the air...” All other commentators recognize that the first resurrection, which is of Christians only, happens in total **at one fixed time**, namely when Jesus returns, so that it is a one-time event (1 Cor. 15:22).

Philippians 3:14

This text speaks of:

*“...the prize of the **upward** (Gk ano) calling of God”* KIT.

*“...the prize of the **high** (Gk ano) calling of God”* UBS Interlinear.

This phrase is presented in the NWT as “the upward call of God” and is used by the Organization to promote the idea that there are two callings—one to heaven and one to the earth. Furthermore, it is wrongly interpreted in the NIV as “God has called me heavenward” as if to imply that Paul would be going to heaven. However, the Greek word *ano* means ‘**above**’ as in *“the Jerusalem above (Gk ano)”* (Gal. 4:26). It is really God’s calling of Christians to the higher reward of the first resurrection at Christ’s coming (1 Cor. 15:24). Marshall’s interlinear renders it as: “**The above calling.**” and as “the **high calling**” in the Unvarnished NT, the ASV, Young’s, NSB, KJV and all earlier Bibles. Also, Moffatt renders it “**the high call.**” Furthermore, when both the CSB and ISV use the phrase “**God’s heavenly call,**” this has no meaning of the Christian’s supposed departure to heaven, but is descriptive of the quality of the call to be a Christian because it is from God.

2 Corinthians 5:1–9

Paul notes that:

*“we know that if our earthly house, this **tent**, should be torn down, we are to have a **building** from God, a house not made with hands, everlasting in the heavens. For in this **house** we do indeed groan, earnestly desiring to put on the one for us from heaven, so that when we do put it on, we will not be found **naked**. In fact, we who are in this tent groan, being weighed down, because we do not want to put it off, but we want to **put the other on**, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who prepared us for this very thing is God, who gave us the spirit as a token of what is to come.*

*So, we are always of good courage and know that while we have our **home** in the body, we are **absent from** the Lord, for we are walking by faith, not by sight. But we are of good courage and would prefer to be absent from the body and to make our home*

with the Lord. So, whether at home with him or be absent from him, we make it our aim to be acceptable to him.”

In this passage Paul writes figuratively using the metaphors of *tent, building, house, and clothing*. The passage contains no thought of the pagan Greek idea of disembodiment, re-embodiment or intangibility. In the resurrection there will be continuity between the two states of the body as explained in 1 Corinthians 15:35–39. The context for 2 Corinthians 5:1-9 is in 4:14 stating that God: “*will raise us up also together with Jesus and will present us together with you.*” This will occur on the Last-day second coming of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:23, John 11:24). Furthermore, this passage is to be further understood in the context of 1 Corinthians 15 where the Christian dead are all to be raised at the same time when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 4:17) and then they will be “at home with the Lord” and have “the building from God” i.e., the immortal body.

John 14:2

“In the house of my Father there are many dwelling places.”

This is expressed figuratively just as the kingdom of Israel was called “the house of Israel.” Indeed, “*Moses...was faithful as an attendant in all the house of that one ... but Christ was faithful as a son over God’s house. We are His house*” (Heb. 3:5-6). Also, the Apostle Peter notes that, “*it is the appointed time for the judgment to start with the house of God*” (1 Pet. 4:17) and so showing that, Jesus’ “Father’s house” is a reference to God’s people as prospective members of the kingdom because they are, “*...a temple of a living God*” (2 Cor. 6:16).

INTERPRETATION

- “Many dwelling places” = the ample space for all in the kingdom. Possibly referring to the individual Christians in whom God and Christ will live (John 14:23) and so giving them reassurance.
- “...to prepare a place (it does not say ‘in heaven’) for you.” = The preparation for the Kingdom is by means of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension.
- “I will come again and will receive you home to myself.” = at the *parousia* to set up the kingdom. (Please note that the word “home” is not in the Greek text and no literal translation uses this term).
- “...so that where I am you also may be” = in the Kingdom on earth.

*“We have this hope as an **anchor** for the soul...and it enters **within the curtain**, where a **forerunner** has entered in our behalf, Jesus, who has become a high priest.”*

The term “forerunner” highlights Jesus as being the first fruits (of the New Creation) and that his high priestly service “in our behalf” makes it possible for Christians to approach God in priestly service. Only the high priest in Israel physically entered within the curtain of the sanctuary, hence only Christ literally enters heaven. It is **our hope** that is anchored within the curtain because our high priest is there standing before God on our behalf. This secures for the Christian the purification that enables him to draw close to God. This in no way implies that Christians will go physically “within the curtain” by going to heaven. So, when **Hebrews 10:19** says: “...since we have boldness for the way of entry into the holy place” this does not refer to a physical entry, but is figuratively an “approach with sincere hearts and complete faith” (verse 22). This means that **now**, here on earth, we may have free access to God through our high priest. Please also note Ephesians 2:6 where we learn that figuratively God: “...seated us together in the heavenly places in union with Christ” showing that **currently**, here on earth, Christians are figuratively viewed as being in heaven because of their union with Christ.

John 14:19

“In a little while the world will behold me no more, but you will see me because I live and you will live.”

Again, this is no proof of a *parousia* (“coming to be present” or advent) that is invisible to the world. Such a view would contradict the many Scriptures showing a physical/literal return of Jesus. Really, this means that the world would see Jesus no longer at that time until the *parousia* (Matt. 23:39) when he will be visible like lightning and when many will acknowledge him. So, to the Jews, Jesus said that they: “will by no means see me **until** you say; “Blessed is the one who comes in Jehovah’s name!” (Luke 13:35).

NOTE: John 14:18, 23 concerns Jesus’ coming to his disciples **spiritually**: “I will not leave you bereaved. I am coming to you ... we [God and Christ] will come (spiritually) to him [the Christian] and make our dwelling with him.” This was fulfilled when he sent “the spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive” (verse 17).

This analysis of biblical texts shows that God's plan for mankind is for them to inherit the earth as He intended it to be, and with mankind granted perfection and immortality. From this it is evident that He does not intend for any of humankind to be in His literal heavenly location. The Only human to go to heaven is the immortal Jesus, and that is for a temporary time to act as our mediator, advocate, and high priest.

Christian Belief in c. 150 C.E.

In his Dialog with Trypho, Justin Martyr condemned those who promote the idea of going to heaven as the Christian destiny. Justin said to him:

For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians...who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that *their souls when they die are taken to heaven*, do not imagine that they are Christians...But I and others who are right-minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a **thousand years in Jerusalem**, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah and others declare ... And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in our Christ **would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem**; and that thereafter the general and eternal resurrection of all men would take place.

Justin's condemnation of those who promote heaven-going as the Christian destiny harmonizes with his interpretation of the apostle John's Revelation concerning the millennium spent in literal, physical Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Contrary to the Watchtower organization's teaching that Mount Zion is in heaven and that the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14 will stand on it in heaven, the reality is that it will be a physical place as the location of Jerusalem. Nowhere do the descriptions show any reigning of Christians, either stated or implied, as being in heaven. According to the best Greek, the words of Revelation 5:10 translate as "*they will reign on the earth*" rather than "over the earth" in the sense of being in heaven.

Evidently, the teaching acquired by C.T. Russell of an invisible return of Christ, thought originally to have occurred in 1874 and later changed to 1914 is out of harmony with the details of the Scriptures. Sadly, this belief is still promoted today by the Watchtower Organization and the

various Bible Student groups that originated with Russell. They further promote the idea that Jesus will never literally return to earth. Almost no other groups or denominations of Christians hold such an unbiblical view.



PART FIVE

Clarifying the Details of the Resurrection

23

What Is Meant by Resurrection?

The Watchtower Society teaches that those of the class of the 144,000 anointed Christians are resurrected in the first resurrection. Each one is raised as an immortal spirit, that is, as having a non-human, intangible body; whereas those of the non-anointed Christians will be resurrected during the Millennium in the general resurrection and be raised with mortal physical human bodies. However, there are numerous problems with this scenario!

The concept of resurrection as spoken of in the Scriptures comes in two forms: in words which mean:

1) “to resurrect,” i.e., *anastasis* and *egeiro* with *anastasis* meaning literally “to make to stand up” and *egeiro* as meaning “to awaken or raise up.” When in combination with the phrase “from the dead,” these words are translated as *resurrect/resurrection/resurrected* so that a literally physically decaying and brain-dead person is brought back to life. (Please see Luke 20:35; Acts 24:21; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 21, 42).

2) to come back to life in such phrases as “the dead will live.” This may

refer to living persons who come to life spiritually or to a literal coming to life in a tangible ‘natural’ mortal body as with Lazarus and others in the Bible record or with a tangible immortal body as we will examine shortly.

There Is Never Any Resurrection to Heaven

There are no passages or texts in the Scriptures which speak of a resurrection to intangible spirit life in heaven. Even Jesus, as, “*the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*” (Col. 1:18), was resurrected on earth and not to heaven. Of course, after 40 days he did **ascend to** Jehovah’s right hand in heaven, so that he could function as High Priest. However, as we have seen he never promised his followers a resurrection to heaven. As with many other literal terms Jesus also used the concept in a metaphorical way before speaking of the literal resurrection.

The Promise of a Literal Physical Resurrection

The Hebrew Scriptures first introduce the concept of physical resurrection when Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice to Jehovah (Gen. 22:1-3 and Heb. 11:17-19). Later Job, Isaiah, and Daniel all spoke of the physical resurrection in the following texts:

*“If a man dies, can he live again?...I will wait...Until **my relief** (“renewal” *ESV*) comes. You will call and I will answer”*

(Job 14:14-15).

“Your dead will live. My corpses will rise up. Awake and shout joyfully, You residents in the dust! For your dew is as the dew of the morning, And the earth will let those powerless in death come to life” (Isa. 26:19).

*“And many of those asleep in the dust of the earth will **wake up**, some to everlasting life and others to reproach and to everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).*

Notice that Isaiah and Daniel use the term “sleep” as a metaphor for the condition of the dead from which they will one day “wake up.” Indeed, the Psalmist David uses the same term when he asks that he, “*may not fall asleep in death.*” (Ps. 13:3). Later, Paul wrote that, “*...if Christ has not been raised up...also those also who have **fallen asleep** in death in union with Christ have perished*” (1 Cor. 15:17-18).

Literal Resurrection Is Always Physical - Tangible

Both the first and second resurrections are literal and physical. We note that when there are two of something shown to be ‘first’ and ‘second’ they are of the same nature e.g., “*the first man is out of the earth and made of dust, the second man is out of heaven*” (1 Cor. 15:47) and so showing that Jesus was a man just like Adam i.e., both are of the same nature. So, too, with the second death as real death just as is the first death; they, too, are of the same nature.

As a comparison with the Watchtower Society’s explanation of this issue the Catholic understanding of the resurrection arrangement in Revelation 20 is given by Dean Alford who wrote:

As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain *psuchai ezesan* [souls came to life] at the first, and the rest of the *nekroi ezesan* [dead came to life] only at the end of a specified period after the first, ...If in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first...

Although the Watchtower Society presents the reverse of the Catholic interpretation, the principle of what Alford says still applies i.e., if one resurrection is literal then so is the other. Furthermore, Revelation 20:4, 5 speaks of those who will have already experienced the first resurrection and are shown in verse 1 as sitting on thrones because: “...*they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for 1,000 years (the rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were ended.) This is the first resurrection*” (Rev. 20:4c-5). However, if the phrase “came to life” for those in this first resurrection means that they were resurrected then the same is true for those classified as “the **rest of the dead**” and not simply for them to be just declared righteous as in Watchtower teaching! So, for both “the righteous and the unrighteous” the phrases “**came to life**” or “**come to life**” clearly refer to literal **tangible resurrection of the whole person**. In Matthew 9:18 the same phrase is used by the synagogue ruler with reference to his daughter’s resurrection when he said to Jesus: “*Come and lay your hand on her, and she will come to life.*” This phrase is also used by Jesus, in John 11:25, of any faithful person when he said: “*Even though he dies, [he] will come to life.*” And finally,

Romans 14:9 states that, “*Christ died and **came to life again.***” These are all clear references to resurrection. Therefore, this phrase in Revelation 20:4 cannot possibly mean simply being declared righteous as the end result of a so-called growing to perfection in a progressively coming to life as is stated in the Watchtower’s *Revelation – Grand Climax* book p. 290. Otherwise, this would contradict the teaching that those who rule with Christ “came to life” (vs. 4) in a real resurrection.

The Dead Are in God’s Memory

Although there is no consciousness for any person who dies, yet the one thing that survives them is their complete identity including their being personally and completely remembered in every detail by God in His limitless memory. This is why Job prefaces his rhetorical question to God of: “*If a man dies can he live again?*” with “*that you would set a time limit for me and **remember me!***” (*Job 14:13-14*). All of this is true for every person who has ever lived and died. Indeed, a good picture of how the resurrection will happen is given in Ezekiel 37:1-14 concerning the lifeless dry bones that are connected together and then given sinews and covered in flesh and finally with breath entering into them. Although this passage in Ezekiel 37 is allegorical of the reinstatement of the nation of Israel, it is based on the reality of literal resurrection as shown when Jehovah completes this picture saying: “*I will open your graves and raise you up from your graves...and you will come to life*” (verses 12-14).

The Spiritual Resurrection of Living Persons

Rather than any thought of an intangible spirit body, Jesus used the fact of a literal physical resurrection as a metaphor for people who are alive and who need to be revived spiritually when he said:

*“The hour is coming, and it is now, when **the dead** will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have paid attention **will live**”* (*John 5:25*).

Following on from the statement that any person who believes “*has passed over from death to life*” (*John 5:24*), Jesus went on to show that some once spiritually dead but literally living persons who have had a change of heart, **will live** in the age to come because they hear Jesus’ voice. So spiritual resurrections were occurring throughout Jesus’ life on earth and continue to occur. However, we now move on to examine

Jesus' comments on the literal resurrection.

§

24

Everyone Is Resurrected in One of Two Phases

After speaking of those who would be spiritually revived Jesus spoke of those who would experience a literal physical resurrection that would be all encompassing when he said:

*“...the hour is coming in which all who are in the memorial tombs (Gk mnemoneion) will hear his voice and come out; those who did **good things** to [1] a resurrection of life, and those who practiced **vile things** to [2] a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28, 29).*

There is no contextual reason to imagine that the word “**all**” is not in the absolute sense. It means all who are in their graves, indicating all who have ever lived and died. Here, as in many of his parables, Jesus separates all people into only two groups; “those who did **good things**” and “those who practiced **vile things**.” Paul also separates all people into just two groups when he says in Acts 24:15: “...*there is going to be a resurrection of both [1] the righteous and [2] the unrighteous.*” This parallels the two destinies of resurrected ones described in Daniel 12:2. Indeed, Paul uses the term “the righteous” as meaning those who are approved by Jehovah because they are true Christians and have proved themselves worthy of receiving everlasting life. So, the term “the unrighteous” means those who are not true Christians having “practiced **vile things**.” This category includes all those who have practiced the most heinous of crimes against others **and without repentance**.

NOTE: The Scriptures never teach that there will be universal salvation – commonly called Universalism (Please see my book, *How God Works in Human Affairs*).

ANSWERING THE ARGUMENT AGAINST A UNIVERSAL RESURRECTION

1. It is argued that, because the word “memorial tombs” in **John 5:28** implies that only those in God’s memory will be resurrected and

some are not remembered by God, and so apostates to the Watchtower religion and those who have been horrendously wicked e.g., Stalin, Hitler etc will never be resurrected.

RESPONSE: This is, in itself, a very weak and misguided argument because “memorial tombs” are called such so that the dead person will be remembered by their loved ones, even if the person has been very wicked. Even unmarked graves are called “memorial tombs” in the Scriptures (Luke 11:44). Simply being called “memorial tombs” is for the benefit of humans as well as the fact that God will remember every detail of everyone who has ever lived and died. So, this term does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that “all” would be resurrected.

2. It is also argued from Isaiah 26:14 that those destroyed can never be resurrected. This passage reads: *“They [other masters vs. 13] are dead; they will not live. Powerless in death (Heb. **Rephaim** meaning “shadowy ones”), **they will not rise up.** For you have turned your attention to them to **annihilate** them and destroy all mention of them” (Isa. 26:14).*

RESPONSE: It is noted by professors of linguistics that *Rephaim* is a particularly difficult term to translate and is typically rendered as “the departed spirits” or “the shades” or “dead ones” in most translations. However, this does not refer to the pagan teaching that, at death, a person’s spirit separates from his body. This is because verse 19 shows that it is impossible that, “the **earth** will let [disembodied spirits] come to life.” It simply means that those particular individuals—these “other masters”—have ceased their oppressive rulership of Israel and are now more like an ineffective shadow because they are dead.

At first glance it may appear that these ones will never come to life again when the resurrection occurs. However, the understanding of this passage is according to its context of poetic language and not directly that of future resurrection. So, the phrase “they will not rise up” because they are dead concerns these “other masters” as never returning to power over Israel. This is why the Amplified Bible expresses the passage as:

*“O Lord, our God, other masters besides You have ruled over us, but we will acknowledge and mention Your name only. They [the former tyrant masters] are dead, **they shall not live and reappear; they are powerless ghosts** (Heb. *Rephaim*), **they shall not rise and come back.** Therefore, You have visited and **made an end of them** and caused every memory of them [every trace of their supremacy] to perish” (Isa. 26:13-14 Amplified Bible).*

This harmonizes with the fact that in verse 19 “the earth will let those powerless in death (Rephaim/shades) come to life” i.e., these “dead ones” or “shadows” will be resurrected. So, verse 14 is not saying that these “former tyrant masters” (primarily the Assyrians) will never be remembered again by God so as to be in “the resurrection of the unrighteous” as Jesus said, but rather these words are an encouragement for Israel at that time to cease fearing the return of “those masters” and to forget them and their harsh rulership because, being dead, they will never return to trouble Israel again—they are just mere shadows now. So, this text also does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that “all” would be resurrected and as confirmed by Paul when he speaks of the resurrection of, “the righteous and the unrighteous.”

3. It is further argued from Jeremiah 51:39, 57 that some will “sleep a lasting sleep” and so never wake up in the resurrection. Here Jehovah says:

*“...I will set out their banquet and make them drunk, in order that they may exult; Then they **will sleep a lasting sleep**, from which they will **not wake up**,” declares Jehovah I will make her princes and her wise men drunk, her governors and her deputy rulers and her warriors, And they must **sleep a lasting sleep**, From which they will not wake up” (Jer. 51:39, 57).*

RESPONSE: This is a clear allusion to Belshazzar’s feast on the very night Babylon fell to Cyrus. Although “sleep” is often used as a metaphor for being dead it also obviously refers generally to literal sleep. So, the “**lasting sleep**, from which [Belshazzar and his princes etc.] will **not wake up**,” has nothing to do with resurrection, but simply that in falling asleep in their drunken stupor, after all their bragging, they would not wake up because they would be slain (Dan 5:30). And this is what happened when Cyrus’ soldiers broke into Babylon, and yet Belshazzar and company did not even know that Babylon’s walls had been breached. So again, this text also does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that “all,” would be resurrected along with Paul’s statement that it would “be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Resurrection Will Be in Two Phases

The Bible gives a particular arrangement of the resurrection, one resulting in “life” and the other resulting in “judgment.” In fact, Paul sought to “*attain to the earlier resurrection **from the dead***” (Phil. 3:11) and he later stated that “*...there is going to be a resurrection of*

[1] the righteous and [2] the unrighteous” (Acts 24:15). This harmonizes with what was said in Daniel 12:2 and by Jesus in John 5:28-29 and later in the Revelation: “[1] The first resurrection... [2] “*The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended*” (Rev. 20:5). ‘First’ implies a second resurrection and Luke 14:14 mentions only: “...the resurrection of [1] the righteous ones.” So, people can only be classified as righteous or unrighteous. Therefore, **everyone is resurrected**, either immediately before the Millennium in resurrection [1], or after the Millennium in resurrection [2]. In fact, because the lake of fire (*Gehenna*) does not operate until Armageddon (Rev. 19:20) every mortal human who has ever lived and died is currently in “the memorial tombs.”

In Acts 24:15 Paul focuses on the resurrection in total, that is, both events. Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29 also show that there are two events of resurrection and **Revelation 20:4, 5** shows that the two events are separated by 1000+ years. The first event occurs at Christ’s coming when the Millennium begins. The second event occurs in preparation for the Great White Throne judgment a short while after the Millennium has ended. This is the classical pre-millennial understanding. Amillennialists (those who do not accept a literal 1000 years) and post-millennialists do not accept this scenario. However, the resurrection events were first recorded by Daniel who prophesied that: “**many** of those asleep in the dust of the earth will wake up, [1] **some** to everlasting life, and [2] *others*” to everlasting contempt” (*Dan. 12:2*). The view of Jewish commentators Saadia Haggan (10th century) and Aben Ezra (12th century) on this passage was advocated by Bible translator S.P. Tregelles. This resulted in his rendering of verse 2 as:

*“And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; **these** shall be unto everlasting life; **but those**, the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.”*

So, the “**many**” who will awake are “*these to everlasting life*,” but “*those, the others*” are not included in the many who will awake at that time. Their awakening comes later. This means that the main focus of this verse is on the first resurrection but still noting the second.

The Two Events of the Resurrection Are to Be Separated by 1000+ Years

There are no contextual issues in Revelation 20:4-5 and all pre-

millennial commentators view this as a reference to the two parts of the resurrection. “*The rest of the dead*” are those of Revelation 20:12-15 who stand before the great white throne “**as soon as the thousand years have been ended.**” Paul explains the order of this “coming to life”:

*“...in the Christ all will be made alive. But each one in his own proper order: Christ the first-fruits, **afterward** those who belong to the Christ during (This should be rendered ‘at’ and not “during.” See 1 Thessalonians 3:13) **his presence** (parousia = coming). **Next** the end, when he hands over the Kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government...For he must rule as king until God has put all enemies under his feet. And the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing” (1 Cor. 15:22-26).*

The fact that “those who belong to the Christ” i.e., Christians, are resurrected at the time of Jesus’ arrival excludes “the rest of the dead” until “the end” i.e., the end of the Millennium. So, the destruction of death itself (1 Cor.15: 26) at that time corresponds to “the rest of the dead coming to life” in Revelation 20:5, 11-15 before “death and Hades are hurled into the lake of fire” (verse 14). This separation of the two parts of the resurrection was recognized by second century Christians as noted in Justin Martyr’s Dialog with Trypho as quoted earlier.

All of this information eradicates the need for the eight changes made by the Organization on the question of whether or not the “men of Sodom,” noted in Matthew 10:15, will be resurrected because, in fact, all will be resurrected. The key difference is whether a person is resurrected to mortality or to immortality and the gap of a thousand years between these two phases of the resurrection.

The Second Resurrection Is for Those Who Died as Unbelievers

“*The first resurrection*” (Rev. 20:5-6) implies a second resurrection. The second is often termed ‘the general resurrection’ and does not involve true Christians, but will occur after the thousand years have ended. It will concern, “**those, the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time...**” (Dan. 12:3 Tregelles), “who practiced vile things” and “to a resurrection of judgment” according to Jesus (John 5:29), called “the unrighteous” by Paul (Acts 24:15), and finally described as, “the rest of the dead” in Revelation 20:5.

NOTE: Daniel 12:3 is rendered, “age-during abhorrence” in Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible and “age-abiding abhorrence” in Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible rather than “everlasting...”

Can the Second Phase of Resurrection Occur During the Millennium?

In fact, the second resurrection cannot occur during the Millennium as in the Watchtower Organization's teaching, because, "*it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment*" (Heb. 9:27 NASB) and this judgment is at the Great White Throne **after the Millennium has ended** as the Revelation shows in saying that, "*(the rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were ended) ... I saw a great white throne...The dead were judged...*" (Rev. 20:5, 11, 12). In fact, there is no statement in the Scriptures from which it could be inferred that the second resurrection will be occurring during the Millennium in contradiction of Revelation 20.

NOTE: The phrase 'for all time' in Hebrews 9:27 in the NWT is not in the Greek or in any other translation.

Because this will be a resurrection to judgment it must of necessity be a resurrection to mortality in "the natural" body. This will be a resurrection just the same as that which Lazarus experienced when Jesus brought him back to life, but was limited so that Lazarus eventually died.

Are These "Unrighteous" Ones to Be Instantly Condemned?

This is not a resurrection to "damnation" as the KJV wrongly translates the Greek, but is to judgment, which may hand down either a favourable or an unfavourable verdict. Indeed, as with any just court, some will be condemned and others will be acquitted. Therefore, the second resurrection is for the purpose of judging these "unrighteous" ones and not for an instantaneous condemnation of them. So, the basis and procedure for this judgment is that:

*"The dead were **judged out of those things written in the scrolls** according to their deeds. And the sea gave up those dead in it and death and the Grave gave up the dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds. And death and the Grave were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second death, the lake of fire. Furthermore, **whoever was not found written in the book of life** was hurled into the lake of fire"*

(Rev. 20:12b-15).

The judgment of these ones is not only according to their deeds prior to death, but according to their response to whatever is set out in "the

scrolls.” So, whether they are thrown into the lake of fire or not will depend on their response and deeds according to those scrolls and implies that there will be some people in this second phase of resurrection who are given a favourable verdict and will then be written in the book of life and, therefore, will not be destroyed in the lake of fire. This pattern is strongly implied by the fact that those deserving of such second death after the Millennium are described as:

“the cowards and those without faith and those who are disgusting in their filth and murderers and the sexually immoral and those practicing spiritism and idolaters and all the liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This means the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

So, of those who are in the second resurrection it will only be the gross unrepentant sinners i.e., those in the above categories, including all who reject God and his arrangements, who are to be thrown into the lake of fire i.e., their everlasting destruction.

However, although the Revelation does not mention the destiny of those who are acquitted the implication is that they will finally be granted immortality (which is same as “everlasting life”) because Revelation 21:4 says that “death will be no more.” The certainty is that this judgment will be just and merciful allowing resurrected individuals enough time to adjust to all that they will then learn before a decision is made by Jesus concerning their future.

§

25

For Whom Is the First Resurrection?

The purpose of this chapter is to show from the Bible that there is only one literal resurrection of true Christians who will, in that “first resurrection,” each be given a glorious, immortal, spiritual (not spirit), and tangible body that is fully human.

The First Resurrection Is for All True Christians

As explained earlier, there are not two classes of true Christians, and so all whom God approves as true Christians will be in the first resurrection at the point of its occurrence. In fact, Jesus focused specifically on the first resurrection when he said: “*You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous ones*” (Luke 14:14). Additionally, Martha said concerning Lazarus that: “*I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said to her: ‘I am the resurrection and the life. **The one who exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life**’*” (John 11:24-25). Evidently, anyone with trust in Jesus as loyal to him will experience the same resurrection as Lazarus will yet experience i.e., the first resurrection.

The Earlier Resurrection Is Better

Not only did Paul, in Philippians 3:11, call the first resurrection “*the earlier resurrection from the dead*” because it will be the first resurrection, but the writer to the Hebrews calls it “*a better resurrection*” (Heb. 11:35). But in what way will it be better? F.F. Bruce discusses this on p. 326 of his commentary: *The Epistle to the Hebrews* where he says:

The resurrection to which they looked forward was “better” than that to which the boys of Zarephath and Shunem had been raised by Elijah and Elisha. Those were restored to mortal life, and in due course died...

So, the first resurrection is better because each Christian will receive an immortal, imperishable life, whereas those of the past, like Lazarus, regained only their normal mortal lives and those in the resurrection after the end of the Millennium also will receive only their mortal life at that time.

Abraham and the Men of Old Will Attain to the First Resurrection

Because these faithful ones prior to Jesus’ time were messianists in the sense of looking forward in faith to the coming of the Messiah, they are retrospectively Christians in just the same way as are the faithful ones since Messiah’s first coming. The key factors are that:

[1] “As it was, they [from Abel onward] were longing for a better place, a heavenly one” (Heb. 11:16 *New Testament for Everyone*).

NOTE: The phrase in the NWT of “**belonging to**” is not in the Greek. Similar to the KIT the UBS Interlinear reads “that is to say, a heavenly one.”

[2] “...they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a **better resurrection**” (Heb. 11:35). This better resurrection, shown above, is “the first resurrection” of Revelation 20:5, 6 which is “the resurrection of the righteous ones” (Luke 14:14).

“[3] “...all of these...did **not obtain** the fulfilment of the **promise**, because God had foreseen something better for us, so that they might not be made perfect **apart from us**” (Heb. 11:39, 40).

So, these righteous ones who lived before Christ will attain the better (the first) resurrection and will “not be made perfect apart from us.” Indeed, they will be resurrected at the one specific time as for all other Christians (1 Thess. 4:17) i.e., when it is time for Jesus’s royal arrival, and not in a so-called general resurrection during the Millennium.

There Is no Cut-off Point Concerning John the Baptist

The Society teaches that the first resurrection applies only to those who became Christians after the time of John the Baptist. This is based on what Jesus said about John’s greatness:

“I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John, but a lesser person in the kingdom of God is greater than he is” (Luke 7:28 also Matt. 11:11).

However, this statement relates to John as a mortal as compared to “a lesser person in the kingdom” who would be immortal. It is comparing John’s situation in his time with those in the future kingdom. It clearly does not mean that John and faithful ones before him would not participate in the first resurrection and so be members of the kingdom. Such would be an anomaly and an injustice to those who have shown complete loyalty to God. Certainly, John will be among the: “...many [who] will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt. 8:11) which means in the Kingdom of God (see chapter 9) as being on the earth.

More on the Resurrection Body for All True Christians

Christians are those “...who are seeking glory and honor and incorruptibleness (“immortality” in the NAB and other translations)” (Rom. 2:7) and are, “...earnestly desiring to put on the [dwelling house] for

us from heaven” (2 Cor. 5:2). This means that God is the provider of the spiritual body which Christians will receive at the beginning of the Millennium.

In his detailed description of the first resurrection Paul informs us that our body, “...is raised up in incorruption...raised up in glory...raised up in power...raised up a **spiritual body**” and “this which is mortal must put on immortality...” (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 53). This is our own body that is transformed to be an incorruptible, immortal, but tangible human body in just the same way as for Jesus (Luke 24:36-43) because Jesus, “will transform our humble body to be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21).

The NWT follows the trend of several versions (REB, NRSV, and Barclay’s) which render the Greek phrase *soma psychikos* in 1 Corinthians 15:44 as “**physical** body” so that the NWT reads: “It is sown a **physical** body (Gk *soma psychikos*); it is raised up a **spiritual** body (Gk *soma pneumatichos*)” (1 Cor. 15:44 NWT). However, *soma psychikos* means “the **natural** body” or “**soulical** body” even though it is physical. So, most other translations render the word *psychikos* as “natural” so that the real contrast is between a natural body and a supernatural body according to Paul’s descriptions of it, and not between what is tangible and what is intangible. In fact, N.T. Wright contrasts the two bodies with the terms “the spirit-animated body” and the “nature-animated one” which is “the embodiment of ordinary nature.”

NOTE: KIT renders 1 Cor. 15:44 as: “It is being sown body **soulical**, it is being raised up body spiritual; Rotherham: “It is sown a body of the soul, it is raised a body of the spirit;” UBS: “It is sown a **natural** body, it is raised a spiritual body.” In fact, most translations translate *soma psychikos* as “the **natural** body.”

In its usage of the NWT rendering of “**physical** body” in 1 Corinthians 15 the Organization has given the impression that the “spiritual body” will not be tangible so as to comply with its teaching on this issue. However, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 is contrasting the mortal, natural body that is weak and perishable with the immortal, spiritual body that is powerful and imperishable i.e., supernatural. So, this passage is not about tangibility or physicality. The Bible’s use of the word spiritual is not always associated with things that are intangible as is shown in **1 Corinthians 2:15** where Paul says: “*However, the **spiritual man** examines all things.*” Yet the spiritual man is obviously a tangible physical person, but guided by holy spirit, and so indicating that the spiritual body is also physical and tangible, but directed, ruled and dominated by holy spirit. Also note Paul’s comment that Christians on earth: “...are **not in flesh** but in spirit, if spirit of God is dwelling in

you” (Rom. 8:9 KIT). This shows that being “**not in flesh,**” in this present life, doesn’t mean that one is not a tangible person.

WHAT ABOUT 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50?

Here Paul tells us that: “**..flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s Kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruption**” (1 Cor. 15:50). So, does this mean that inheritors of the kingdom cannot be physical? No! This is because **here** Paul uses the phrase “flesh and blood” **metaphorically** so that it represents the **natural mortal body** given as the parallel to “*corruption.*” So, this is not actually a reference to the body’s physicality as if to contrast it with “the spiritual body,” but refers to the absence of natural limitations and sinful inclinations. So, the NJB expresses the fact that: “*...mere human nature cannot inherit the kingdom of God: what is perishable cannot inherit what is imperishable*” i.e., the Kingdom. So, ‘flesh and blood’ (mortal human nature) is perishable and weak. What is required to inherit the Kingdom is a body that is not perishable/corruptible. So, **verse 53** describes how: “*...this which is corruptible must put on incorruption, and this which is mortal must put on immortality.*”

This highlights the “change” from perishability/corruptibility of the body to imperishability of the same body (verses 52, 53), so that now it is immortal, powerful, and glorious. There is no indication here of an exchange so as to become a spirit in the pagan Greek sense of intangibility. Furthermore, the promise of immortality spoken of by Paul means exactly the same as the “everlasting life” which Jesus offered his earliest disciples and those future from his time.

§

26

The First Resurrection Cannot Have Begun in 1918

The Governing Body correctly teaches that the Great Tribulation is yet future. However, they also incorrectly teach that Jesus returned invisibly in 1914, and that the first resurrection, in the main, has already taken place in 1918 with a continuing, at-the-point-of-death, immediate

resurrection to heaven of those who have died since then. This scheme of events closely follows the pattern of the teaching of dispensationalist churches who teach a pre-tribulation resurrection/rapture—a scheme which contradicts the biblical sequencing of events. The correct sequencing can be understood by drawing together the many relevant scriptures and taking note of the way the relevant Greek words are used in these passages. Once one realizes that the gathering of ‘the holy ones’ refers to their meeting the descending Jesus then Matthew 24 can be seen as a clear sequence of events.

The Great Tribulation Occurs Before the First Resurrection

The MATTHEW 24 SEQUENCE

1. “When you see the **disgusting thing that causes desolation**, as spoken about by Daniel, standing in a holy place” (v.15 See NOTE).
2. “Then let those in Judea begin to flee” (verses 16-20).
3. “Then there will be **great tribulation**” (verse 21).
4. “Immediately after the **Tribulation** of those days...they will see **the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven**” (verses 29-30).
5. “He will send out his angels with a **great trumpet** sound, and they **will gather** His chosen ones together from the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens to the other” (verse 31) i.e., the harvest/resurrection as in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 23, 52; John 1:3 and 11:24.

NOTE: Mark 13 says “standing where **he** should not” NAB, REB, and NLT. The reference is therefore to an individual. Please see my book *Prophecies Related to the Return of Jesus: THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS AS THE FINAL ANTICHRIST* which gives proof that this “**disgusting thing**” is a personalization of **the man of lawlessness** who “sits down in the temple of The God, publicly showing himself to be a god” (2 Thess. 2:4). There is no scriptural basis for this to be reinterpreted as any kind of composite ‘man of lawlessness’ such as the clergy of Christendom. So, the advent/arrival of the Man of Lawlessness must be shortly before the yet future advent/arrival of the Lord Jesus and is therefore also yet future.

It would be illogical to state, as the Organization does, that this gathering is one which is into an organization. Such a statement would mean that the conversion of the individuals occurred after the Great Tribulation.

Reversing the Order of ‘Time of the End’ Events

THE GATHERING OF CHOSEN ONES

In Jesus’ Mount of Olives discourse as recorded in Matthew 24 the Organization, since 1973, views Jesus’ “coming on the clouds” (Matt. 24:30) as yet future. However, confusion is caused by the further claim that the event of Jesus’ sending, “*out his angels with a great trumpet sound, and they will **gather his chosen ones** together from the four winds...*” (verse 31) has been a gathering of people into the Organization and going on since 1919. Yet the order of events in Matthew 24 is very clear in these verses:

- that first Jesus comes on the clouds (vs. 30b) and
- then he gathers his chosen ones (vs. 31).

This order is confirmed in the parallel account in Mark’s Gospel:

*“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling out of heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. And **then** they will see the **Son of man coming in clouds** with great power and glory. **And then** he will send out the angels and will **gather his chosen ones** together from the four winds, from earth’s extremity to heaven’s extremity”*

(Mark 13:24-27).

This mistaken reversed order of *the gathering of the chosen* is because the Governing Body views Matthew 24:30 as referring to its own work of gathering people into the Organization rather than according to Jesus’ own words of a physical gathering from geographical locations to be caught up to meet the returning Jesus (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Part of the confusion goes back to the early decision of the Society to state that Jesus had returned in 1914. However, all the statements and parables referring to the separating of people are timed at the future return of Jesus. Furthermore, the scriptures show that it is angels who will do this separating work and not Christians who are, in fact, the ones that will be separated from unbelievers at that specific future time.

The First Resurrection Occurs When Jesus Returns

The first resurrection occurs at a single time when Jesus returns from heaven immediately prior to the beginning of the Millennium. There is no later resurrection of any Christians at the point of their deaths. This is

“because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call...and **those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first**” (1 Thess. 4:16). This statement does not allow for other Christians to be resurrected at some later time as with the mistranslation in the NWT of 1 Cor. 15:23 in using the phrase “during his presence” as if spread over a lengthy period of time. As in all other translations this should be rendered “at his coming” (or similar). Please note that in the NWT 1 Thessalonians 3:13 is correctly rendered as “at” rather than “during;” so N.T. Wright correctly and very clearly renders 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 as:

*“all will be made alive in the Messiah. Each, however, in proper order. The Messiah rises as the first fruits; then those who belong to the Messiah will rise **at the time of his royal arrival**”*

(1 Cor. 15:22b-23).

NOTE: Jesus’ *parousia* i.e., his royal arrival is yet future.

“The Gathering” Noted in Matthew 24:31 Involves the First Resurrection

First Thessalonians 4:16 to 5:6 gives nine details of the time of the end. Eight of the details of Matthew 24:30-43 are the same as the details of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:6 indicating that the ninth detail in Matthew 24:31, namely, “**will gather,**” must be the same as the being “**caught away**” mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which the Watchtower Society recognizes as being connected to the resurrection. These details are:

1. Son of man (24:30) /Lord himself (4:16).
2. Clouds of heaven (24:30) /air (4:17).
3. Great sound of a trumpet (24:31) /the trumpet of God (4:16).
4. **Gather together** (24:31) /**caught away together** (4:17). (*Please see the chapter on the rapture*).
5. Know that summer is near (24:32) /times and the seasons (5:1).
6. Marrying, then flood came (24:38) /safety then destruction (5:3).
7. Coming of the Son of man (24:39) /day of the Lord (KIT 5:2).
8. Watch (24:42) /stay awake and keep our senses (5:6).
9. Known in what watch the thief was coming (24:43) /thief in the night (5:4).

Evidently Paul was writing about the same subject in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 as Jesus had spoken of in Matthew 24, namely the time of the end that culminates in the resurrection when Christians are gathered together by the angels to meet Jesus. The statement by Jesus in Matthew 24:31 of

“will gather his chosen ones” does not mean the gathering of them to be in the Organization, but a gathering to be caught up to meet the returning Jesus. This can be seen in the following comparison and will occur when everyone:

*“...will see the **Son of man coming** on the clouds of heaven...He will send out his angels with a **great trumpet** sound, and they **will gather** His chosen ones together from the four winds...”*

(Matt. 24: 30b, 31).

*“**The Lord himself will descend** from heaven...with an archangel’s voice and with **God’s trumpet** ... those dead in union with Christ **will rise first** (resurrected). Afterward, we the living who are surviving will, together with them, be **caught away** in clouds to **meet the Lord** in the air...” (1 Thess. 4:16-18).*

So, the sequence given in Matthew 24:29-32 can clearly be seen to present the event of the first resurrection as occurring after the great tribulation. So, with the great tribulation as being yet future it is not possible that the first resurrection occurred in 1918. Furthermore, the Organization misapplies the term “the Lord” in 1 Thessalonians 4 to Jehovah rather than correctly to Jesus and so adding more confusion to their interpretation.

The First Resurrection Is to Immortality at “the Last” Trumpet

The Apostle Paul states that the last trumpet will be the time for the first resurrection when he reveals that:

- ❖ *“We will not all fall asleep in death, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, during (“at” in the KIT and all other translations) **the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound and **the dead** will be **raised up** incorruptible and we will be changed”*
(1 Cor. 15:51b-52).

However, the Kingdom arrives with the 7th trumpet of Revelation; therefore, the first resurrection also occurs at the future arrival of Jesus just before setting up the Kingdom and so cannot have occurred in 1918. (Please see Chapters 13 and 16 showing that the **kingdom has yet to arrive** and it will not be invisible).

The Gathering/First Resurrection Occurs Only When Christ Arrives

Part of the problem causing the Organization's faulty and unbiblical sequencing of resurrection events is with the rendering of the Greek word *parousia* as "presence" in the New World Translation. However, leading scholar on the use of the Greek language in the New Testament Adolph Deissmann informs us that:

parousia means **advent**, coming, **arrival**. From the Ptolemaic period down to the 2nd century A.D. we are able to trace the word in the East as a technical expression for the arrival or visit of the King...(or other person in authority).....Adventus coins were struck...Epiphany nearly always means the future *parousia* of Christ,...

Also, the Greek-English lexicons of Bauer, Thayer, Moulton and Milligan, Liddle and Scott, and Abbot-Smith all give **coming** or **arrival** as the definition of *parousia* with reference to Christ. So, N.T. Wright renders all relevant texts as "coming as king," "appearing as King," "royal arrival" or "royal appearing" and so concerning the, "**Resurrection from the dead.**" *then those who belong to the Messiah will rise at the time of his royal arrival (Gk parousia)" (1 Cor. 15:21, 23)*. This links with Jesus' words: "I will **come again** and receive you to myself" (*John 14:3 NASB*). However, to come again does not mean to merely "turn one's attention to earth's affairs" as the Watchtower proposes as being Jesus' second coming, supposedly in 1914.

Jesus' Return Will Be After the Great Tribulation

Paul writes with great concern for the faulty thinking of those Christians in Thessalonica:

*"...concerning the presence (Gk parousia = royal arrival) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being **gathered together to him**, we ask of you not to be quickly shaken from your reason...to the effect that the **day of Jehovah** is here: ³Let no one lead you astray in any way, because it [the day of Jehovah] will not come unless the apostasy ("**rebellion**" is better) comes **first** and the **Man of Lawlessness** gets revealed ...⁸Then, indeed the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his presence. But the lawless one's presence is by the operation of Satan..." (2 Thess. 2:1-3, 8-9).*

As is evident from Joel 2:32 and Matthew 24:29 that, "the day of Jehovah" follows after the great tribulation. Also, because "the day of

Jehovah” became “the day of the Lord/day of Christ” in the Christian Scriptures it will occur when Jesus returns, at which point the “gathering together to him” i.e., the first resurrection occurs and so must be after the great tribulation and not in 1918. (Please see my book *Prophecies Related to the Return of Jesus* in Chapter 16.

Jesus Arrives After the “Man of Lawlessness” Arrives

Second Thessalonians 2:1-3, 8-9 makes it very clear that the “apostasy/rebellion” and the appearance of “the man of lawlessness” must be before the first resurrection can occur on the “day of the Lord” at the “last trumpet.” Yet this ‘man’ does not appear until shortly before the one-time return of Christ which is yet future. Again, this shows that the first resurrection must occur after the great tribulation. The sequence in 2 Thessalonians is:

1. Rebellion when “many will fall away” at the time of the end (Matt 24:10).
2. The “Man of lawlessness” arrives a little less than three and a half years before Messiah’s arrival in harmony with the five prophecies given by Daniel, the prophecy in the book of Revelation, but qualified by Jesus’ shortening of it (Matt: 24:22).
3. There will be great tribulation (Dan. 7:25; 12:7, 11; Rev. 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5).
4. Day of Jehovah (celestial darkening Matt. 24:29-30).
5. Jesus descends, at which time the first resurrection gathering occurs.

The Resurrection Will Be At the End of the Age Harvest-Time

In the Scriptures harvesting is often used figuratively of judgment for either condemnation or acquittal. It also, logically, means **a gathering in** as is the case with Jesus’ admonition to “*beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers*” (Luke 10:2). However, in the following scriptures the harvest/gathering cannot refer to any extended time for the conversion of individuals to Christianity but is the gathering to Jesus at the very end of the age—on the last day: “**The harvest is the conclusion (Gk *syntelia*) of the age**” (Matt. 13:39 *KIT*). However, rather than implying a long period of time, as in Watchtower theology, the Greek word *syntelia* means “a point of time marking completion of a duration” (Bauer’s *Greek-English Lexicon* and also note *Thayer’s lexicon* and

Marshall's Greek-English Interlinear which renders *syntelia* as "completion"). So, most translations render this word as "end," rather than "conclusion." Furthermore, *syntelia* is synonymous with the Greek word *telos* which also means "end" in Matthew 24:14. Therefore, *syntelia* is not a period of time. Additionally, if it did mean this, it would actually become an extra age, but the gathering of Christians to Christ is not to occur until the very end of this age. However, we have not yet reached the end of this age, so no Christians can have been resurrected in 1918 or the years following 1918 i.e., many years before the end of the age.

More on the Harvest-Time

Jesus speaks of the harvest of the metaphorical wheat as being the time for the gathering of his followers to join him, saying, in the NWT *"Let both [wheat and weeds] grow together until **the harvest, and in the harvest season...**"* (Matt. 13:30). However, once again the NWT has changed the wording to make it appear that the harvest will take a long period of time because the word "season" is not in the Greek text or in the Kingdom Interlinear Greek text. In fact, any harvesting will take a short time because it will be the action of angels (Matt. 24:31) in this harvesting to gather all true Christians up to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17). This is emphasized in the Revelation where John is shown Jesus as, *"... seated on the cloud ... someone like a **son of man** ... ¹⁵another angel ... calling with a loud voice ... Put your sickle in and **reap**, because the hour has come to reap, for **the harvest of the earth is fully ripe"*** (Rev.14:14-16). Of course, the wicked "weeds" are also harvested at this time and are later described as "the clusters of the vine of the earth" which are destroyed (Rev.14:18-20). In contrast to the destruction of this vine, "**the harvest** of the earth" concerns the holy ones who have already "endured" (14:12) during the three and a half-year period of the worship of "the wild beast" (14:9) along with, "**the dead who die** in union with the Lord from this time onward" (14:13). This harvest occurs when "the hour of judgment by him has arrived" (14:7b) at the end of the age. Therefore, no living Christians can then be in heaven. Indeed, all of the dead are in their graves awaiting resurrection.

Resurrection Is to Occur on "the Last Day"

The Greek word for "last" is *eschatos* which also means "final." So, this presumably refers to the final day of the present age. So, when Jesus says to the crowd following him concerning those who God had given

him, “*I will resurrect him on the **last day***” (John 6:40, 44, 54) and to Martha Jesus said of Lazarus, “*he will rise in the resurrection on the **last day***” (John 11:24), he clearly meant right at the end of “the present age—the very last day of it.

Furthermore, the last day of the present age must also immediately precede the first day of the ‘age to come’ [the Millennium], (Luke 20:35, Mark 10:30) and so making the theory of the first resurrection as occurring many years before the great tribulation impossible.

Summary of When the Resurrection Occurs

1. After the Man of Lawlessness appears.
2. After the great tribulation.
3. At the descending and *parousia* of the Lord Jesus.
4. At ‘the end of the age.’
5. On ‘the Last Day.’
6. At the last trumpet.

In Watchtower theology the great tribulation has not yet arrived and therefore the first resurrection has not yet occurred!

§

27

Not “Caught Away” Before Jesus’ Future Return

The teaching of the Organization is that the First resurrection is to heaven and that it occurred in 1918 exactly three and a half years after the setting up of the kingdom [supposedly Christ’s Parousia] in October 1914, but with a follow up of others living up to 1931 and then going to heaven when they die.

The Usage of the Greek Words for Jesus’ Return

However, this scenario is not possible because all **living** Christians must demonstrate their faith right through the great tribulation which occurs immediately before Jesus’ revelation (*Gk apokalipsis*), his

appearing/manifestation (*Gk epiphania*), his coming (*Gk erchomai*), and his advent/royal arrival (*Gk parousia*). This requires that they be on earth right up to the point when Jesus' return occurs. So, the following comparison and contextual usage of these Greek words will show this pattern that Christians will be:

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL *THE PAROUSIA*

- “Be patient then, brothers, **until** the coming to be King (*parousia*) of the Lord” (James 5:7).
- “And may the spirit and soul and body of you brothers...be **preserved** blameless at the coming to be King (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.5:23).

This comparison does not contradict the faulty Watchtower teaching that the *parousia* began in 1914. However, the following scriptural facts do not harmonize with the Watchtower's teaching.

STILL ON EARTH AT *THE APOKALYPSIS*

“...it is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you...⁷relief along with us at the revelation (*apokalipsei*) of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels...¹⁰at the time he comes (*elthe* from *erchomai*) to be glorified in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded in that day with wonder...” (2 Thess.1:6-7, 10).

Peter speaks of, “trials...in order that the tested quality of your faith...may be found a cause for praise and glory and honour **at** the revelation (*apokalipsei*) of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7) and “...set your hope upon the undeserved kindness that will be brought to you **at** the revelation (*apokalipsei*) of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13).

So, Paul, says, “...while you are eagerly waiting for the revelation (*apokalipsin*) of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also make you firm to the end (of the age), so that you may be open to no accusation **in** the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Cor.1:7-8).

NOTE: According to Bauer's Greek/English Lexicon it is: “The end (*telos*) of the age, not the end of one's life.”

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL *THE EPIPHANIA*

“...that you observe the commandment...until the manifestation /appearing (*epiphania*) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14).

So, why would Christians be awaiting the revelation of Jesus if he had

already revealed himself to them in an earlier invisible *parousia* and taken them to heaven? It is therefore necessary for all living Christians to prove their faith, set their hope, be made firm as blameless, be keeping the commandment, and waiting to receive “the undeserved kindness to be brought to you **at** the revelation (*apokalipsei*) of Jesus.” Hence no Christian can be separately alive in heaven at Armageddon which will occur at “*the epiphania of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL “*THE DAY OF CHRIST*”

In 1 Corinthians 1:7-8 we saw that Paul links “the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ” with his (*apokalipsis*) in showing that all Christians must be on the earth until Jesus literally and physically returns. Paul, later confirms this view when writing to the Philippians, saying,

“...so that you may be flawless and not stumbling others until the day of Christ” (*Phil. 1:10*).

“the one who started a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ” (*Phil. 1:6*).

There would be no need for such counsel if they were already in the perfection supposedly of heaven.

All Christians Must Be on Earth During the Great Tribulation

Jesus stated:

“Therefore, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation...standing in a holy place, ¹⁶then let those in Judea **begin fleeing to the mountains** ...²¹For then there will be **great tribulation**²³Then if anyone says to you, Look! Here is the Christ, or There! **Do not believe it.** For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs”

(*Matt. 24:15-16, 21, 23-24*).

Why would Jesus bother to give these warnings if anointed Christians would supposedly be already safely in heaven? It will be only after the tribulation that Jesus returns to gather the Christians. This is just as he directly stated in Matthew 24:29 that:

“**Immediately after** the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven...³⁰Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven...and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds”

(*Matt. 24:29-30*).

Only after this does Jesus send his angels to gather his chosen ones

(24:31). Furthermore, the “the holy ones” are shown to have endured the great tribulation when, “*It [the wild beast] was permitted to wage war with the holy ones and to conquer them*” (Rev. 13:7). Hence, they cannot be in heaven during the great tribulation.

The Being “Caught Away” Is for the Purpose of Meeting the Returning Jesus

Because of the teachings of Roman Catholicism, the Bible teaching of the being “caught away” i.e., the Rapture had been lost for over 1,000 years and only recovered some time after the Reformation. However, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 the Greek word *harpazo* means “snatched up” or “caught up.” It is the same as in Revelation 12:5 where the woman’s “*child was snatched away to God.*” Also, in Acts 8:39, 40 where “*the spirit of Lord snatched away (KIT) Philip...to Ashdod.*” Similar events happened to Enoch (Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5, 13), Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Jesus (Acts 1:9). This Greek term was translated into Latin as *rapere* from which we get the English word “rapture;” yet, the teaching is not much focused on by the Watchtower organization, but when it is then it is significantly misinterpreted by them. However, in the biblical scenario rapture occurs immediately after the resurrection as shown by Paul when he explains that:

*“The Lord himself [Jesus] will descend from heaven...and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise **first**. ¹⁷Afterward we the living who are surviving will, together with them, (“at the same time together with them” KIT) be **caught away** in clouds to **meet the Lord in the air**” (1 Thess. 4:16-17).*

Therefore, the descent of Jesus, the resurrection, and the rapture are all in close proximity of time. This will be the **only time for the resurrection of believers** before the Millennium.

The Organization’s Interpretation of the Rapture

The Organization does not accept the biblical teaching of the rapture but, in following the pattern of a pre-tribulation resurrection, they make it refer to an **invisible and secret resurrection**. So (1) “the Lord” of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is interpreted as being Jehovah who invisibly descends in the sense that he turns his attention to resurrecting the dead. (2) Being “**caught away**” is interpreted as the resurrection itself. (3) The description “in clouds” is interpreted as indicative of invisibility. Then (4) the “air” is changed into a reference to heaven. However, this is

misinterpretation for the following reasons:

- a. The description in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 shows this to be an event that is **very public**, inasmuch as there is a “trumpet blast” and the **loud** voice of an archangel. Additionally, Matthew 24:27 gives the singular description, in that chapter, of Jesus’ return as being comparable to ‘lightning’ which is so very **visible**. Also, the Greek words used to refer to Jesus’ return indicate that it will be a visible return. It must also be noted that it is Jesus, as appointed by Jehovah, who will perform the resurrection (John 5:28, 29). So, it follows that “the Lord” mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 must be Jesus who is literally descending into “the air” of earth’s atmosphere to resurrect and then rapture his faithful holy ones.
- b. The Governing Body’s interpretation of being “**caught away**” ignores the facts concerning the snatching away of Enoch, Elijah, Phillip, and the ascension of Jesus. None of these events were a resurrection but, rather, were a literal “snatching away” of living persons to a different location.
- c. In the Scriptures clouds are not generally indicative of invisibility but, rather, of God’s presence or that of his representatives. See the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* P. 157.
- d. The snatching up (away) **in the air**, (Gk *aera*) refers to: the atmosphere immediately above earth’s surface according to *Bauer’s Greek/English Lexicon*. Hence, there is no thought of going to heaven in this verse. So, the phrase: “and thus we will always be with the Lord” is because resurrected Christians will accompany Jesus as he continues his descent to earth (1 Thess. 4:17) to rule as king. Note: the Greek word *apantesis* indicates a continuing descent.

The First Resurrection Does Not Occur in Stages

As noted earlier the Organization teaches that after an initial resurrection of the Christian dead in 1918 there is a continuing, at-the-point-of-death, immediate resurrection to heaven of those who have died since then. This teaching is as a result of following the faulty pattern of the Pre-tribulation Rapture theory. However, it is clear from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 that all Christians who are living when Jesus descends will be **caught away** in clouds to **meet the Lord in the air** “**at the same time together with them** [i.e., all the Christians just resurrected] (KIT).” Indeed, to teach that there are multiple stages to the first

resurrection interferes with the biblical fact of it being a single event (1 Cor. 15:22). It makes each individual stage in itself a separate resurrection event and thereby producing not just a first resurrection but multiple resurrections. Furthermore, these “first resurrections” then become stretched over a period of 17 years up to 1935 or 92 years up to now according to current Governing Body teaching. Yet 1 Corinthians 15:23 gives three clearly defined and discrete events concerning the resurrection and which relate to three different categories of persons: 1) Jesus, 2) Christians, 3) The non-Christians at the ‘end’ of the Millennium (see Revelation 20:4-5). To posit the theory of many stages of the First Resurrection also violates the concept of a “last day” and “last trumpet” resurrection.

The Two Witnesses Are Killed During the Tribulation Then They Are Resurrected/Raptured

Revelation 11:3ff describes two witnesses who, prior to Armageddon (Rev. 16:15), prophesy for 1,260 days (3½ years) after which they are killed, but then:

*“...spirit of life from God entered into them, and they **stood upon their feet**...¹²And they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them: “**come on up here.**” And they went up into heaven (Gk ouranos) **in the cloud** and their enemies saw them” (Rev. 11:11-12).*

The Greek word *ouranos* here refers to the sky rather than God’s location. This is because “their enemies saw them” go up “in the cloud” showing this to mean “in the air” as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when Jesus brings relief for Christians: “who suffer tribulation” and “*will be given relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels*” (2 Thess.1:7, 8). Hence, the relief is not earlier than the great tribulation, so the pre-tribulation rapture scheme, as originally used by the Organization, is not the biblical pattern. In fact, the statement that, “*...spirit of life from God entered into them, and they **stood upon their feet***” (Rev 11:11) concerns the resurrection of Christians after they were killed.

The Any Moment Rapture Theory (Pre-Tribulationism)

The idea of an any moment resurrection and rapture could not happen in the apostles’ time. This is for several reasons:

- Jesus had stated that Peter would reach old age and die before Jesus returned. (John 21:18-23).
- Paul expected imprisonment, sufferings and a visit to Rome before Jesus' return.
- The Ephesian Elders were to expect “ravenous wolves,” yet they all entertained the coming of Christ as a “present hope” ... “the blessed hope.”
- The any moment rapture scheme produces a secret return of Jesus and a secret resurrection/rapture; yet there were many visual signs that God gave for the first coming of Jesus. So, why would God want the second coming of Messiah to be secretive?

WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF PASSAGES?

These emphasize the unexpected nature of the second coming for those who are unprepared i.e., not watching, rather than any silence or secrecy. This is why Jesus had said: *“But know one thing: If the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have **kept awake** and not allowed his house to be broken into. On this account, you too **prove yourselves ready**, because the Son of man is coming at an hour when you do not think to be it”* (Matt. 24:43, 44). See also Luke 12:39, 40. Jesus also warned the congregation in Sardis that, *“**unless you wake up**, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at all at what hour I will come upon you”* (Rev. 3:3). Paul also illustrated this point of being alert to Jesus' return and the resurrection by saying, *“But you, brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that **day** should overtake you as it would thieves”* (1 Thess. 5:4). This shows that the day will overtake them, but they are not caught unawares. However, none of this indicates some kind of secret or invisible rapture.

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28

Can the First Resurrection Really Be Under Way?

The Watchtower magazine article of January 1, 2007 attempts to prove that the first resurrection has been happening since 1918 with this teaching being based partly on the idea that the 24 elders represent the 144,000 joint heirs with Christ in their heavenly glory. However, this can be shown to be incorrect for the following reasons:

1. The 24 elders are heavenly beings and there is no indication that they were ever previously humans. Please see the seven reasons given in Chapter 50. THE 24 ELDERS OF REVELATION ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.
2. There is no heavenly glory in the sense of any Christian as ever going to heaven as noted earlier.
3. The first resurrection occurs at one single time as shown in the Watchtower's *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* of 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18.
4. The first resurrection occurs most specifically on the "last day" (John 6:40, 44, 54; 11:24) There is no indication in the Scriptures that this is any extended period of time but simply the last day of this present age.
5. The so-called evidence that the first resurrection has already been taking place because in Revelation 6, as part of the 5th seal, "a white robe was given to each of them," flies in the face of the facts that:
 - Revelation 6:9-11 concerns martyrs who are still dead because, as the Society correctly teaches, it is their sacrificed blood that is at the base of the altar metaphorically. However, one cannot switch to literal meanings within **a single entirely metaphorical passage**. Indeed, because the 'blood at the base of the altar' is a metaphor to show that they are dead, then when, "a white robe was given to each of them" it is still in a metaphorical or promissory sense and is the same as when Abel's blood metaphorically cries out for vindication (Gen. 4:10, Heb. 11:4). Also, Isaiah 14:9, 10 gives an example of the dead speaking, but not literally. So too, Revelation 6:9-11 is poetic imagery of the promise that martyred Christians will later be given such white robes ("**will be** clothed" Rev. 3:5).
 - Also, the 24 elders of Revelation 4:4 clothed in white garments are completely different individuals to Christians and can be seen as clothed in white just as the angels were clothed in white at Jesus' tomb.

- It is not until the last trumpet (1 Cor.15:52) that the first resurrection takes place.
- The great tribulation, which obviously has not yet begun, will occur before the first resurrection. Logically, the first resurrection cannot, therefore have begun.
- Anointed Christians are resurrected, as Jesus was: He was human, tangible, and visible, but with a glorified immortal and imperishable body. (Please see Chapters 7-9). So, Christians too, are promised the same type of body which, in being tangible, will give proof of the resurrection as having occurred inasmuch as all such resurrected ones will be visible and tangible.

Conclusion

From the above facts it is evident that the first resurrection from “the sleep of death” is the receiving of the “spiritual body,” which is not the same as an intangible ‘spirit’ body; but rather it is tangible, so that it will be based on who we are now i.e., human—but granted incorruption (imperishability), immortality, glory, and power (1 Cor. 15:42-54). This first resurrection will be at the time of Christ’s return and will be of all Christians including those faithful people prior to Christ who anticipated the coming of Messiah. The second resurrection will be to mortality and will occur a thousand years later and concerns all those who died as non-Christians. Unlike the teaching of the Governing Body, no one except Christ Jesus has yet been resurrected, and when the resurrection does occur it will not be an invisible one.



PART SIX

False Teachings on the Time of the End

29

Did the Sign of the Last Days Begin in 1914?

Was World War I the Beginning of the Last Days?

In its earliest days the Watchtower Society claimed that mankind entered “the last days” in 1799 and that Jesus returned in 1874. Currently, the Society claims that both these events occurred when World War I began in 1914. This claim is based on Matthew 24:7. The following wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are pointed to as being the **composite sign** of Jesus having become invisibly present in 1914 and that the “last days” had begun then. All these features of problems in the world are said to be much worse than in any century before the 20th century. However, an examination of history shows that, in overall terms, the 14th century was a much worse century for most people to have lived in, and other centuries have also been worse than the 20th in respect of the individual aspects. So now it is worthwhile for us to examine the 20th century in relation to the four significant aspects that Jesus noted in his Olivet discourse of Matthew 24/Luke 21.

WARS — Although there were more deaths caused by **World War II** than any other war, the supposed key time marker i.e., World War I, did not result in more deaths than all previous wars put together, as is sometimes misquoted from certain sources. As examples, in 1644 the **Manchu-Chinese war** claimed an estimated 25 million lives and from 1850 to 1864 the **Taiping Rebellion** claimed between 20-30 million lives. At least one set of wars earlier than 1914 was considered by historians to be total war i.e., a world war, namely, the Napoleonic wars from 1793.

Although the Organization quotes sources which state that 33 nations were involved in ‘the Great War’ yet only 14 nations were significantly involved and the death toll was 8.5 million of mobilized men and a total of 15 million which included deaths from epidemic diseases and malnutrition. This means that some wars prior to 1914 were worse in terms of the number of deaths.

FAMINES — The resulting famine from the flood of **1877-78 in China** caused an estimated 9 to 13 million deaths. By contrast, deaths from the famines of the 20th century range from 3 to 5 million. When providing statistics today the definition of ‘starvation’ concerns the lack of one or more essential nutrients. According to the older definition less than 1% (40 million) of mankind is actually now starving. This is not the extreme and contradictory figures of 12.5%, 25%, and 80% often quoted. So, there was at least one famine prior to 1914 worse than anything since 1914.

PESTILENCES — The Black Death of **1330-1350**, perhaps the worst disaster of all time, killed one quarter or more of the world’s population. So, by percentage of population this was worse than any pestilence since 1914.

EARTHQUAKES — Possibly the worst earthquake of all time occurred on 1 November **1875** and was centred in Lisbon, the shock of which was felt over much of the world. However, it is impossible to be certain regarding earthquakes because there were no true seismologists before the mid-1800s and therefore only few and poor records were kept.

What Do All These Facts Mean?

None of the above facts are meant to diminish the very bad situations in many places of the world. Nevertheless, none of the above features on their own are part of the sign of Jesus’ return or that the “last days” began in 1914 or even have begun up to now. More importantly the claim by the Organization that it is the combining of all these types of events of the 20th century that make it the worst century of all history and is therefore **a composite sign** of the last days. This is simply not true. If one were to combine the details of these types of events to present a composite sign for the 14th century, it would indicate that that century was far worse than the 20th century.

Furthermore, as will be shown later, it is not specifically the world wars, famines, pestilences, or earthquakes noted by Jesus that are “the sign” of “the conclusion of the system of things” or better rendered “end of the age.” However, because the paradise conditions prophesied for the earth have not yet arrived some may be tempted to promote the idea of “the last days” as being a very long period of time running from (although wrongly) 1914.

Jesus Spoke, Not of “Last Days,” But Only of a Sign of His Return and “The End of the Age”

Please search through all of Matthew chapters 10, 24, and 25; Mark 13; and Luke chapters 19, and 21. In none of the passages concerning Jesus’ great prophecy given on the Mount of Olives or his earlier statements related to it, does Jesus use the phrase “the last days” or any synonym for it. However, what Jesus did speak of were events concerned with his return at “the end of the age.” Indeed, his disciples asked him, “*when will these things be, and what will be the **sign of your presence** (Gk *parousia* = coming, advent, arrival) and of the conclusion of the system of things*” (Matt. 24:3).

NOTE: The NWT rendering of “system of things” loses the correct Jewish understanding of “this age” and “the age to come.” In KIT the Greek word *aionos* is correctly rendered as “age”

SEEING “ALL THESE THINGS”

Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ question in Matthew 24:3 concerned the sign that would indicate his soon return: “...*when you see all these things, know that **he is near** at the doors*” (Matt. 24:33). Yet the phrase “**he is near** at the doors” does not refer to geographical proximity but near in time. Jesus’ answer was also about “**the end**” (Gk *telos* verses 13, 14) and the end of the age would be synchronous with Jesus’ return. He did not speak of any long *period of the last days as marked by a sign*. Although Jesus’ mention of wars, famines and pestilences is significant, such things were not the actual sign for his return. So, the First World War along with the Spanish influenza was not a sign that Jesus had returned or that “the last days” had begun. But can Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:34 be used to prove that people living since 1914 must be those who will see “the end of this system of things”?

NOTE: For a further discussion of “the last days” and “the sign” (please see my book *Prophecies Related to the Return of Jesus*).

§

30

Is It the 1914 Generation That Will See Armageddon?

Until the late 1990s the Watchtower Society taught that Jesus' words concerning "this generation" in his statement, "this generation (*Gk genea*) will by no means pass away until all these things happen" (Mat. 24:34-35) covered a period of seventy years which began in 1914, and so leading to the idea that Armageddon would occur in the mid-1980s. But in the late 1990s the society re-evaluated its understanding of Jesus' words and concluded that they applied to people during an undetermined period of time, but still beginning in 1914 and stretching to whenever Armageddon would occur. However, even this definition is incorrect according to the following biblical information.

A Section of Mankind with Similar Characteristics

The Greek word *genea* does not refer to any approximate time such as seventy years or even any undetermined human period of time, but rather it applies to any group of people with a common characteristic—whether good or bad. This can be seen from the way Jesus used the word *genea* when he said that: "*the sons of this system of things (age) are wiser in a practical way toward their own generation (or "their own kind" in many translations) than the sons of the light are*" (Luke 16:8). As an example, the CEB renders it as, "dealing with their peers." This indicates that *genea* refers to a class of people as with the description of Israel of whom Moses said: "*They are not his children, the defect is their own. They are a twisted and crooked generation*" (Deut. 32:5). So, the following examination of the term "generation" throughout the Scriptures reveals more on what actually is the common characteristic of the people Jesus spoke about.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED GENERATIONS

- "*For God is with the generation of the righteous*" (Ps. 14:5).
- "*There is a generation that curses its father*" or "*There is a type of people who curse their fathers*" (Prov. 30:11 CJB).
- "*A **wicked and adulterous generation** keeps seeking a sign*" (Matt. 16:4) and "*this **adulterous and sinful generation...***" (Mark 8:38) and "*Get saved from this **crooked generation***" (Acts 2:40). This is in spite of all the evidence of Jesus' messiahship provided for them by his words and actions. So, "this generation" is therefore unbelieving.

So, any one ‘kind’ or ‘generation’ is not bounded by human time periods—such a kind exists throughout all periods of time. In particular, the ‘kind/generation’ that is evil, adulterous, and crooked are not bounded by time periods fixed by humans, but come to their end as a ‘kind’ when God brings them to an end. This shows that they don’t exist only from 1914 to that end. So, “this generation” refers to people throughout human history who are of this particular ‘kind’ i.e., evil, adulterous, sinful, and crooked and have lived during what the Scriptures call “the present age.” So, they come to their end at “the end of the age” (not “system of things”) when Jesus returns.

In Hebrew thinking “this generation” refers to the people that Jesus was speaking of at that time, but taken ‘corporately’ of the **entire wicked society of mankind** which is organized against God and living throughout “the present age” between the two advents or “comings” of Jesus as Messiah. This is verified by considering the context of Jesus’ words about “this generation” which is better rendered as “the society of this age/present society.”

THE CONTEXT OF “GENERATION” MATTHEW 24:34

The Journal of the evangelical Theological Society 38:3 (Sept 1996) states: “In the context of the discourse it (this generation) refers to that type of consummately evil and unbelieving people who **deceive and persecute** the disciples of Christ until the time of the parousia...” Therefore, the “generation that will not pass away until all these things take place” is the section of humanity that epitomizes “this age” in being evil, adulterous, sinful, perverse, crooked, unbelieving, and pure in their own eyes. It therefore exists in opposition to God and exists right up to the time of Jesus’ return. So, although this is not the way we use the term ‘generation’ in 21st century Western thinking, it is the meaning in first century and earlier Jewish thinking. However, because the Organization wishes to save its 1914 doctrine of an invisible return of Jesus it has developed unbiblical definitions of some of the terms used by Jesus.

The Watchtower’s “Overlapping Generation” Doctrine

As just noted, in the late 1990s the Watchtower redefined what Jesus meant by “generation” to be as of an undetermined length of time for “this wicked society of mankind” but still existing between 1914 and “the end, and as involving only those who will see Armageddon. This period is linked with the time of Christ’s so-called invisible presence in heaven. Yet because the Organization still wishes to portray “this

generation of the wicked society of mankind” as existing only from 1914, they have the usual problem that Armageddon never seems to come within any Watchtower Society time-scale and because many so-called ‘anointed class’ individual JW’s continue to die off and not see Armageddon. So, steadily the connection between the two events of 1914 and “the end” is being broken. To solve this problem, the Society did a little more redefining of the term ‘generation’ which was published on April 15th, 2010. The Watchtower magazine issue of that date said:

How then, are we to understand Jesus’ words about “this generation”? He evidently meant that the lives of the anointed who were on hand when the sign began to become evident in 1914 **would overlap** with the lives of other anointed ones who would see the start of the great tribulation.

So, as an example of how this works out as occurring before Armageddon: what if, at the annual Lord’s Evening Meal, one of the ‘anointed’ class of Jehovah’s Witnesses who saw 1914 is the last one of these 1914ers. And another of the anointed’ class of Jehovah’s Witnesses born much later also partakes of the emblems at the same annual Lord’s Evening Meal (perhaps in a different area). If the older ‘anointed’ one then dies what happens to the continuity of the ‘anointed’ class who must not pass away until “the end” of the age? Prior to 2010 this situation would have been a major cause for alarm among the rank-and-file JW’s, and embarrassment for the Organization as regards its teaching. However, since April 2010 this problem has now been alleviated because there **will always be a new person claiming to be of the ‘anointed’ class!**

Nevertheless, on a question of definition it seems presumptuous to speak of what Jesus “evidently meant” without Jesus giving that definition or any proof from other parts of the Scriptures or even background information for such a definition. It also seems to be extremely imaginative to say that: “the lives of the anointed who were on hand when the sign began to become evident in 1914 **would overlap** with the lives of other anointed ones who would see the start of the great tribulation.” This is because Jesus said that “no one knows the day or the hour.” So, this Watchtower statement is presumptuous to the extent of being a claim that the Organization knows more than Jesus knows. Nevertheless, even the metaphorical sleight-of-hand in this current Watchtower scheme could not continue indefinitely because it only works with younger ones of the so-called ‘anointed’ class of Jehovah’s Witnesses whose lives overlap the last of the 1914ers. Once the more recent ‘anointed’ ones begin to die off before Armageddon then

eventually there will be no more overlap with the 1914ers and the whole connection is lost unless the Organization comes up with a further new definition of these terms and events. If, of course, they wish to propose that an anointed person living between the one who saw 1914 and the one who finally sees Armageddon is part of this skewed scheme, then that middle “anointed” person will not have seen either of these events at the end points. So, the Organization’s scheme is a wholly unbiblical approach which is purely from the schemes of men. If we examine all of the details of Jesus great “time of the end” prophecy, from Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 we get a significantly different picture.

There certainly is no mention of any overlapping generation in the Bible and nor is there even such a concept. From the research done by one sister it appears that the Governing Body simply took the concept from diagrams of the United States Social Security System and adapted them for its own purposes. Indeed, the fact is that Jesus spoke of “generation” singular, but not of a combining of a number of generations into one.

§

31

The Sign of the End of the Age and Its Precursors

The Watchtower Society, along with several other denominations, understands the occurrence of the wars, famines, and earthquakes noted by Jesus to be the sign of his return, albeit invisible in Watchtower theology. But is this what Jesus really meant when he answered his disciples’ question of “*when will these things be and what will be the sign of your presence (“coming”) and of the conclusion of the system of things (“end of the age”)?*” (*Matt. 24:3*)? In fact, a careful analysis of all that Jesus said leads to the conclusion that the wars, famines, and earthquakes, along with the appearance of false messiahs are all precursors to the sign of the end of the age. So, Jesus gave three major warnings of what will happen before the sign appears:

1. “And in answer Jesus said to them: ‘Look out that nobody misleads you, for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many” (Matt. 24:4-5).

So, before answering the disciples’ question regarding what will be the sign, Jesus gave them this warning which he enlarged upon it in verses 11, 23-28. As an example of one claiming ‘I am the Christ’—a messianic claim—there was Bar Kochba in A.D. 135. Nevertheless, such ones appear on the scene throughout the period when “the end is not yet.” Jesus then went on to say:

2. “You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but **the end is not yet**” For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages [Gk *limos* = “famines” in KIT and all other translations] and earthquakes in one place after another. All these things are **a beginning of pangs of distress**” (Matt. 24:7, 8). Also see Mark 13:4-8 and Luke 21:8-11a.

NOTE: There is a significant difference between “food shortages” in the NWT and “famines.”

3. “...when you [Christians] see **“the disgusting thing that causes desolation”** [“when Jerusalem’ is surrounded by armies” in Luke 21:20], as spoken about by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place ... for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now” (Matt. 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23 and Luke 21:20-24).

A MIDDLE-EASTERN SCENARIO

It is clear that Jesus drew upon the information provided by all the ancient prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. In particular he drew upon Daniel’s prophecies by referencing things “as spoken about by Daniel” (Matt. 24:15) which include the wars of the King of the North (“the disgusting thing that causes desolation”) in Daniel 11 when “**nation will rise against nation**” and these events will naturally be followed by **famines** and **pestilences** (Luke 21:11). Jesus also added **earthquakes** (Joel 2:10; Isa. 29:6) as part of these characteristics of “*the beginning of the birth pains*” (verse 8). Unlike Watchtower teaching, Jesus focuses on the local situation in *Judea* (Matt. 24:16; Zech. 12-14). So, all these events are yet to occur in the middle-east in harmony with the general location detailed by all the ancient prophets, although they do finally involve the whole world.

Time of the End Persecution of Christians

So, by studying the book of Daniel it is evident that this is the time of the appearance of the Antichrist as **the desolator** of Jerusalem and the instigator of a relatively short but intense burst of persecution upon both Jews and Christians. This event begins in the middle of Daniel's 70th week and continues for somewhat less than 3½ years.

MATTHEW GIVES A SYNOPSIS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

It would appear that in Matthew's version of the Olivet discourse, before going into greater detail from verse 15 to 31, Jesus gives a synopsis of the great tribulation in verses 9-14: *"Then (at that time) people will hand you over to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name ... Then, too, Many will be stumbled..." (Matt. 24:9-13)*. Such tribulation means persecution and the experiencing of hatred which results in a falling away by many from the Christian faith. This reminds us of Paul's words at 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 3 that the day of the Lord *"will not come unless the apostasy ("rebellion" in many translations is a better rendering) comes first."*

NOTE: Contextually the "lawlessness" mentioned in Matthew 24:12 is not world crime statistics, i.e., not a reference to the lawlessness within society in general, but rather lawlessness against God by Christians because they "fall away."

After giving his synopsis of the great tribulation in Matthew 24:9-14, Jesus, in Jewish literary fashion, went into greater detail by now discussing what will cause the great tribulation and in giving warnings of what Christians must watch out for, namely, the false prophets who will attempt to mislead them along with details of what they must do concerning fleeing to the mountains. So, when Jesus says in verse 14 *"and then the end will come"* he is speaking of the end of the age which is *"the last day"* (John 6:40), but the final precursor to the "end" is, *"when you see the disgusting thing that causes desolation spoken about by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place ... for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now"* (Matt. 24:15, 21).

The Sign of the End
Becomes Evident to the Whole World

After showing that, **“the end is not yet.** For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages (“famines”) and earthquakes in one place after another. All these things are **a beginning of pangs of distress**” and leading to the great tribulation caused by “the disgusting thing...” (i.e., the antichrist), and finally God’s Day of wrath, Jesus then explains that:

*“Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the **sign of the Son of man** will appear in heaven ...and they [the whole world] will **see** the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24: 29, 30).* See also in Mark 13:24-26.

The fact that the whole world sees this sign is shown in the parallel account given by Luke when he reports Jesus’ words as: *“And there will be **signs in sun and moon and stars**, and on the earth anguish of nations not knowing the way out because of the roaring of the sea and its agitation” (Luke 21:25).*

Clearly, Christians will understand that what begins to take place in and around Jerusalem with the actions of the Antichrist and the subsequent great tribulation is the most powerful indicator that after an undetermined period of less than 3½ years Jesus would return. Yet the unbelieving world will not know that Jesus is about to appear until there is a visible physical sign and then he is actually visible in glory, as described in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, and with devastating plagues being poured out on the truly wicked of the world as described in the book of Revelation.

§

32

Jesus Cannot Have Returned in 1914

As noted, according to the teaching of the Watchtower Society there was an **invisible** return of Jesus in 1914 (when he became present) and there will yet be a future **invisible** return when Jesus comes to bring

destruction on the wicked. This two-phase return scheme is based on the use of the Greek words concerning Jesus' return, so that his presence (Gk *parousia*) supposedly began in 1914 as the first phase, and his future revealing (Gk *apokalypsis*) at Armageddon will be the second phase.

Based Partly on a Dispensational Teaching

The Society's teaching was originally based on the very popular teaching of dispensationalism from the 1830s onward (See my book *Prophecies Related to the Return of Jesus* which shows why this scheme is incorrect) which proposes that Jesus will, in the future, return **invisibly** to resurrect Christians. and then rapture them along with living Christians to heaven (1 Thess. 4:15-17) before the great tribulation. Then seven years later, after the great tribulation, including the pouring out of God's wrath on wicked mankind, the second phase will occur when Jesus returns again, but this time **visibly** to set up the Kingdom. This scheme was as the result of a vision by Margaret MacDonald, a woman from a church in Scotland in 1830, and was popularized by J.N. Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren. It is commonly called *the pre-tribulation rapture at any moment* scheme.

Even if this Dispensationalist scheme was the biblical sequencing of events for Jesus' return, the Watchtower Organization's scheme would still be incorrect because it is evident that the *parousia* ("coming") of Jesus will be visible. Furthermore, because of the failures, prior to 1914, of the dates set by the Watchtower Society for Jesus' revealing (Gk *apokalypsis*) they have altered their scheme to some extent so that the biblical 3½ times, 1,290 days, and 1,335 days are no longer applied to future events. However, the Organization still presents an open-ended gap between the 1914 presence of Jesus (Gk *parousia*) and his bringing of Armageddon. As of October 2021, there is a 107-year gap since October 1914 when Jesus was supposed to have become present (his *parousia*) and the yet to occur great tribulation when Jesus is revealed.

The Bible Does Not Show a Two-Phase Return of Jesus

The Scriptures do not allow for any long gap between any so-called phases of Jesus' return running from 1914 to when Jesus returns to bring destruction on the wicked of this world. Indeed, Jesus returns just once as stated in Hebrews:

“...Christ...the **second time** that he **appears** (Gk *opsthesetai*) it will

be apart from sin, and he will be seen by those earnestly looking for him for their salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

Clearly, Jesus’ first appearance was in the first century. So, this verse shows that there is only “a **second time that he appears**” and not a 1914 return and then a later Armageddon return. There is not a Part A second presence and then a Part B second presence. This is further confirmed by understanding the contexts in which the Greek words for his return were used in the Scriptures. As shown in Chapter 13 these words i.e., *parousia*, *apokalypsis*, *epiphaneia*, and *erchomai* all refer to the one single time of Jesus’ return, and so not in two phases.

The Unknown Time of Jesus’ Return

After stating in his Olivet discourse that: “*concerning that day and hour nobody knows...*” (Matt. 24:36) Jesus focused on those who are “faithful and discrete” along with those who are watchful, saying:

*“Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. “But know one thing: if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because **the Son of man is coming** at an hour that you do not think to be it”*

(Matt. 24:42-44).

However, the 1973 Watchtower produced book *God’s Kingdom of a Thousand Years*, pp. 336, 337 applied these verses to the **future return** of Jesus at the time of the great tribulation. This means that the following verses, as an expansion of verses 42-44, must also be applied to that future time:

*“Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if **his master on coming** finds him doing so! Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings” (Matt. 24:45-46).*

So, because the “Son of man” i.e., “the master” has not yet come, and the great tribulation has clearly not occurred, there **could not have been an appointment of a “faithful and discreet slave” in 1919**. However, the phrase “faithful and discrete slave” does not apply to an organization, but to individual Christians and not to any organization (please see Luke 12:42-48). Indeed, **such appointments will be future**.

Jesus Returns Once and Only After the Great Tribulation

In contrast to the faulty system of a two-stage return of Jesus—commonly called the pre-tribulation rapture, Jesus says: “...for then there will be **great tribulation** ... ²⁹Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven...³⁰Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven...and they will **see the Son of man coming on the clouds**” (Matt. 24:21, 29-30). Later Paul showed that the tribulation for Christians comes before Jesus returns, saying:

*“... that it is righteous on God’s part to repay tribulation to those who make **tribulation for you...relief** along with us at the revelation (Gk apokalipsei) of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels ... at the time he comes (Gk elthe from erchomai) to be glorified in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded in **that day** with wonder” (2 Thess. 1:6-7, 10).*

Clearly, because the **great tribulation** has not yet occurred it is evident that Jesus’ one-time return cannot have occurred in 1914 or at any time up to now.

Rewards Are Given Only When Jesus Appears

The Scriptures make it very clear that Christians do not get their reward at the point in time when they die, but rather when Jesus appears because it is:

“...Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his manifestation (‘appearing’ Gk epiphaneian) and his kingdom ... ⁸there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me as a reward in that day, yet not to me only, but also to all who have loved his manifestation” (2 Tim. 4:1, 8).

*“...trials...in order that the tested quality of your faith...may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the **revelation** (apokalipsei) of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7).*

*“And when the Chief Shepherd has been made manifest (**appears** phanerothentos), you will receive the unfading crown of glory”*

(1 Pet. 5:4).

*“When he is made manifest (**appears** phanerothe), we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is” (1 John 3:2b).*

REWARDS ARE GIVEN AT RESURRECTION TIME

*“For you will be repaid in **the resurrection** of the righteous ones”*

(Luke 14:14).

Therefore, the rewards to the one single class of true Christians i.e., all true Christians are not given at an earlier so-called secret *parousia*, but only when the kingdom comes at Jesus’ one-time appearing and revelation.

All Christians Must Be Resolute Until the Day Christ Returns

This one-time return of Christ must occur on a particular **day** and the Scriptures show that all living Christians (no Christians are ever alive in heaven. (Please see Chapters 18 and 19)) must be on earth to continue to work faithfully for Christ because:

*“...each one’s work will be shown for what it is, for **the day** will show it up, because it will be revealed by means of fire”*

(1 Cor. 3:13).

*“...the one who started a good work in you will bring it to completion until **the day of Christ Jesus** ... ¹⁰so that you may be flawless and not stumbling others up to **the day of Christ**”*

(Phil. 1:6, 10b).

Also, Christians are to, “...hold fast to what you have until **I come**” (Rev. 2:25). So, as will be seen in Chapter 39 “**the day of Jehovah/the day of Christ**” occurs after the great tribulation. Logically both events are yet in the future. So, the above encouragements would be meaningless if the body of Christ were not here on earth to greet Jesus when he physically and visibly returns.

Nobody Knows the Day or Hour of Christ’s Return

There has been much debate regarding the very significant words of Jesus of: “Concerning that day and hour **nobody knows**, neither the angels of the heavens **nor the Son, but only the Father**” (Matt. 24:36). The debate has been over whether or not Jesus does now know when that “day and hour” will occur. In the reasoning of the Organization this still allows for one to endeavour to calculate the year and perhaps the month of either Jesus’ return or Armageddon. However, this is also an incorrect understanding, because in answer to the disciples’ question of: “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?” (Acts 1:6) Jesus answered, in verse 7 that, “it does not belong to you to know **the times and seasons...**” Certainly, such calculations by the Watchtower Society have never worked for them. Nevertheless, Jesus’ words about “the day or hour” do not refer to the day or hour for the great tribulation [wrongly including Armageddon] as taught by the Society, but rather to Christ’s *parousia* or coming to be present—his arrival. This Greek term is used in verses 3, 27, 37, 39 of Matthew 24. Additionally, verses 42, 44 and 46 use the word “**coming**” of the master to show that it is one and the same event. Yet in contradiction of Matthew 24:36 the Organization claimed, prior to 1914 and continues to claim, that October 1914 was the time that Christ’s *parousia* began. Yet, there is no scriptural evidence that Christ has yet arrived. If there was, then the kingdom would have already improved the world substantially rather than having no major positive effect and, in fact, allowing the world to get worse in many ways.

If, as the Organization claims, Jesus was the agent of the Genesis creation (please see my book *Can There Be Three persons in One God? – Why You Should Examine the Trinity Doctrine {in the sections on pre-existence}*) he would have known when it was created, and therefore could have calculated when 6,000 years of man’s existence would have been completed as the time for Armageddon to take place (supposedly shortly after 1975 in Watchtower teaching). Yet he did not know the time of his return and therefore would not be able to give the time of Armageddon. In fact, he warned: “Look out that you are not misled; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘**The due time is near.**’ Do not go after them” (Luke 21:8), and yet one of C.T. Russell’s books was entitled ‘The Time is at Hand’ and so showing him to be one of those who mislead. Other very early misapplied dates by the Society for Christ’s *Parousia* (return) were that:

- Jesus returned and the Millennium began in 1873 as stated in *Thy Kingdom Come*, p.305.
- Jesus returned and the Millennium began in 1874 as stated in *The*

Finished Mystery, p.386.

The fact is the Jesus will only return after the great tribulation as clearly shown in his words recorded in Matthew 24:29-31 that: *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days...²⁹then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven (the sky), and all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in grief, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

Biblical Description of a False Prophet

It is for each one of Jehovah’s Witnesses to consider the facts about the Watchtower’s track record on setting dates for the end of this system of things. However, one thing is clear which is:

*“When any prophet presumptuously speaks a word in my name that I did not command him to speak...that prophet must die. However, you may say in your heart: “How will we know that Jehovah has not spoken the word?”” When the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word is **not fulfilled or does not come true**, then Jehovah did not speak that word. The prophet spoke it presumptuously. You should not fear him”*

(Deut. 18:20-22).

Although Watchtower may say that they are not a “prophet” and are not even inspired they certainly have made predictions in Jehovah’s name. They predicted the likely end of this system of things to be in 1873, then 1874, then 1914, then 1925, then 1975, and then to be before the end of the 20th century. You may draw your own conclusions concerning what their position will finally be before God according to the above text.



PART SEVEN

Misguided Calculations for the Last Days

34

Jerusalem's Destruction Not in 607 B.C.E. - the Evidence

The date for the destruction of ancient Jerusalem is of paramount importance for the theology of the Watchtower Society and is taken by them to be 607 B.C.E.; whereas all other commentators understand this date to be 586/7 B.C.E.—**a difference of about 20 years**. This date of 607 B.C.E. is the starting point for the Society's calculation which moves forward 2,520 years (seven "times" turned into years) of "Gentile times" so as to arrive at the date of October 1914 for the establishment of God's Kingdom in heaven. From this latter date the Society has taken the phrase "time, times and half a time" (3½ years) mentioned in both the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, so as to arrive at the year 1919 as the time that Jesus supposedly selected the Society to be God's only organization on earth. So, it is vital to ascertain which is the correct date for the destruction of ancient Jerusalem, and whether or not the "Gentile times" really is a period of "seven times" amounting to 2,520 years.

Indeed, the Watchtower Society and all other religious and secular authorities accept the year 539 B.C.E., as the certain date when the Babylonian Empire fell. This therefore is a pivotal date which can be used to calculate events in Bible history. However, more importantly **586/7 B.C.E.** as the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar **is a date that is even better attested than 539**. So how does one resolve this difference of opinion between the Watchtower teaching and the view of all others? We start by examining some historical facts about King Nebuchadnezzar who invaded Jerusalem.

The Eighteenth Year of Nebuchadnezzar's Reign

According to both the Bible and secular chronology the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians occurred in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Jeremiah tells us that: *"...in the 10th year of King Zedekiah of Judah, that is, the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. At*

that time the armies of the king of Babylon were besieging Jerusalem” (Jer. 32:1b-2). Now only the Watchtower Organization and the various Bible Students associations state that that this 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign was in 607 B.C.E; whereas all modern-day historiographers, archaeologists, and Bible scholars acknowledge the date to have been **586/587** B.C.E. This date is proven from the following works of ancient historians; cuneiform tablets; business, administrative, and legal documents; planetary movements; and synchronous links to Egyptian chronology. It is an absolutely fixed date in history.

THE WORKS OF ANCIENT HISTORIANS

a) **Berossus** whose work is quoted in Josephus and Eusebius.

b) **Ptolemy’s Canon** which is the Babylonian king list known as *The Royal Canon*. However, Berossus used much older works as his sources and his work is completely independent of Ptolemy’s and yet they show the same regnal dates for the Neo-Babylonian period. Although these regnal dates are confirmed by the thousands of cuneiform tablets, these historical works are no longer needed to fix the regnal dates for the Neo-Babylonian period.

CUNEIFORM TABLETS (tens of thousands of these tablets)

1. Chronicles, king lists, and royal inscriptions.

a) Neo-Babylonian Chronicles including the **Nabonidus Chronicle** which is contemporary with the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and gives the whole chronology. This matches those of Ptolemy and Berossus.

b) **The Uruk king list.**

Composed three hundred years after the Neo-Babylonian dynasty and gives the whole chronology. This also matches those of Ptolemy and Berossus.

c) Royal inscriptions: including:

1. Nabonidus No.18. This establishes Nabonidus’ 2nd year as **554/553** because of the lunar eclipse at that time. (Please note that Nabonidus was Belshazzar’s father).
2. The Hillah stele (Nabonidus No.8). This stele gives the whole chronology for the Neo-Babylonian period.
3. Adad-guppi stele (Nabon No. 24). Adad-guppi was the mother of Nabonidus. This stele gives the whole chronology for the Neo-Babylonian period except for that of Nabonidus because he was still living.

2. Business, administrative, and legal documents.

About 55,000 contemporary tablets exist (of which over 5,000 have

been published) that are consistently dated for each year of the Neo-Babylonian period. For these dates to be wrong by 20 years (as claimed by the Watchtower Society) would require a conspiracy of silence on an empire-wide scale through the centuries. Such a conspiracy would have had to have involved hundreds of scribes, chroniclers, officials and astrologers. Yet there are no documents that indicate any missing period of twenty years.

3. The astronomical diaries.

- **VAT 4956.** This fixes the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar to 568 B.C.E by a unique set of astronomical observations and establishes his accession year as being in 605 B.C.E (not 625 as per Watchtower Society) and his 18th year being fixed at **587/586** B.C.E. (not 607) Indeed, the Society tries to discredit this diary because it is a copy made in the 3rd century and "so it is possible that its historical information is simply that which was accepted in the Seleucid period" as if this period was somehow unreliable, which it is not. In fact, the Society looks for support for 539 from Diodorus (1st century BC), Africanus (3rd century AD), and Eusebius (3rd/4th century AD) who were all far more distant in time from the event than was the copyist of VAT 4956.

- B M 32312 + the Akitu pin.

This fixes the 16th year of Shamashshumukin to 652/1. When combined with the other documents this gives Nebuchadnezzar's reign as being from 605-562. BC.

4. Lunar eclipse tablets

- Saros cycle texts LBAT 1417, 1419, 1420 and 1421. These provide absolute dates for the Neo-Babylonian dynasty with Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year being fixed at **587/586** B.C.E.

5. The Saturn tablet in two pieces B.M.76738 and B.M.76813.

- This gives the dates of fourteen successive years when Saturn disappears behind the sun. This pattern of positions is not repeated again in more than seventeen centuries. The tablet fixes the regnal dates of Nabopolassar's predecessor Kandalanu as 647-627. From this the Neo-Babylonian chronology is calculated to demonstrate Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year as **587/586**.

6. Synchronous links to Egyptian chronology and contemporary Egyptian documents.

- Crown-Prince Nebuchadnezzar fought against Pharaoh Necho at

Carchemish in 605 and not the Society's date of 624/5 B.C.E. In fact, a date of 625 for this event is impossible because Necho did not begin his rule until **610** B.C.E.

- Although Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo in 609 B.C.E. one year after the established date for the beginning of Necho's reign in 610 B.C.E, yet the Society puts a date for his death at 629 B.C.E., some 20 years before he fought that battle.
- Immediately after Jerusalem's destruction some Jews fled to Egypt under Pharaoh Hophra [Apries]. Since he began to reign in 589 B.C.E, Jerusalem could not have been destroyed in 607 B.C.E.
- The Society claims that Nebuchadnezzar died in 582; but a fragmentary cuneiform text mentions his battle against Pharaoh Amasis whose reign began in 570 B.C.E.

Finally, the *Encyclopedia Britannica Macropedia* 15th Edition Volume 22 p.359a under "Jerusalem" states: "In 586 BC the city and temple were completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity began."

So, as the first plank in the Watchtower's scheme to set 1914 as the date for Jesus' return and the establishment of God's Kingdom, we find that the very starting point is completely wrong by twenty years. But is the rest of Watchtower's scheme founded on biblically factual information?

§

35

Seventy Years "for" Babylon Jeremiah 29:10

**It Is Not 70 Years 'at Babylon' as Rendered in
the New World Translation**

The Watchtower Society applies the seventy years stated by Jeremiah in 29:10 to the paying off of Israel's Sabbaths by means of the total devastation of the land of Judah and so covering the period from 607 B.C.E to 537 B.C.E. and therefore, supposedly, the full length of Israel's captivity in Babylon. However, there are reasons to understand this as a

misapplication. Firstly, the Organization uses a mistranslation in the NWT as the basis for this misapplication. Here the NWT renders Jeremiah 29:10 as: “When 70 years **at** Babylon are fulfilled, I will turn my attention to you, and I will make good my promise by bringing you back to this place.” The word “at” is a mistranslation copied from the King James Version. So, language scholars of Hebrew long ago pointed out that this verse should not be rendered ‘at Babylon’ as it is in the KJV (and NKJV) and now in the NWT. The correct rendering is: “*When seventy years have been completed **for** Babylon, I will visit you and fulfil my good word to you, to bring you back to this place*” (NASB). This is because the accurate rendering of this phrase is as in the **Hebrew Interlinear** and all other versions give the same or similar rendering such as:

- “*Only after seventy years have elapsed **for** Babylon...*” (NAB).
- “*As soon as Babylon’s seventy years are over...*” (Moffatt and S&G).
- “*When a full seventy years have **passed over** Babylon...*” (REB).
- “*When seventy years are about to be completed **for** Babylon*” (NET LXX).
- “*When Babylon’s seventy years are up*” (CEB).

The ESV, RSV, NIV and Amplified render it: “*When seventy years are completed **for** Babylon...*” and similar in the NRSV. So, clearly in Jeremiah 29:10 this seventy years applied to the period of Neo-Babylonian rule and not to Jerusalem’s and Judah’s desolation, which was only coincidental with most of that rule. This is shown by the following authorities:

The sense of the Hebrew original might even be rendered thus: ‘After seventy years of (the rule of) Babylon are accomplished etc.’ The seventy years counted here evidently refer to Babylon and not to the Judeans or to their captivity. They mean **seventy years of Babylonian rule**, the *end of which will see the redemption of the exiles*. Dr Avigdor Orr. ‘The Seventy Years of Babylon’

Vetus Testamentum, vol. VI (1956), p.305.

...the references in Jer. 25:11-12 and 29:10—whether original to the passages or not—are to a period of **seventy years of Babylonian rule**, and not to a period of actual captivity. Dr. Peter R. Ackroyd, “Two Old Testament Historical Problems of the Persian Period,”

Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Vol. XVII (1958), p.23.

Seventy Years Duration of

the Neo-Babylonian Empire 609 to 539

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 627 Nabopolassar drove the Assyrians from Babylon.

In 616 Nabopolassar attacked and defeated the Assyrians, but retreated when Psammetichus 1st of Egypt assisted the Assyrian King.

In 612 The Medes and Babylonians attacked and destroyed the Assyrian capital Nineveh. Ashur-Uballit II fled to the city of Harran which Nabopolassar marched against and plundered in late 610/early 609. The Assyrian Empire ended with the failed attempt of Asshur-Uballit to recapture Harran in the **summer of 609 B.C.E.** This is noted by the following scholars:

Russian Assyriologist M. A. Dandamaev notes in *History of Humanity*, Vol. III p.117 that: “In 609, the Babylonians finally routed the Assyrians and began the establishment of their control over Phoenicia, Syria and Palestine.” Polish Assyriologist Stefan Zawadski in *The Fall of Assyria*, p.16 notes that: “In 609 Assyria was mentioned for the last time...After that time Assyria ceased to exist.” And lastly Professor Wiseman stated that Assyria ceased to exist and her territory was taken over by the Babylonians. So, it was at this time of 609 B.C.E. that the “seventy years [to be] completed **for** Babylon...” commenced and therefore terminated in October 539.

Nebuchadnezzar Becomes King in **605** B.C.E., and Not in 625 B.C.E.

It was in 605 B.C.E. that the remaining Egyptian influence in Palestine ended at the battle of Carchemish:

*“For Egypt concerning the military force of Pharaoh Necho the king of Egypt, who happened to be by the river Euphrates at **Carchemish**, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon defeated in the **4th year of Jehoiakim**” (Jer. 46:2). (Daniel 1:2 says “**3rd year**” because he uses the accession year system).*

Certainly, all reputable historians show that the Battle of Carchemish when Crown-Prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho occurred in 605 B.C.E., after which he conquered a number of countries in Palestine. The Babylonian Chronicle BM 21946 informs us that in:

The first year of Nebuchadnezzar...he marched about victoriously in Hattu. All the kings of Hattu (which included Palestine) came into his presence and he received their vast tribute.

Soon after this event Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon so that his **accession year was 604-603** and not at the date of 625 B.C.E., as given by the Watchtower Society (see *All Scripture Inspired of God*, p. 296).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S ACCESSION YEAR WAS NOT 625 B.C.E.

It was also in 605 that Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to besiege and capture Jerusalem and take King Jehoiakim (later sent back), “*some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility*” (*Dan. 1:1-3 ESV*) “*and the temple utensils*” (*2 Chron. 36:7*) back to Babylon. However, Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem when he wrote his account (*Jer. 25:1*) in 605 concerning the “*fulfilling of 70 years for Babylon*” (*Jer. 29:10*). Hence the 70 years had already started before Nebuchadnezzar’s 1st year started in **604** and therefore many years before the final destruction of Jerusalem. Furthermore, Daniel was already at Nebuchadnezzar’s court in 605 as shown by his statement concerning: “*the second year (accession-year system) of the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar...*” (*Dan. 2:1*). Yet the Society theorizes this to mean Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd year from their theoretical date for the destruction of Jerusalem (607) rather than his second accession year, and thereby turning it into his 19th year as ruler.

Contradictory Information Within Watchtower Teaching

In the appendix to the book ‘*Let Your Kingdom Come*’ pp. 127-40 and 186-89, the Watchtower Society appeals to **yet undiscovered** material in its failed attempt to overcome the evidence for a 586/7 date and therefore against 607 B.C.E as being the date of Jerusalem’s destruction. Furthermore, by their rejection of the proven date for Nebuchadnezzar’s 18th year as being 586/587 the Society is forced to change many other dates of events, one of which is the date when Nebuchadnezzar actually became king of Babylon in 605 B.C.E so that his **accession year was 604-603** and not at the date of 625 B.C.E., as given by the Organization.

Interestingly some **publications** of the Watchtower Society **give the following timings for rulerships of Babylonian kings**. However, when these timings are **tabulated** they give the date for Nebuchadnezzar’s 18th year of rulership as 586/7 B.C.E. These are that:

Nebuchadnezzar immediately preceded Evil Merodach and reigned **43 years**.

Evil Merodach: WT ‘65 Jan 1, p. 29 notes a 2 year reign 562-561 B.C.E.

Neriglissar: " " " " " a 4 year reign 560-556 B.C.E.
Labashi-Marduk: " " " " " a less than 9 months reign to 556
Nabonidus *Insight on the Scriptures* Vol. 2 p.457 says he “ruled some
17 years (556-539 B.C.E).”

However, the Society never presents Nebuchadnezzar’s 43 years as added on to the beginning of the reign of Evil Merodach in 562 because such a summation gives 605 B.C.E. as the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and not the Watchtower’s consistently presented date of 624/5 B.C.E., which does not fit the Society’s own information given above. All authorities give 605 B.C.E as the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign; (for example, see the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. 4, p. 1058). It was in Nebuchadnezzar’s 18th year that he destroyed Jerusalem and this computes as being 587 B.C.E.

Interestingly, quotes from twenty-five reliable authorities are used by the Society to prove *the absolute date* of 539 B.C.E., as the time when Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians. However, at least twenty-two of these also prove that Jerusalem fell in 586/587 and in fact, there is actually greater scholarly support for 586/587 than for 539 in these twenty-two authorities. So why did the Society not accept 586/587 as the starting point and reject 539 as the terminus?

For the Society to reply that they are just following the Bible because 70 years back from 537 leads to 607 is entirely misleading for all these and the following reasons.

The Actual Chronology for the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty

627 – the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty – Nabopolassar.

609 – the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian Empire with the defeat of Assyria. Babylon’s **70 years begin**.

605 – the first captives are taken from Jerusalem (soon after the battle of Carchemish).

605 – Nabopolassar dies (c.Aug 16). Nebuchadnezzar becomes king.

604-603 – Nebuchadnezzar’s first regnal year.

586/7 – Nebuchadnezzar’s 18th year of kingship. Destruction of Jerusalem.

539 – Medes and Persians conquer Babylon. The **70 years end**.

The Absolute Chronology of the Judean Kings

Josiah – 31 years 640 – 609. Killed by Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo.

Jehoahaz – 3 months of 609. Exiled to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho.
Jehoiakim – 11 years 609 – 598. Appointed king by Pharaoh Necho.
Vassalage – transferred to Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C.E.
Jehoiachin – 3 months of 598/7. Deported to Babylon and incarcerated until his 37th year.
Zedekiah – 11 years 597 – 586. Appointed king by Nebuchadnezzar.

But firstly, does the prophet Jeremiah’s statement about 70 years also apply to the captivity of the Jews and the devastation of their land?

Seventy Years of Servitude of Many Nations

Rather than 70 Years of Judah’s absolute desolation Jeremiah reports God’s words as: *“I am sending for all the families of the north...sending for King Nebuchadnezzar...against this land and against the inhabitants and against **all these surrounding nations**; and I will devote them to destruction...”* (Jer. 25:9).

*“And [1] all this land [Judah] will be reduced to ruins and will become an object of horror, and [2] **these nations** will have to serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. But [3] when 70 years have been fulfilled I will call to account the king of Babylon and that nation for their error”* (Jer. 25:11, 12).

There is no time-link between Judah being ‘reduced to ruins’ and the 70 years. So, clearly the 70 years applies only to *“these nations”* and *“**the king of Babylon.**”* In fact, the Hebrew word *chorbah* for “devastated place/ruins” does not imply total ruination without an inhabitant. Examples are: *“...the **inhabitants** of these ruins”* (Ezek. 33:24) and *“You can see what a terrible situation we are in, how Jerusalem is in ruins”* (Neh. 2:17). Notably, Jeremiah 25:18 says *“to make them a ruin...as it is today”* showing that some ruination had already taken place. This would be the kind of ruination after invading armies had marched through.

NOT JEHOVAH’S WILL THAT THE LAND BE TOTALLY UNINHABITED

The ruination to Judah only occurred because they kept trying to throw off the Babylonian yoke of servitude. Indeed, the Jews were told by Jehovah: *“But the nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the King of Babylon and serves him, I will allow to remain **on its land...to cultivate it and dwell in it**”* (Jer. 27:11). Furthermore, Jehovah promised the Jews the blessing of staying in the land if they would serve the king of Babylon: *“Serve the king of Babylon and you*

will keep living. Why should this city become a ruin?" (Jer. 27:17) and "If you will indeed remain in this land, then I will build you up..." (Jer. 42:10).

The 70 Years Ended When Cyrus Conquered Babylon in 539, Not in 537

Jehovah also prophesied through Jeremiah for these Jews that: "*all this land [Judah] will be reduced to ruins and will become an object of horror, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. But **when 70 years have been fulfilled** I will call to **account the king of Babylon** and that nation for their error...I will make the land of the Chaldeans a desolate wasteland for all time" (Jer. 25:11-12). This accounting for "the king of Babylon and that nation for their error" came in 539 when the Medo-Persian armies conquered Babylon. Certainly, the Watchtower Society does not dispute this fact; however, the Scriptures show that the **70 years** ended, not in 537, as taught by the Society, but in 539 B.C.E. This was because Nebuchadnezzar, "*carried off captive to Babylon, those who had escaped the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons **until the kingdom of Persia began to reign, to fulfil Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its sabbaths. All the days it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil 70 years**" (2 Chron. 36:20, 21). Here, the Jews could only "*be servants to him (Nabonidus) and his sons*" until Belshazzar was killed in 539, "*to fulfil Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah.*" The land had paid off its Sabbaths, not in 537, but when the royalty of Persia began to reign in 539 B.C.**

THE TIME OF CYRUS' DECREE

The Society teaches that the decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem took effect in 537. So, regarding **539 to 537 B.C.** *Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 1, p. 458 says: "...it is very probable that the decree was made by the winter of 538 or toward the spring of 537." Nevertheless, there is no biblical support for any particular date for the issuing of this decree, although there are indications concerning the kingship of Darius the Mede that the decree was issued around 538-537 because Cyrus was not king until around this time. As soon as Cyrus had conquered Babylon it appears he made Darius the Mede king not only of the City of Babylon but of the entire Neo-Babylonian Empire. This was soon after its conquest in October 539 and with his rule being reckoned from 538. William H. Shea has demonstrated that Cyrus laid no claim to being king of Babylon during the fourteen months following

the fall of Babylon (See *An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period* pp. 51-67, pp. 88-117, 147-178). This would mean that Cyrus did not become king until around early 537, a date that would make the total of captivity of Jews about 68 years from the first deportation in 605 B.C.E. This indicates that such a time of captivity merely coincides approximately with the 70 years decreed as the duration of the Babylonian Empire.

§

36

The 70 Years Were Not for Paying-off the Sabbaths

Ezra, as the writer of the Bible books of Chronicles, presents historical information concerning Israel's captivity in Babylon, saying:

*“He [Nebuchadnezzar] carried off captives to Babylon those who escaped the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons **until the kingdom of Persia began to reign; to fulfil Jehovah’s word spoken by Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its Sabbaths. All the days it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil 70 years”***

(2 Chron. 36:20-21).

A surface reading of verse 21 easily leads one to think that the land of Judah laid fallow to pay off its Sabbaths for a full seventy years. However, Ezra, in this verse, has not reinterpreted Jeremiah's words to apply the seventy years to the period of Judah's desolation because we already know that Jeremiah's statements concerned the 70-year duration of the Babylonian Empire. In fact, **Jeremiah never spoke about any paying off Sabbaths**. The seventy years noted by Ezra is a fulfilment of “Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah,” and therefore, to the length of Babylon's rulership.

WHY ARE THERE TWO SABBATH REST CLAUSES IN 2 CHRONICLES 36:21?

The phrases in 2 Chronicles 36 of “until the land had paid off its Sabbaths” and “all the days it lay desolate it kept Sabbath” are direct quotes from Leviticus 26:34, 35 where the people were warned that if they did not observe the law of sabbatical years their land would be desolated. If these two clauses are left out of 2 Chronicles 36:21 the text

would read: “to fulfil **Jehovah’s word by the mouth of Jeremiah, to fulfil 70 years**” i.e., for Babylon’s dominance as noted in Jeremiah 29:10. If the land had to pay off its Sabbaths for 70 years this would mean that the nation had failed to observe any land Sabbaths for 490 (7 x 70) years, which would go right back to 1077 (or 1097 in the Watchtower scheme) into the latter part of Saul’s reign. Yet it is very unlikely that any years of Sabbath-keeping were missed during David’s reign; whereas 343 (7 x 49) years goes back to the time of the division of the kingdom after which it is more likely that the land Sabbaths were not kept. Indeed, Jehovah, through Moses, made it clear that:

*“At that time the land will pay off its sabbaths all the days it lies desolate, **while you are in the land of your enemies**. At that time the land will rest, as it must repay its Sabbaths. All the days it lies desolate it will rest, because it did not rest during your sabbaths when you were dwelling on it” (Lev. 26: 34-35).*

In fact, Moses gave no time period for paying off sabbaths i.e., no mention of 70 years and the land was only substantially unused between 586/7 and c.537 (the likely time that some of the exiles left Babylon for the return to Judah) a total of 49 years. So, the scenario harmonizing with the facts is that:

- The people of Judah suffer about 68 years of complete servitude (including vassalage) to Nebuchadnezzar from 605 to 537.
- The land pays of its sabbaths for 49 years from 586/7 to 537 B.C.E.

So, one could speak of Judah’s 70 years of captivity, but only in approximate terms and for both the people and the land these events were coincidental with the 70 years duration of the Babylonian Empire.

Fulfilling the Devastations of Jerusalem According to Daniel

SEVENTY YEARS HAD TO PASS FIRST

The Hebrew word *chorbah* meaning “devastated place” is a plural term, indicating the several devastations that had occurred to Jerusalem in 605, 597, and various times of raids on her by “Marauder bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites during the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:2) before the final destruction in 586.” Daniel notes the coming to an end of these “devastations” saying:

*“I, Daniel, discerned by the books **the number of the years***

mentioned in the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah the prophet, **to fulfill the desolation of Jerusalem, namely, 70 years**" (Dan. 9:2).

Although this NWT rendering is quite literal it is somewhat ambiguous. So, the ESV makes this clearer with the rendering:

*"I, Daniel, perceived in the books **the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.**"*

The Jerusalem Bible gives similar clarity:

*"I, Daniel, was perusing the Scriptures, counting over **the number of years**—as revealed by Yahweh to the prophet Jeremiah—that were to pass before the successive devastations of Jerusalem would **come to an end**, namely seventy years."*

However, did Jeremiah ever speak of the devastations of Judah? He did not, but he did speak of "70 years for Babylon" as shown earlier. So, Daniel read those words of Jeremiah and noted the connection between Babylon's 70-year period of supremacy and the ending of the "**devastations (plural) of Jerusalem**" that had been prophesied in Leviticus 26:34. This prophecy makes no mention of any length of time for such devastations. In his prayer recorded in the following verses of chapter nine not once did Daniel mention seventy years, because his prime concern was that of God's stated conditions for the return of the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem. So, Daniel is simply referring to two different prophecies (Jeremiah 29 and Leviticus 26) that would be completed at the same time. Hence, **the number of the years** mentioned in the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah the prophet, namely, **70 years**, was for Babylon's 70-year period of supremacy, the end of which closely coincided with the end of all **the devastations of Jerusalem in 537 B.C.E.** This means that the period of captivity of Israel in Babylon turned out to be somewhat shorter than seventy years and that the destruction of Jerusalem did not occur in 607 B.C.E., but in 586/7 as all the historical facts show.

§

37

The True Chronology of the Deportations of Judah

The Watchtower Society combines the first and second deportations of Judah into a single event in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year. However, the first deportation is dated to "*the third year of the kingship of Jehoiakim*" (*Dan. 1:1-2*) just before Nebuchadnezzar had become king and not in his seventh year. Other biblical and secular details also show that the Watchtower's presentation of a single deportation was, in fact that of two separate deportations:

THE FIRST DEPORTATION was when Nebuchadnezzar was still the Crown-Prince in **605 B.C.E** after the battle of Carchemish. Ezra shows that: "*King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up against him [Jehoiakim vs 5]...And Nebuchadnezzar took **some of the utensils** of the house of Jehovah to Babylon...*" (*2 Chron. 36:6-7*). However, Daniel provides the information that this occurred:

*"In the 3rd year of the kingship of Jehoiakim ... Nebuchadnezzar ... came to Jerusalem and besieged it. In time Jehovah gave Jehoiakim into his hand, along with some **of the utensils** of the house of the true God... ³Then the king ordered Ashpenaz his chief court official to **bring some of the Israelites**, including those of royal and noble descent..." (*Dan. 1:1-3*).*

Almost all translations render this as, "*to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility*" (ESV) and the word "including" in the NWT is not in the Hebrew text. So, this deportation was primarily of the aristocracy among whom were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Nebuchadnezzar's second year was, according to Daniel 1:5b, when Daniel and the three Hebrews had already completed being "trained for three years, and that at the end of that time they were to enter the king's service." Then: "*in the second year of his kingship (604 B.C.E accession-year system), Nebuchadnezzar, had a number of dreams...*" (*Dan. 2:1*). So, if Daniel was not deported until the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar (as indicated by Watchtower), how could Daniel be at Nebuchadnezzar's court interpreting his dreams in his second year as this scripture shows, and therefore some five years earlier. Apart from the fact that this first deportation is stated to have been "in the third year [605 B.C.E.] of the kingship of Jehoiakim" (not the 3rd year of his vassalage to Babylon as proposed by the Society), only "**some of the utensils**" were taken in this first siege, with the rest ("**all the treasures**" - 2 Kings 24:13)

being taken during the second deportation. Possibly Jehoiakim paid off Nebuchadnezzar with these least valuable utensils. This would explain why Jehoiakim was left on the throne until 598 B.C.E when he died according to Jehovah's pronouncement (Jer. 36:27-32).

THE SECOND DEPORTATION was in **597** B.C.E in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year and after Jehoiachin had reigned for three months:

"King Jehoiachin went out to the king of Babylon [597 B.C.E.]...and the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his [Nebuchadnezzar's] reign. Then he took out from there all the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the treasures of the king's house ... ¹⁴He took into exile all Jerusalem, all the princes, all the mighty warriors, and every craftsman. No one was left behind except the poorest people of the land" (2 Kings 24:12-14).

Again, we can see how wrong it was for C.T. Russell and the Society to continue to propose that these first two events were just a single deportation all at the same time.

THE THIRD DEPORTATION was in **586/7** B.C.E in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year when he burned Jerusalem.

*"These are the people whom Nebuchadnezzar took into **exile**: in the seventh year [597 B.C.E.] 3,023 Jews. In the **18th year** [586 B.C.E] of Nebuchadnezzar, 832 people were taken from Jerusalem" (Jer. 52:28-29).*

Yet, the Society uses these verses to argue against a first deportation in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year by presupposing that they contain a complete record of the deportations, which it evidently does not. Because of the apparent conflict concerning the 10,000 in 2 Kings 24 the Society states regarding the figures in Jeremiah 52 that this: "...apparently refers to those of certain rank, or to those who were family heads" *Insight on the Scriptures - Volume 1*, p. 415. However, this is just speculation on the part of the Society.

THE FOURTH DEPORTATION was in **582** B.C.E.

"In the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar [582 B.C.E.], Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard took Jews into exile, 745 people. In all, 4,600 people were taken into exile" (Jer. 52:30).

So, these four occasions of the deportation of the Jews to Babylon were: 605, 597, 587, and 582 B.C.E.

Judah's Other 70 (68) Years Without God's Blessing 587 to 519 B.C.

The 70 years period mentioned in Zechariah 1:12 and 7:1-5 is not a prophetic period as is the 70 years noted by Jeremiah and Daniel. Zechariah's first mention of 70 years, in fact, amount to only 68 years showing that the 70 is just a round figure for the amount of time that had passed during which Jehovah was indignant with them:

*"In the second year of Darius (520/519 B.C.E.) the word of Jehovah came to the prophet Zechariah...¹²So the angel of Jehovah said and said: 'O Jehovah of armies, how long will you withhold your **mercy** from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with whom you have been indignant **these 70 years?**'... ¹⁶Therefore this is what Jehovah says, 'I will return to Jerusalem **with mercy** and my own house will be built in her...' (Zech. 1:7, 12, 16).*

The Society applies these statements in Zechariah to the period of 607-537 B.C.E. However, they are not actually a reference to Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the 'devastations of Jerusalem' but to a more recent "denunciation" which seems to have been because of the people's sins in their failure, since their release from Babylon, to complete the new building work of the temple and with the foundation only having recently been completed (Haggai 2:18). The lapse of 70 years stated by Zechariah clearly refers to a different and less significant non-prophetic period of 70 (68) years than the 70 years which applied to Babylon's rulership from 609-539. So, this period in Zechariah cannot apply to the earlier period of 607/537 but to "**these 70 years**" that were a different period. To run these years from 607 would make the period **88 years** long because it was in 520/519 B.C.E that the words of Zechariah 1:7, 12, 16 were said. This gives strong support against the idea that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E., but additional support for a 586/7 date.

NOT NINETY YEARS OF FASTING

Further proof for 586/7 B.C.E as the correct date for Jerusalem's destruction comes from Zechariah's later statement that:

"In the fourth year (518/517 B.C.E.) of King Darius the word of Jehovah came to Zechariah... ⁴And the word of Jehovah of armies again came to me, saying: "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and wailed in the fifth month and in

the seventh month for 70 years [lit. “these 70 years” as in 1:12], did you really fast for me?” (Zech. 7:1-5).

This fasting by the Jews was in commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem’s temple in 586/587 and the assassination of Governor Gedaliah. By the fourth year of Darius, they had been doing this for 70 years from 587/6 to 518/7. To run these 70 years from 607 would make the period **90 years** long because these events occurred in 518/517 B.C.

Sadly, the Watchtower Society rejects all of this irrefutable evidence in its effort to prop up a very faulty and misleading doctrine, namely that 1919 was the year that God appointed the Society as God’s only organization.

§

38

Watchtower’s Faulty Scheme to Claim to Be God’s Organization

Because the Watchtower Society’s claim that **1919 C.E.** was the time when Christ ‘the Master,’ having returned in **1914** (after 2,520 years since 607 B.C.E), **chose the Society** (now only the Governing Body) as the “faithful and discreet slave” class with full authority over all Christians, it is imperative that one be certain that such dates and methods are accurate. This whole theory is constructed based on three claims which are shown here to be false claims.

WATCHTOWER Claim 1:

THAT 607 B.C.E. IS THE CORRECT START DATE FOR THE GENTILE TIMES

As shown above the complete lack of biblical or secular proof for a 607 B.C.E starting date and the massive amount of proof from the Scriptures combined with ancient literature and astronomical material for the destruction of Jerusalem as being 586/7 B.C.E leads one, not to 1914 C.E., but to 1935 as the end of 2,520 years according to Watchtower Claim 2. This means that Christ had not returned in 1914 and therefore he, as the Master, did not appoint anyone in 1919. This also means that those who claim such an appointment are merely self-appointed. Unfortunately, C.T. Russell learned the wrong date for the destruction of

Jerusalem and then mistakenly applied the 70 years to a period of total desolation of the land of Israel rather than to the length of time of Babylon's supremacy and the servitude (vassalage) to Babylon of many nations including Judah.

WATCHTOWER Claim 2:

THAT THE "GENTILE TIMES" WERE 2,520 YEARS LONG

According to the Book of Revelation, 42 months = 1,260 days which means that with reference to prophetic matters the Bible sets out 30-day months which equal a 360-day/year. Hence 7 x 360 days = 2,520 days which then become the Historicist interpretation of 2,520 years. However, these were prophetic **lunar** years; yet the Society used the **solar** year measurement when counting from 607 B.C.E. to 1914 C.E. This makes a **34-year difference!** However, the **day for a year theory** which first appeared about the middle of the 12th century C.E. in the teaching of the Cathari is not a scriptural approach. (Please see Appendix B: History of the Day/Year Theory). It was Joachim de Floris (1202 C.E.) who first assigned a day/year value to the 1,260 days of Daniel and Revelation. The principle on which the day/year theory is based comes only from the following two scriptures and **applied on these two occasions only**. These are:

*"According to the number of the days that you spied out the land, 40 days, a **day for a year**...you will answer for your error **40 years**" (Num. 14:34).*

*"I will impose on you 390 days, **corresponding to the years** of their guilt and you will carry the guilt of the house of Israel...⁶and you will carry the guilt of the house of Judah 40 days. A **day for a year**..." (Ezek. 4:5-6).*

However, the theory fails because both these events were literally fulfilled. So, in Numbers 14:34 the forty-year period was the **period of the prophecy** and forty years **was the period of the wandering**. In Ezekiel 4:5 the 390 years and 40 years were the **periods of the prophecies** and **their fulfillments**. Neither of these passages nor any other Scripture says that such a concept was to become *a general rule or principle of interpretation of prophecy*. **If Daniel or John in Revelation had wanted to indicate 1,260 years, they would not have written 1,260 days**. The theory was partially dropped by the Society as a general principle in the 1920s, but they retained it only for the 2,520 years calculation from 607 to 1914. This is a major inconsistency in their position. In fact, the day/year principle is almost universally rejected by modern scholars of repute.

WATCHTOWER **Claim 3:**

THAT THE “GENTILE TIMES” ARE NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S “SEVEN TIMES”

This is a linking of Jesus’ statement about “*the appointed times of the nations*” (Luke 21:24) with Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the chopped down tree (Dan. 4:4-27). However:

- Nothing indicates that these “seven times” had any further fulfilment than for Nebuchadnezzar’s times of insanity.
- There is no scriptural or logical connection between the tree dream and Luke 21:24 concerning the “appointed times of the nations.”
- Nothing in the Scriptures indicates that if the trampling of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24) started on earth that it later shifts to heaven for completion.
- Why would the reign of a pagan dictatorial emperor be used by God as a symbol of God’s loving rule through the Davidic dynasty? It would be more logical if David or Hezekiah or Josiah had had the tree dream and so be representative of God’s loving rule that gets temporarily chopped down.
- It seems unlikely that Nebuchadnezzar’s seven years of **powerlessness** could represent the 2,520 years of vicious domination by the Gentile nations, as proposed by the Watchtower Society.
- It is inconsistent to apply the day for a year principle to the time prophecy of Daniel 4, but then to fail to apply it to the many other time prophecies in Daniel as does the Society.
- If, according to the Society’s teaching, Daniel was not taken to Babylon until 617 (*Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 1 p. 576) how could he interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream concerning **the statue** in the 2nd year of the king (Dan 2:1) which according to the Society would have occurred in 624/23 B.C.E? In *Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 2 p.481 the Society fairly correctly dates this dream as occurring in 605, **but says that**, “the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar” was really the second year from the destruction of Jerusalem and so was actually referring to Nebuchadnezzar’s **20th regnal year**. This false statement is for the purpose of maintaining the illusion that Jerusalem fell in 607. But Daniel 2:1 clearly says that it was “the second year of **the reign** of Nebuchadnezzar” and not his 20th. This second year is known by all evidence to be 604 B.C.E, but Jerusalem fell in his 18th year which

was 586/7. It is normal to mark the date of the beginning of the reign of a king according to some event which occurred during that reign.

- If Nebuchadnezzar's second dream about **the tree** (Dan. 4) is a **prophecy**, as the Organization teaches, then it would have to have been given earlier than the beginning of its fulfilment (supposedly 607 B.C.E), and earlier than the first dream concerning *the statue* (Dan. 2). Yet the Society dates the first dream as 605 B.C.E. according to *Insight on the Scriptures* Volume 2. p. 481.

Indeed, according to the Society's own criteria, proof for the Governing Body to be God's Organization requires all three of these claims to be true. If *any one* of these claims is false then the Watchtower Society's proof for it to have been appointed as God's organization in 1919 fails. As noted above all three claims are false and therefore fail as proof.

The Mistake of Setting Dates for Christ's Return

In 1876 **C.T. Russell** (still believing that Christ would return visibly according to '*The Object and Manner of the Lord's return*' in the '*Proclaimers*' book, p. 47) receives the magazine 'The Herald of the Morning' and begins to change his position on date-setting, eventually accepting all of Barbour's time setting calculations. In 1889 Russell wrote that the 1914 date: "will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men...that the Kingdom...will have obtained full universal control...that the 'time of trouble such as never was' will reach its culmination." However, this was understood as being **a class struggle rather than a war**. In 1904 Russell adjusted his position so that the great tribulation would occur after October 1914. In these calculations the error of no year 'zero' from B.C to C.E. times was allowed to stand until 1943 when the starting date for the Watchtower chronology scheme was moved back to 607 B.C. Yet the error of the great tribulation as lasting from 1914 to the present was not abandoned until 1969. Nevertheless, **prior to 1993** the view was given that Russell was the first to publish a correct chronology leading to 1914 and that the Bible Students alone had predicted the First World War. This had been held as proof that they had God's spirit and the Truth. However, politicians and millions of Baptists, Pentecostals and many others were predicting either war or the end of the world in that era. In 1922 **J. F. Rutherford** declared that the Kingdom had been set up in 1914, but invisibly. He also claimed that the Lord came to His temple 3½ years after 1914 in 1918 and after a period of testing the Watchtower

Society was **chosen as God's only organization on earth.**

What Jesus Said about Date Setting

To the question, “*Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?*” Jesus answered: “*It does **not belong to you** to know the times or seasons that the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction...*”
(Acts 1:7).

This question by the disciples was a legitimate question because the Kingdom was to be restored to Israel. However, the problem here was the seeking of a date for when it would be restored. In fact, Jesus had earlier said: “*Concerning that day or hour nobody knows...not the Son, but only the Father*” (Matt. 24:36). In fact, this statement by Jesus does not refer to the day or hour for the great tribulation but to Christ’s *parousia*—his coming to be present, that is, his physical advent/arrival.

This Greek term *parousia* is expressed in verses 3, 27, 37, 39 of Matthew 24. Additionally, verses 42, 44 and 46 in the NWT have the word *coming* (*Gk erchetai/elthe*) of the master. Yet in contradiction of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24:36 the Organization continues to claim October 1914 as the time when Christ’s invisible *parousia* began. Yet there is no genuine evidence at all that Christ has returned. In fact, Christ himself warned Christians to:

“*Look out that you are not misled; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and ‘**The due time is near.**’ Do not go after them*” (Luke 21:8).

Yet, as shown earlier one of C.T. Russell’s books was entitled *The Time is at Hand*. Furthermore, the Society often uses phrases that lead its members to think in ways contrary to Jesus’ warning.

§

39

The Great Tribulation Is Not Armageddon

The teaching presented by the Watchtower Society that Armageddon is part of the great tribulation is out of harmony with the scriptural statements concerning the sequence of events at the time of the end. This sequence shows that the great tribulation occurs first and is followed by “the day of Jehovah”—His day of wrath. The Armageddon event then comes as the last part of the day of God’s wrath. Indeed, the great tribulation is to be Satan’s wrath against Christians and comes in the form of intense persecution by those who hate the true God and the Bible’s message.

The Great Tribulation Is Satan’s Wrath

Although Christians met with a significant amount of persecution prior to the time of Emperor Constantine, and are still persecuted at various times and places in the modern world, these painful and difficult times do not compare to the coming time of Satan’s final expression of his wrath in persecution of Christians. This is expressed in Revelation by the use of verb tenses applied proleptically i.e., the past tense being used for the future. In other words, the events in the following descriptions in the Revelation are certain and have yet to happen:

*“So down the great dragon was hurled...Satan...he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him ...¹²On this account be glad, you heavens...Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger (‘wrath’ in most translations), knowing that he has a short period of time. ¹³Now when the dragon saw that it had been hurled down to the earth, it **persecuted the woman** who gave birth to the male child” (Rev. 12:9, 12, 13).*

*“It [The wild beast - Satan’s prime representative] was permitted to **wage war with the holy ones** and conquer them” (Rev. 13:7).*

Added to this is Daniel’s earlier prophecy saying: “...that horn [a symbol of Satan’s prime representative] **made war on the holy ones**, and it was prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones...” (Dan. 7:21-22).

All Christians Living at the Time Will Experience the Great Tribulation

Contrary to the teaching of the Watchtower Society there is only one class of Christians as shown earlier, and so all living Christians will

experience the great tribulation as shown in numerous scriptures. Although, “*We must enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations*” (Acts 14:22) and “*I John...a sharer with you in the tribulation and Kingdom and endurance in association with Jesus...*” (Rev. 1:9), nevertheless there is a great tribulation to come. Indeed, “*...the things you are about to suffer... so that you may be fully put to the test, and you will have tribulation for ten days*” (Rev. 2:10) i.e., meaning the complete time of the great tribulation. This will involve: “*...the great crowd...These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation*” (Rev. 7:9, 14).

*“For then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, **no flesh would be saved**; but on account of **the chosen ones** those days will be cut short”*

(Matt. 24:21-22).

This is not to say that all Christians will be tortured or killed. Many flee Judea to the mountains and are protected in the wilderness (Matt. 24:16; Rev. 12:6, 14).

NOTE: According to Daniel and in the Revelation, the great tribulation lasts for a period somewhat less than 3½ years.

“The Day of Jehovah” Is the Day of His Wrath

In contrast to Satan’s wrath as expressed against Christians during the great tribulation, Jehovah God will express his wrath against the wicked of this world. There are many descriptions throughout the Scriptures of this event. For example:

*“The great day of Jehovah is near!...That day is a **day of fury** (‘wrath’ in most translations), a day of distress and of anguish, a day of storm and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom ... ¹⁷I will cause distress to mankind” (Zeph. 1:14-15, 17).*

The phrase “the day of Jehovah” and similar phrases appear over two dozen times in the Hebrew Scriptures. All descriptions of this day are concerning wrath from God. (Please read Isaiah 13:9; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2; 3:13-16; Amos 5:18-20). Furthermore, the book of Revelation also picks up on these descriptions when it describes wicked people’s reaction to that time:

*“And they keep saying to the mountains and to the rocks: “Fall over us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because **the great day of their***

wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:16-17).

Indeed, judgment of the world occurs in the day of God’s wrath: “...because of your...unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the **day of wrath** and of the revealing of God’s righteous judgment.” (Rom. 2:5) and “the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and hurled it into the great winepress of **God’s wrath**” (Rev.14:19). However, studious Christians will be encouraged when they are enduring the great tribulation, because they can know the sequence of these events by having compared the words of the prophets with those of Jesus.

The Great Tribulation Occurs Before the Day of God’s Wrath (Including Armageddon)

The great tribulation is a relatively short burst of Satan-inspired intense persecution of Christians; whereas the “day of God’s wrath,” including Armageddon, follows after the great tribulation. So, the great tribulation is not Armageddon. Indeed, the order of events is provided by Jesus when he warns: “Therefore, when you catch sight of **the disgusting thing that causes desolation**...standing in a holy place, then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains ... ²¹for then there will be **great tribulation** ... ²⁹Immediately after **the tribulation** of those days, the sun will be **darkened**, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven ...³⁰Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven....and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and glory”

(Matt. 24:15, 21, 29-30).

NOTE: Please see Chapter 50 in the subheading concerning the U.N.

So, the “great tribulation” occurs **before** the sun, moon and stars are darkened. However, the next part of the sequence is understood when we read Joel’s prophecy which is also quoted by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2:20. So Joel tells us that:

“The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awe-inspiring day of Jehovah”

(Joel 2:31).

Therefore the “day of Jehovah” occurs after the sun, moon and stars are darkened—portending God’s Day of Wrath. So, combining Matthew 24:29 and Joel 2:31 the order of events becomes clear:

1. The great tribulation.

2. Sun, moon and stars are darkened.
3. “The day of Jehovah” when Jesus makes his one-time return.
This is also “the day of Christ” at Armageddon.

The Day of Jehovah Includes Armageddon

So, after the great tribulation when Jesus returns, then the day of God’s wrath begins to be poured out. This begins when: “[the spirits of demons] gathered them [the kings of the entire inhabited earth]...to gather them together to the war of **the great day of God the Almighty...**¹⁶and they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew **Armageddon**” (Rev. 16:14, 16). This preparation for the Armageddon event and the occurrence of it are shown to be part of the pouring out of Revelation’s 6th and 7th bowls of God’s wrath and therefore **at the end of the ‘day of God’s wrath.’**

NOTE: Because Christ acts as God’s agent “the day of Jehovah” came to be called in the Christian Scriptures “the day of the Lord” and is recognized as also being the “day of Christ” (2 Cor. 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10) because it is “*the day when God through Christ judges the secret things of mankind*” (Rom 2:16).

§

40

Christians Will Not Suffer During the Time of God’s Wrath

Paul gives the following encouragement to his fellow Christians by noting that, “*since we have now been declared righteous by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath*” (Rom. 5:9) and that it is, “*Jesus...who rescues us from the wrath that is coming*” (1 Thess. 1:10). However, as we have seen Satan’s wrath is poured out on Christians during the great tribulation and with the deaths of some of these Christians. However, following on from the tribulation and into “the day of Jehovah” Christians will be immune to the plagues described in Revelation which will be poured out on the incorrigibly wicked. This is, “*...because God assigned us, not to wrath, but...to the acquiring of salvation*” (1 Thess. 5:9). Jesus later also gave similar encouragement in his words to the Congregation in Philadelphia, saying: “*I will **keep** you*

from the hour of test, [God's wrath upon the wicked] which will come upon the whole inhabited earth" (Rev. 3:10). The context here shows that this refers to the protection that Christians will have when Jehovah pours out his wrath on the wicked of mankind. This does not require the removal of any Christian from the earth to avoid this devastation and it certainly did not require this back in 1918 and onward as in Watchtower teaching. The first resurrection is, in any case, not over any extended period (see Chapters 27 and 28). If a Christian is living close to the time of Jesus' return, he will be on earth but he will be preserved from the destruction that will be brought by Jehovah "which will come upon the whole inhabited earth," that is at the pouring out of God's wrath. Such protection is highlighted in the following examples:

1. "I do not request that you take them out of the world, but that you watch over them ("keep," "keep them safe" or "protect" in all other translations) because of the wicked one" (John 17:15).
2. "So that He might rescue us **from** (out of) this present wicked system of things ("age" KIT)" (Gal. 1:4).
3. "The One who was able to save him [Jesus] out of death" (Heb. 5:7) but Jesus still went through death.
4. The sun-clad woman of Revelation chapter 12 is protected for 1260 days. She is not removed from the earth, but placed in the wilderness.
5. The Israelites in ancient Egypt were supernaturally protected during the seven last plagues.
6. Noah and family were sheltered in the Ark from God's wrath, but were still on the earth.

So, too, all true Christians who are living at the time of Christ's return, will be protected during the pouring out of these plagues. If any have died during the earlier great tribulation they will be resurrected quite a bit before before the 7th bowl of plague is poured out (Rev. 16:15) along with all others who have died before the time of the great tribulation.

Salvation for Christians Occurs on the Same Day That Destruction of the Wicked Begins

Contrary to the Watchtower teaching that there are two classes of Christians the following scenario painted by Jesus shows that there will

be no salvation for any Christians until the great tribulation is over and the wicked are about to be destroyed:

*“Just as it occurred in the days of **Noah**, so it will be in the days of the Son of man: they were eating, they were drinking, men were marrying and women were being given in marriage until **that day** when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and **destroyed them all**” (Luke 17:26-27).*

Similarly,

*“...on the **day Lot** went out of Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and **destroyed them all**. It will be the same on that day when the Son of man is to be revealed” (Luke 17:29-30).*

These passages emphasize that the righteous will be delivered on **the same day** as the wicked are being destroyed. Noah’s entry into the ark and Lot’s going out of Sodom are types of the future salvation of all Christians i.e., to a place of safety.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE DRAGNET

After describing the gathering of all sorts of fish by means of a dragnet and then the separating of the fine fish from the unsuitable ones which are then thrown away, Jesus says: *“That is how it will be in the conclusion of the system of things (“age” KIT). The angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous and will cast them into the fiery furnace” (Matt. 13:49-50).* These details make the timing of the salvation, including the first resurrection, close to the time of the pouring out of God’s wrath, thereby making any form of a pre-tribulation first resurrection impossible.

The Day of Jehovah Does Not Extend Through the Millennium

The Watchtower Society teaches that “the day of Jehovah” encompasses the entire 1,000-year reign of Christ Jesus. However, the descriptions of “the day of Jehovah” throughout the Hebrew Scriptures point to a time of foreboding rather than peaceful paradisiac conditions because God’s wrath is poured out on the wicked of the world at that time. They are told that they will:

*“Wail, for the day of Jehovah is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty ... ⁹Look! The day of Jehovah itself is coming, **cruel** both with fury and with burning **anger**, to make the land an object of horror, and to **annihilate the land’s sinners** from it”*

(Isa. 13:6, 9).

*“Woe because of the day! For the day of Jehovah is near. And it will come like a destruction from the Almighty! Has not **food been taken from** before our very eyes, and rejoicing and joy from the house of our God? The seeds have shrivelled under their shovels. Storehouses are desolate. Granaries have been torn down, for the grain has dried up ... ¹⁹For **fire has devoured the pastures** of the wilderness, and a flame has consumed all the trees of the field” (Joel 1:15-17, 19).*

*“Blow a horn in Zion! Shout a war cry in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of Jehovah is coming! It is near! It is a day of **darkness** and of gloom, a day of clouds and thick gloom. Like light of dawn spreading on the mountains” (Joel 2:1, 2 and a similar picture is found at Amos 5:18-20).*

*“Thrust in a sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come down and tread, for the **winepress** is full ... ¹⁴Crowds, crowds are in the valley of decision, for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of the decision. **Sun and moon** will become **dark**, and the stars will actually lose their brightness. And Jehovah will roar out of Zion, out of Jerusalem he will raise his voice. And heaven and **earth will rock**; but Jehovah will be a refuge to his people, a fortress for the people of Israel” (Joel 3:13-16).*

*“For the day of Jehovah **against all the nations** is near. As you have done, so it will be done to you” (Obadiah 15).*

*“Look! The day is coming, a day belonging to Jehovah, when the spoil from you will certainly be divided in your midst. I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for the **war**; and the **city will be captured** and the houses plundered, and the women raped. And half the city will go into **exile**...³Jehovah will go out and war against those nations as when he fights in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:1-3).*

The positive side to “the day of Jehovah” is the protection and salvation given to God’s people. However, this does not include paradise conditions at that time of the destruction of the wicked or at the very beginning of the Millennium. Furthermore, although the Christian Scriptures contain many elements of joy regarding “the day of Jehovah” this is not because of any paradise conditions, although these will certainly exist later during the Millennium. Instead, the joy over “the day of Jehovah” is because of the destruction of the wicked and so it still

remains “the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5) for the purpose of destroying the unrepentant wicked of this world and does not extend through the 1,000 years.

§

41

World Improvements Begin Soon After the Kingdom Begins

In the Watchtower Society’s teaching that the Kingdom of God was set up invisibly in 1914 it also proposes that Satan was expelled from heaven and this precipitated the worsening of world conditions that have occurred throughout the last 107 years. However, this scenario does not fit with the biblical picture of end-time or Millennial events. The Society’s scheme is based largely on Psalm 110:1, 2 and Revelation 12:7-9 which we will examine first:

Psalm 110:1, 2:

*“Jehovah declared to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand **until I place your enemies** as a stool for your feet.’ Jehovah will extend the scepter of your power out of Zion, saying: ‘Go subduing (“rule” in other versions) **in the midst of your enemies.**”*

From this passage the Organization teaches that Jesus has been ruling mankind invisibly “in the midst of [his] enemies” from a Zion in heaven in an invisible kingdom that was established in 1914 which is a period of more than 107 years as of the year 2021.

RESPONSE

This interpretation of Psalm 110:1, 2 by the Society is largely based upon a misunderstanding of the “Mount Zion” described in Hebrews 12:22-23 which says:

*“But you **have approached** a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels in general assembly, and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and **God** the Judge of all, and the spiritual*

*lives of righteous ones who have been made perfect, and **Jesus** the mediator of the new covenant...” (Heb. 12:22-23).*

Please note that this is a present condition of Christians just as in Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 where **Christians on earth** are seen as being *in heaven representatively* through their union with Christ. With the word “heavenly” as being descriptive rather than locational, the “heavenly Jerusalem,” situated on a literal Mount Zion, is the **glorious city of the future** which Christians have figuratively approached now. Concerning the future inhabitants of Jerusalem, we learn that: “*about Zion it will be said: ‘Each and every one was born in her’*” (Ps. 87:5); yet men are not born in heaven. Also, Jerusalem/Zion is “above” (Gal. 4:26) because it is vastly superior and originates with God; yet one does not need to go to heaven to approach God.

So, in fulfilment of Psalm 110:1, 2, Jesus will be at Jehovah’s right hand in heaven **only until the time comes** to begin placing his “*enemies as a stool for [his] feet*” at which time he will have descended to earth (1 Thess. 4:17; Zech 14:4). So, it will be from a real literal physical Zion that Jesus will, “*Go subduing in the midst of [his] enemies.*” Furthermore, Jehovah states prophetically that:

*“I myself have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain ...
9You will **break** them [the nations] with an iron sceptre ... So now, you kings, show insight ... 12Honor the son, or God will become indignant and you will **perish** from the way” (Ps. 2:6, 9-10, 12).*

So, Jesus, after being established on his throne can go out of literal Zion to, “Go subduing **in the midst of**” his prime enemies i.e., the wild beast, the false prophet and “the rest” i.e., their armies and supporters (Rev. 19:12-21), and Satan during the very earliest stage of the Millennium. **This does not fit in with a wait of 107 years for such breaking of the nations** “with an iron sceptre” to take place.

Revelation 12:7-9:

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but they did not prevail ... 9So down the great dragon was hurled...he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.”

*“And I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “**Now** have come to pass the salvation and the power and **the Kingdom** of our God and the authority of his Christ ... On this account be glad you heavens...**Woe for the earth** and for the sea, because the Devil*

has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time” (Rev. 12:10, 12).

So, because of the statement “**now** have come to pass...**the kingdom**” the Organization’s explanation is that the kingdom was established at exactly the same time Satan was thrown out of heaven to cause woe for the earth. This also would mistakenly mean that the Kingdom was set up before the great tribulation occurs.

RESPONSE

As demonstrated earlier, there are many Scriptures which show that the sequence of events is the very opposite of the Organization’s teaching on this, inasmuch as, the moment Satan is hurled down the intense but relatively short great tribulation begins. This **immediately precedes Jesus’ return** and the establishment of the Kingdom (Matt. 24:21, 29-31). Also, Jesus returns only once and not in two phases as per Watchtower teaching. As shown in earlier chapters Jesus has evidently not yet returned.

Additionally, after the **narrative** of Revelation 12:1-9 the next passage is an **anonymous prayer of praise** to God concerning what will happen in the relatively near future. So, because this praise is in poetic form, it does not describe events as being immediately sequential as with many of the other statements in the middle of the book of Revelation which are anticipatory. So, the passage in 12:10-12 is also **proleptic** (anticipatory). This is proven by noting what is said earlier:

*“And the seventh angel blew his trumpet. And there were loud voices in heaven, saying: ‘The kingdom of the world **has become the Kingdom** of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever’” (Rev. 11:15).*

Yet at this point in the events of Revelation there is only an anticipation of the establishment of the Kingdom and so the Hebrew prophetic past tense (proleptic) has been used. The *Word Biblical Commentary* says regarding Revelation 12:10-12:

At this point the author inserts a hymnic passage consisting of vv 10-12, which comment on the significance of the expulsion of Satan from heaven...The temporal verb *arti* “now,” together with the aorist verb *egeneto*, which has perfective value...indicates that the ascriptions of deliverance, power and kingship to God **are grounded in** the specific temporal occurrence of Satan’s expulsion from heaven narrated in v 9...If God’s kingship has already become a fact in

11:15, what can the duplicate statement in 12:10 mean? The answer must be that in the present text the coming or occurrence of the kingship of God is described **proleptically**.

Also, Bible Commentator George Eldon Ladd states in his *Commentary on Revelation* that with reference to Revelation 12:10:

This announcement, like that in 11:15, is **proleptic** and looks forward to the consummation which has not yet occurred; but it has occurred in principle, for Satan is already a defeated foe...This defeat leads to the establishment of *the authority* of the Messiah of the world.

Furthermore, Bible Scholar Robert Govett notes regarding the “short period of time” that Satan has: “This ejection of the devil, then, cannot yet have taken place. For after it he has only 1260 days respite, and those persecuted by him have to endure only 1260 day’s exile: 12:14 and 13:5.”

So, the passage in Revelation 12:10-12 is a praise to God for the expulsion of Satan so that the next part of God’s purpose is opened up in anticipation of the soon establishment of the Kingdom. It is separate from the preceding narrative and therefore does not occur at the exact time of Satan’s expulsion which precipitates the great tribulation. Furthermore, the great tribulation precedes the establishment of the Kingdom. **Jesus’ one-time return is shown in Matthew 24:21, 29 as occurring after the great tribulation.** Indeed, it is at Jesus’ return that the Kingdom will be set up as he showed in the illustration of the man of noble birth travelling to a distant land to secure kingly power (Luke 19:11-15).

§

42

Changes That Will Happen When God’s Kingdom Comes

Restoration of Everything
Begins When Jesus Leaves Heaven

Contrary to the Watchtower's teaching that Jesus never leaves heaven are Peter's words in his second great sermon to the Jews showing that Jehovah:

*"...may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. Heaven, must hold this one within itself **until** the times of **restoration of all things** of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old" (Acts 3:20-21).*

This is not the restoration only of pure worship but of the restoration of "all **things** of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time" involving humanity and resulting in "the new heavens and new earth." So shortly after Jesus returns this restoration begins which Jesus describes as: "*in **the recreation**, when the Son of man sits down **on his glorious throne...***" (Matt. 19:28). Other translations make this phrase "in the recreation" a little more specific as: "in the new world," (ESV), "when the world is made new" (NLT), and "at the rebirth of the world," (Barclay) and so demonstrating that improving conditions will begin to exist (perhaps miraculously) very soon after the kingdom is established when Jesus returns.

Separation of the Sheep and the Goats

Firstly, as part of his great prophecy discourse given on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said,

*"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down **on his glorious throne**. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats..."*
(Matt. 25:31, 32).

Until the 1990s the Witnesses were taught by the Organization that the separating of sheep from goats had been in progress through their preaching work since the setting up of the kingdom in 1914. However, since the 1990s the Organization has correctly interpreted this separating work as something that will be done by angels and begins in the future. So, logically the Organization should also have moved the time for the Son of man to "sit down **on his glorious throne**" to the future because clearly these two events begin to happen at the same time. This is also clear from Daniel's first prophecy concerning the Kingdom as the stone, saying, "***the stone** that struck the image, it became a large mountain, and it **filled the whole earth***" (Dan. 2:35b). Firstly, this filling of "the whole earth" indicates that the kingdom will be on earth, but furthermore it indicates that the Kingdom's expansion begins the moment it crushes

the feet of the image. There is here no indication of an earlier establishment of the kingdom than on this occasion or of any 107+years long gap existing between its setting up and the beginning of the crushing of the world's kingdoms.

Furthermore, we have not yet seen the destruction of "the goats" in *"the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matt. 25:41), but as Jesus said in verse 46: *"These will depart into everlasting cutting-off..."* All of this happens soon after Jesus comes.

Destruction of the Enemies of the Kingdom When Jesus Comes

In his illustration about a man of noble birth who left ten servants to do business on his behalf while he went away to receive a kingdom and then return, Jesus says that the man's, *"citizens hated him and sent out a body of ambassadors after him, to say, 'We do not want this man to become king over us.' 'When he eventually got back after having secured the kingly power, he summoned the slaves...in order to ascertain what they had gained by their business activity"* (Luke 19:14, 15). Here we see that it is only **after his return** that the king summons these slaves, but then he orders others to, *"bring these enemies of mine here who did not want me to become king over them and execute them in front of me"* (Luke 19:27). However, we did not see the execution of the Messianic king's enemies in 1914 or at any time since, and yet the correct scenario is that:

*"...in the days of those kings the God of heaven **will set up a kingdom...it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms...just as you saw that out of the mountain a stone was cut not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the copper, the clay, the silver, and the gold"** (Dan. 2:44-45).*

The stone described in Daniel 2:25 is a symbol of God's kingdom. Now the phrase in 2:44 of **"will set up a kingdom"** shows that the kingdom is established at the same time that the stone strikes the feet of the image and crushes the worldly kingdoms; yet 1914 did not bring any such crushing and putting "an end to all these kingdoms" of the world.

Nations Which Submit to the Kingdom

The book of Daniel contains five major time-of-the-end prophecies of which the second concerned four symbolic beasts, the fourth of which

represented the world's final kingdom. Daniel then says:

*“I watched until the beast was killed and its body was destroyed and it was given over to be burned in the fire. But as for **the rest of the beasts** [the other three in 7:4-7], their **rulerships were taken away**, and their lives were prolonged for a time and a season” (Dan. 7:11b).*

Evidently, these three co-existing kingdoms will not be destroyed at the time that the fourth beast is destroyed. Yet, they clearly submit to the rulership of Messiah (Ps. 2:12) because, after having lost their rulership, they are allowed to live on “for a time and a season.” Nevertheless, we have not yet seen the destruction of the fourth beast at any time since the supposed setting up of the kingdom in 1914. Furthermore, this shows that there will be surviving nations who will exist beyond Armageddon. Therefore, the Watchtower's claim that only their people will live on into the Millennium is another false claim.

World Disarmament

The world has had a history of aggression and wars between the many nations, and yet the United Nations building in New York has the slogan, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” as taken from the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 2. The context of these famous words is:

*“In the final part of the days, the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established...and to it **all the nations** will stream ... ⁴He will render **judgment among the nations** and set matters straight respecting many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning shears. **Nation will not lift up sword** against nation, **no will they learn war any more**” (Isa. 2:2, 4).*

Regarding the timing for the fulfilment of this prophecy, the Watchtower Society's explanation of this passage is that it refers to those people who, **before the Millennium**, come out of the nations to become Jehovah's Witnesses and who will not take up arms. However, most of these individuals were not previously armed and never planned to take up arms anyway. Rather obviously, the passage refers to **whole nations** who will be judged and cease to operate any kind of war machine. It is they, and not Christians, who will break up “their swords and their spears.” This

situation evidently has yet to happen and according to Isaiah 2 God will bring it about “in the final part of the days” of the short transitional time of transfer of world power to Jesus. So, the Society’s interpretation of a 1914 establishment of the kingdom fails because the governments of the world still have full control of earth’s affairs and are fully armed with even more lethal weapons than ever before. Evidently, Jesus has not been ruling in the midst of his enemies during the last 107 years since 1914. Furthermore, the placing of the enemies under Jesus’ feet is not something which is absolutely completed **until the end**; but is a “subduing (ruling)” of them (Ps. 110:2) throughout the Millennium as his kingship widens throughout the earth (Dan. 2:35) after which is:

*“...the end, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government and all authority and power. For he must rule as king until God has **put all enemies under his feet**. And the last enemy, death, is to be brought to nothing” (1 Cor. 15:24- 26).*

Finally, God’s Will Takes Place

In his model prayer Jesus’ second major aspect was: “*Let your kingdom come. Let **your will take place...on earth***” (Matt. 6:10). Again, the scriptures give no indication of any decades’ long gap between when God’s kingdom comes and when His will begins to take place on earth. Evidently, the doing of God’s will in general is not happening at the present time. Certainly, the vast majority of people, since 1914, are not even interested in doing God’s will; but this will all change when Jesus returns to set up God’s Kingdom on earth as the ruling power and all the peoples begin to learn righteousness.

It is entirely logical that after the establishment of the Kingdom and after dealing with his main enemies Jesus would immediately bring into effect the processes to disarm the nations and begin the improvement of conditions in the world so that peace comes in a relatively short time. Yet the Watchtower’s scenario has only an invisible kingdom with invisible rulers who have accomplished nothing of any significance toward world peace or improvement over the last 107 years!



Did 1975 Complete 6,000 Years of Mankind's History?

Along with its many date-setting promotions the Watchtower Society promotes the idea that the year 1975 brought to completion 6,000 years of mankind's history. This concept led the vast majority of Jehovah's Witness of the time to believe that Armageddon would happen at the end of that period in 1975 and that they would then begin to live in paradise on earth. Indeed, this whole date-setting concept was based on the Society's establishment of the year 4026 B.C.E, as supposedly being the date of Adam's creation with Eve being created very soon afterward as God's final creation. This date was calculated by a tallying of figures contained in the biblical genealogies to form a complete chronology. As will be shown in this chapter no accurate chronology can legitimately be composed from the biblical data. However, the Watchtower Society took the proven date for the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.E as their pivotal date for working out their own version of biblical chronology. As shown earlier, the Watchtower Society wrongly promotes the date of 607 B.C.E for the destruction of Jerusalem instead of the proven date of 586/7. So, from this unscripturally arrived at date the Society was already twenty years out in its chronology. They then proceeded to work backwards using the actually legitimate biblical chronological markers to Abraham's time, but finally in imitation of Archbishop James Ussher (1650) they moved into the process of using the genealogies of Genesis chapters 5 and 11 to build the remainder of their chronology leading back to Adam's creation.

Generally, Genealogies Do Not Serve as Chronologies

In his paper of 1890 William Henry Green was the first to reveal that there were major problems with the chronological scheme presented by Archbishop James Ussher. Firstly, the biblical genealogies, which include those of Genesis chapters 5, 10, and 11 as particularly relevant to our subject, were not compiled for the purpose of forming dated chronologies; but rather: "to authenticate hereditary succession and inheritance rights, biological descent and geographical or ethnological relationships" according to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE), Vol. 2, p. 424. Furthermore, according to the ISBE, Vol. 1, p. 673: "First is

the fact that commonly all persons in a given line are not included.” In fact, most of the genealogies appear in **abbreviated** form so that there is a compressing of time—a telescoping and therefore they do not provide an exhaustive list. This can be expressed as meaning that: When X had lived Y years, he became father of a **family line** *that included or culminated in Z*. Again, the ISBE, Vol. 1 comments that: “If one does not allow for gaps in the genealogy of Moses and Aaron, he is forced to discredit Chronicles” (p. 676). Even genealogies that would seem to lend themselves to a chronological application were not totalled by the writer. Many of the genealogies focus on outstanding individuals so that a mnemonic (memory aid) is accomplished often in a list of seven or ten or multiples of them. However, since the time of significant contact with the Greek world the Jewish rabbis wanted to show the historicalness of the Scriptures by compiling dated chronologies leading back to creation; the first such chronology being produced in the third century B.C.E. and based on the Septuagint text. Furthermore, the term *father* in these genealogies often means *ancestor* and the term *son* often means *descendant*. In fact, there were no separate words in Hebrew for grandfather or grandson etc.

Abridgement of Genealogies

A comparison of the various genealogies in the Scriptures shows significant gaps in their parallels. For example:

EZRA’S ANCESTORS

Ezra’s presentation of this genealogy has been abridged by the omission of six consecutive names:

1 Chronicles 6:13, 14		Ezra 7:1-5
1. Aaron		Aaron
2-7	the same	
8. Meraioth		Meraioth
9. Amariah		-----
10. Ahitub		-----
11. Zadok		-----
12. Ahimaaz		-----
13. Azariah		-----
14. Johanan		-----
15. Azariah		Azariah
16-21	all the same	
22. Seraiah		Seraiah
Ezra		

MATTHEW'S AND LUKE'S GENEALOGIES OF JESUS COMPARED

In Matthew Chapter 1, from David to the Exile there were 14 generations, but 21 generations are presented in Luke chapter 3. Also, in Matthew, from the Exile to Jesus there were 14 generations, but 21 generations presented in Luke. Although Matthew and Luke are following the descent through two different sons of David, namely Solomon and Nathan respectively, they are both clearly working to patterns based on the number 7, with Luke's pattern being 21, 14, 21, and 21. To obtain such a pattern Luke would have to leave out at least a few names, which he actually does. If this is so with Luke's listing then Matthew's listing must have been in an even more abbreviated form so that his listing of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah shows that he did not simply copy the genealogical record of Mary's husband Joseph, but seems to indicate his intentional arrangement of the names. Therefore, it is evident that these genealogies were not for the purpose of forming a chronology. Certainly, it is a notable fact that the Bible writers themselves never put such genealogies to such a use to form chronologies. This is because nowhere do they add up these numbers, nor suggest their summation. In fact, the genealogies simply authenticate hereditary succession, inheritance rights, and biological descent.

NOTE: In Matthew and Luke Zerubbabel is listed as the son of Shealtiel. But in 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 we find that he is actually the son of Pedaiah (Shealtiel's brother).

Genesis Chapters 5, 10, and 11 Are Abridged Genealogies

Similar to the above, it becomes evident that great care must be exercised when we focus our attention on the genealogies of Genesis. So, in commenting on Genesis 11 *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* speaks of, "drastically abbreviated lists." And the following factors are strong indicators that the Genesis 5, 10 and 11 genealogies are "drastically abbreviated lists" **and therefore have unaccounted for gaps**, i.e., many names are missing.

THE FOCUS IS ON THE EFFECT OF SIN RATHER THAN ON CHRONOLOGY

Apart from the purpose of the genealogies in Genesis 5, 10, and 11 as demonstrating how God was guarding the Messianic line (Gen 3:15, Luke 3) there seems to be a focus on the effect of sin on human vitality and longevity, particularly the steady fall in longevity after the flood and then later in Peleg's time.

THE SYMMETRICAL STRUCTURE OF THE GENESIS LISTS

As with the Matthew and Luke lists as having a pattern based on sevens, but with these chapters in Genesis the lists are based on tens. Here there is also a symmetry and a regularity that seem to indicate an intentionally artificial arrangement. So, when the name Cainan, which is missing from the Masoretic text of Genesis chapter 11, is included the list becomes a pattern of *tens* to match the list in Chapter 5, and no doubt to act as a mnemonic.

Furthermore, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* notes that: "The Hebrew word translated "begot" does not necessarily mean "became the father of," but in these cases it means "became the ancestor of" (p.53). Also, as shown in the first parts of this chapter the term "son" quite often means "descendant." So, a good example of this concerns the summary in Matthew 1:1 of Jesus' genealogy which is detailed as: "Jesus, **the son of David, the son of Abraham.**" Clearly, this means that Jesus was a **descendant** of David who was a descendant of Abraham. So, too, with the genealogies of Genesis Chapters 5, 10 and 11. These can be expressed as meaning that: When X had lived Y years, he became ancestor of **a family line** that included or culminated in Z. For example, Genesis 5:9, 10 means: when Enosh had lived for 90 years, and became the ancestor (father, grandfather or great-grandfather etc) of Kenan and then Enosh lived for another 815 years after he became the ancestor of Kenan and so making his complete life-span 905 years. This must mean that he also became the ancestor to other descendants (male and female) and so, at ninety years of age Enosh had an unnamed (in the genealogy) child who, as the start of Enosh's family, produced descendants who eventually produced the notable individual—Kenan (Cainan). In this case the 90 years does not apply to **Kenan** and so **does not tell us when he was born**, but rather it tells us when his ancestor was born. Evidently, Kenan did not even necessarily have to be born within the remaining 815 years of Enosh's life. This pattern must also be true for many of the key descendants of their relevant ancestors, particularly because of the author's purposeful abridgement of each of these genealogies.

However, unless the naming of a child can be the prerogative of a grandfather, there are some who may have been of a direct father/son relationship: Seth because Eve and Adam named him (Gen. 4:25, 5:3), Enosh because Seth named him (Gen. 4:26), and Noah because Lamech named him (Gen. 5:29).

Illustration of Abridgement of the Genealogies in Genesis Chapters 5, 10 and 11

In his book *The Old Testament Documents—Are They Reliable & Relevant?* Walter Kaiser Jr. gives the following illustration:

Let me suppose, for the purposes of this illustration, that my own father (“A”) was one of these VIP’s (very important persons) mentioned in the Genesis accounts. Let us say that he had four sons born (to give biblical types of numbers) on his 100th, 120th, 140th and 160th birthdays. Let us say that I was born on my father’s 100th birthday and that it was through my son’s son, six generations removed, that the next VIP (“B”) came. In biblical shorthand, then, my father (“A”) would have begotten my son’s son, six generations removed (“B”) when he was 100, for on his 120th, 140th and 160th birthdays he would have begotten my brothers’ lines of descent and not the next VIP.

Why We Cannot Assign a Date to Adam’s Creation from the Masoretic Text

CAINAN IN THE SEPTUAGINT AND IN LUKE 3:36

In Genesis 10:22, 23 and 11:12, 13 in the Septuagint (LXX), and in Luke 3:36 **Cainan** is positioned between Shelah and Arphaxad in this early genealogy. Yet his name is missing from the Masoretic text of our standard Bibles in the Genesis 10 and 11 accounts. With the restored name of Cainan in Genesis 11 the genealogy becomes a perfectly symmetrical pattern along with the genealogy of Genesis 5 namely:

...from Adam to Noah (Noah had 3 sons) is 10 generations Gen. 5.

...from Shem to Terah (Terah had 3 sons) is 10 generations Gen. 11.

NOTE: Each genealogy ends with the father having 3 sons. A parallel is seen in the genealogy in which Lamech is 7th from Adam (through Cain) and Lamech then has 3 sons (Gen. 4).

THE EBER/PELEG GAP

Because the genealogy in Genesis 11 is evenly divided at its 5th member **Peleg** by the statement that “*in his days the earth was divided*” (Gen. 10:25: and 11:18) and because the life spans of the patriarchs drop off drastically after this point, a significant gap is implied between Eber and Peleg. The life spans of Peleg’s ancestors from Shem forward were: 602, 438, 433, and Eber 464 years. However, from Peleg forward the life spans drop to: 239, 239, 230, 148, and 275 years. This sharp decline in longevity of about 200 years indicates the likelihood of **an unknown number of individuals between Eber and Peleg as missing from the list.**

Any failure to acknowledge abridgement of the genealogy and the **Eber/Peleg** gap leads one to the traditional dating of the Tower of Babel event as based on the Masoretic text as being c.2300 B.C. However, this dating leads to the following absurdities:

- If this genealogy is complete, then Peleg, who marks the beginning of a new period—“the dividing of the earth,” would have died while all his ancestors from Noah onward were still living. So not only did Shem, Arphaxad, Cainan, Shelah, and Eber live at that time, but all the generations following as far as and including Abraham’s father, Terah. Yet strangely in Genesis 10:25 only Peleg is mentioned in relation to this major event.
- The 26 cities and all of the many cultures and civilizations in Canaan would have had to have been settled within about 200 years from the Tower of Babel event. However, flourishing ancient civilizations around the Middle-East, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Canaan were in existence when Abram left Ur and before he moved into the land of Canaan in the early third millennium B.C.E. There Abram discovered very large and well-established populations of Kenizites, Kenites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites. Very shortly afterwards he travelled to Egypt with its long line of Pharaoh’s. This was possibly at the time of the 12th dynasty. Later he came into contact with Philistines who by then had built their latest civilization (an earlier one having been on Crete). Also, the five cities civilization of Sodom was well established in Abraham’s time. All of this could not, realistically, have been so settled within the short time of about 200 years.
- The Genesis account of Abraham's time gives the strong impression that the Flood was an event of the long distant past, and that the characters prior to and during that event were long gone.
- Chinese records go very much further back than 2269 B.C.E. as the supposed date of the Tower of Babel dispersion. Such a high level of development is unlikely from this supposed time (200/300 years) until Abram crossed the Euphrates.
- The established dating of written languages reaches back to c.3300 B.C.E. which places the Tower of Babel event at an earlier time than that and the Flood of Noah’s day as still earlier.

So, the genealogies from Adam to Noah and from Shem to Abraham are

abridged and therefore cover only the key events and characters and, according to William Henry Green, with *nothing to suggest the length of time intervening between these events.*

Completing the Genesis 11 Symmetry by Using the Septuagint Text

In contrast to the LXX of Genesis 11 and Luke 3 as both showing the Arphaxad /**Cainan**/ Shelah genealogy the Masoretic text of Genesis 11:12, 13 fails to show the name “Cainan.” It reads: “Arpachshad lived 35 years and then he became father to Shelah. After becoming father to Shelah, Arpachshad continued to **live 403 years.** Meanwhile, he became father to sons and daughters.” However, Luke 3:35, 36 presents the genealogy as, “*Shelah, son of **Cainan**, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem...*” etc., and the New English Translation of the LXX of Genesis 10:24 presents it as: “*Arpaxad became father of Kainan*” and finally, this LXX of Genesis 11:12, 13 presents this line as:

*“And Arphaxad lived **a hundred and thirty-five years** and became the father of **Kainan**. And Arphaxad lived after he became the father of Kainan **four hundred thirty years** and had sons and daughters and died. And **Kainan** lived one **hundred thirty years** and became the father of Sala. And **Kainan** lived after he became the father of Sala **three hundred thirty years** had sons and daughters, and died.”*

NOTE: 1 Chronicles 1:24 also does not have the name of Cainan inserted between Arpachshad and Shelah in either the Masoretic or the LXX texts. However, because all copies of the inspired Luke account include “Cainan” it is clearly a name that is part of the Genesis Record as displayed in the Septuagint account of Genesis 11.

Summary of Reasons Why a Chronology Should Not Be Formed from the Masoretic Genealogical Lists

- Noting that Jesus was not the Genesis creator (Isa. 44:24 and please see: *Can There Be Three Persons in One God? - Why You Should Question the Trinity Doctrine* Chapters 41-46) he certainly seemed unaware of a date when Adam was created (Matt 19:4).
- Genesis 5 and 11 are evidently constructed so that the genealogies are abridged to form patterns of ten. So numerous individuals in the biological lines must have been omitted.

- It is hardly likely that only Adam, Cain, Seth and 15 descendants with their brothers and sisters formed the entire population of the earth prior to the flood.

NOTE: Jude 14 literally reads: “The seventh from Adam, Enoch” and refers to the Genesis 5 genealogical list wherein Enoch is **listed** seventh but is not necessarily the seventh human male to exist.

- The failure to add in the 230 years concerning Cainan, according to Luke 3 and the LXX.
- The Eber/Peleg gap of time means that there are an unknown number of generations unaccounted for in this gap.
- Unlike the names for individuals in later Bible times, those of Genesis 5 and 11 are not composites of “el” or “Yah” as there are in later times. This gives the impression of the post-Abrahamic times as being at a great distance in time from those of the early patriarchs and not just a few hundred years.
- There is uncertainty concerning which ancestors were fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers or even great-great-grandfathers etc. of the named sons. So, it cannot be known for sure when the son mentioned in each case was born.

Although the earliest readers were perhaps able to fill in the gaps in the lists for themselves from their own knowledge of the times, this is not the case for anyone today. For those who have no additional information, the key to such understanding is lost. In other cases, we are able to understand them, because the information necessary to make them intelligible is supplied from parallel passages of Scripture or from proven history based on archaeology.

An Alternative Attempt at Biblical Chronology Using the Septuagint Text

Almost all of the above factors are verifiably true. Nevertheless, there may have one factor that William Henry Green failed to analyse correctly. It is this: It has been proposed that there is a significant difference between the type of genealogy to be found in Genesis 5 and 11 and all other genealogical lists in the Scriptures, namely, that specific ages of various stages of life for the listed individual are actually given. These accounts provide:

- “The age of fathering” of the individual, even though this may refer

to a “descendant” rather than to an immediate son.

- The remaining years of life of the “father.”
- The lifespan of the father.”

So, researcher S. Douglas Woodward and others propose that it is “the age of fathering” of the individual that is the key “age” to be used in forming a chronology and that these ages are linked one after another in an unbroken sequence. Also, to resolve the other problems in establishing a chronology Woodward et al propose that the Masoretic text has been the wrong one to use. Indeed, it has been shown:

- That the Masoretic text is the result of purposeful corruption of the ancient Hebrew text by the second century Jewish Rabbi Akiba who made alterations to the text between A.D. 90 and A.D. 120 to nullify the prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus and the timing factors related to the coming of Messiah as evidence of Jesus as being the Messiah.
- That since the beginning of the 21st century it has become recognized that the once largely ignored Greek Septuagint text (LXX) of the “Old Testament” is actually superior to and much older than the Hebrew Masoretic text (MT) and was in fact the Bible that Jesus and the apostles actually used.
- That the Septuagint was the Bible used by the early church fathers for the first 500 years of Christian history. This can be seen from their biblical quotations as being from the Septuagint. Furthermore, many of them formed chronologies from the LXX of Genesis 5 and 11. This superiority of the Septuagint over the MT is confirmed by its much better matching with the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Dead Sea Scrolls than does the MT.
- That the Septuagint (begun c. 270 B.C.E.) had God’s blessing as the very first translation of the perfectly preserved ancient Hebrew texts into the lingua franca (Greek) in readiness for the world-wide preaching of the earliest Christians to the Greek-speaking world of the day.
- That the ages given in the Septuagint for when a person fathered the next notable generation are very different from those ages given in the Masoretic text and so, along with other factors, giving a date for the creation of Adam some 1,600 years earlier than that given by Archbishop Ussher and those who have based their chronologies on

the Masoretic text.

Reworking the Middle-Period of the Chronology

JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION TO THE EXODUS

From the perspective of the above information, one would begin to form a chronology starting with a pivotal date i.e., the proven date of an event in history that is noted and described in the Bible. Indeed, the Watchtower Society uses the pivotal date of 539 B.C.E. However, an even better testified pivotal date is that of the time when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed ancient Jerusalem. Yet as noted in this book and from all sources the Watchtower's date of 607 B.C.E. for this event is incorrect. This mistake thereby throws out all of the timing for their Chronology by some 20 years at a very early point. Nevertheless, Bible researcher S. Douglas Woodward, in referencing the work of Young Earth Creationist Barry Setterfield, uses the correct date of 586 B.C.E. for this event as the starting point for constructing a chronology.

THE EXODUS TO ABRHAM

The next key event in this chronology is that of the Israelite Exodus from Egypt. Here the Septuagint and the Masoretic texts provide similar data, but because of other information, the Israelite kingdom split in 976 rather 943 B.C.E. (as per WT). So, this construction from all the biblical data results in a date for the Exodus somewhere between 1616 and 1628 B.C.E. (not 1513 as in Watchtower or 1440/1490 as in the traditional view, or c. 1250 as in the liberal view). This dating of 1616/1628 B.C.E. better fits with the historical/archaeological evidence whereby the Hyksos peoples invaded Egypt after the Exodus, doing so when Egypt was at its weakest after God's destruction of Pharaoh and his army.

Furthermore, the Watchtower correctly references the Septuagint on the issue of the length of time for Israel's sojourn in Egypt as being 215 years (Ex, 12:40). So, moving backwards to the time of Abraham's birth, the various factors mostly held in common between the MT and the Septuagint give possible dates for this event of around 2150 B.C.E.

Attempt to Rework the Early-Period Chronology

ABRAHAM BACK TO SHEM

Next, we move into the territory where there is no basis for attempting to form a chronology and the MT has parted company with the Septuagint because of the interference of Rabbi Akiba. Here Akiba has reduced the ages of when each individual fathered the next

generation by 100 years in most cases. So, using the Septuagint data from Genesis 11 with its accurate ages for when each generation was fathered, Setterfield and Woodward (2018) calculate back to the time of the great Flood in Noah’s day—Setterfield giving 3554 and Woodward giving 3,359 B.C.E. for this event. So, the differences between the LXX and the MT here are:

- Whereas the MT fails to list Arpachshad’s son “Cainan” he is listed in the LXX (as also shown in Luke 3:36). This adds back 130 years to the chronology.
- One hundred years each for six named individuals are missing from the MT. Also, 50 years is missing from the MT for one other individual. The total of these missing years adds into the chronology another 650 years.
- From these two factors 780 years have been cut out of the chronology for the genealogy from Arpachshad to Abraham’s father Terah).

NOAH BACK TO ADAM

Similarly, in an attempt to go back from Noah’s time to the time for Adam’s creation and using the Septuagint data from Genesis 5 Setterfield arrives at 5810 and Woodward 5616 B.C.E. The major part of the difference between the calculations of these two researchers is because Setterfield treats the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt as being the full 430-year period; whereas Woodward takes into account the statement in the Septuagint that Israel’s sojourn for that period was in “Egypt and Canaan” (Ex. 12:40). Nevertheless, these dates do line up with the estimates of the early church fathers who always used the Septuagint at least for the first 500 years of Christian history. Once again, the differences between the LXX and the MT concern Akiba’s reduction by 100 of the years for the fathering of each of the next listed person. Again, this is done for six individuals and so making a loss of a further 600 years to the Chronology. So, 1,380 years is lost from standard lists because of using the MT of Genesis 5 and 11 instead of the older and more accurate LXX. And then there are other factors which Setterfield and Woodward have taken into account from the LXX which push the proposed time for Adam’s creation back a further 1,600 or more years earlier than what is given in the standard chronologies based on the MT.

Conclusion

Concerning this approach with the above information and by referencing the Septuagint, what is clear is that Archbishop Ussher’s

calculated date of 4004 B.C.E and the Watchtower's date of 4026 B.C.E and any similar date based upon the Masoretic text are very far off course. Nevertheless, as when using the MT, so too, even by using the LXX it is evident that different chronologists arrive at different dates for **the creation of Adam** e.g.:

Clement of Alexandria (1 st century)	5592 B.C.E
Jackson (before Green's essay of 1890)	5426 B.C.E
Russell (before Green's essay of 1890).....	5441 B.C.E
Setterfield	5810 B.C.E
Woodward	5616 B.C.E

DID 1975 COMPLETE 6,000 YEARS OF MANKIND'S HISTORY?

Indeed, renowned chronologist Jack Finegan shows that there are several variables which make it close to impossible to be certain of all the dates in biblical chronology. Furthermore, in spite of Woodward's and Setterfield's attempt to form a chronology going from Abram back to Adam using the superior LXX text of Genesis 5 and 11, William Henry Green's conclusions in his paper of 1890 still stand i.e., that no chronology can be formed back to Adam. This is also backed up by the views of modern-day biblical resources.

So, the concept presented by the WT organization that 6,000 years of human history were completed in A.D. 1975 is misguided even if a calculation back to Adam could be produced. Nevertheless, all of the earlier information shows the impossibility of establishing an exact year for when Adam was created, and therefore, the impossibility of working out when 6,000, years of human history had been reached. So why did the Watchtower Organization put such an emphasis on the year 1975?

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44

Another False Hope Created for Jehovah's Witnesses

Certainly, the Watchtower Society is not the only organization to have mistakenly turned the specially structured genealogies of Genesis chapters 5 and 11 into a chronology. However, it does appear to be the

only organization to have used these chapters to draw the conclusion that October 1975 would bring this “system of things” to an end!

Earlier Watchtower Misapplied Dates

The Watchtower Society has a history of misapplying dates for the return of Jesus or for the end of this “system of things” in contradiction of Jesus’ warning not to do this (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:6-7). These dates have included: 1873, 1874, 1878, 1914, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1925, and 1975. One early Watchtower book entitled *The Time is at Hand*. (1908) p.101 stated that: “The battle of the great day of God Almighty which will end in A.D.1914, with the complete overthrow of earth’s present rulership, is already commenced.” Also, in the book *The Finished Mystery* pp. 398, 485 it was stated that: “...the people who are the strength of Christendom shall be cut off in the brief but terrible eventful period beginning in 1918 A.D...also in the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by the millions.” These errors were held until 1925, but then during World War Two more misleading statements were made such as in the Watchtower of 9/15/1941 p.288 which spoke of: “...the remaining months before Armageddon.”

MISAPPLICATION OF 6,000 YEARS

Concerning the misapplication of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies the Society stated that:

“6,000 years of human history ended in 1873”

Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 2 p. 39.

This early date was based on a Watchtower chronology which led back to 4126 B.C.E (now reworked as 4026 B.C.E) as the date of Adam’s creation. Since then, other statements were that:

“6,000 years of human history would end in 1972”

The Truth shall Make you Free p. 152.

“6,000 years of human history would end in 1975”

The Watchtower. 1 May 1967 p262.

“Other Bible prophecies clearly foretell God’s purpose to bring this wicked system to an end in a few years” *Awake* 1/22/1969.

In spite of the failure of anything to have happened in 1975 or in all the earlier dates for the end of this system, the fact that there are no

chronological markers in the rest of the Scriptures that specify the total length of time from Adam to the Flood and from the Flood to Abram should have put the Watchtower Society and others on alert. Therefore, we must conclude that it is impossible to arrive at even an approximate date for either the Flood or the creation of Adam and that by attempting to do so the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has led their membership to the false hope of an ending of Satan's wicked system of things in or shortly after 1975.

Blaming the Membership

Sadly, the Organization denies their responsibility in this and blames the membership stating that they read more into the Organization's words than was there. In the July 15, 1976 issue of the Watchtower magazine, it was stated that:

If anyone is disappointed through not following this line of thought, he should now concentrate on adjusting his viewpoint, seeing that it was not the word of God that failed or deceived him and brought disappointment, but that **his own understanding was based on wrong premises.** (Boldening ours).

But was this true? In fact, this statement by the Organization is a cop out because it was the Governing Body which released the book *Life Everlasting in the Freedom of the Sons of God* in 1966, and the chart at the back of it very clearly showed that 6,000 years from the creation of Adam would end in 1975. Also, there were later comments in Watchtower magazine issues throughout the 1960s and early 70s which indicated that Eve was likely created within only a few months of Adam's creation so that the taking over of the rulership of the earth would soon begin the seventh 1,000 years i.e., the Millennium. All of this was supposed to be 'spiritual food at the proper time'! So evidently those "**wrong premises**" were created in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses by the Governing Body. Furthermore, this had practical repercussions. In the May issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry* it was stated:

Reports are heard of brothers **selling their homes** and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly, this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end. (Boldening ours).

Yet 46 years have now passed since these false expectations were raised in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses by the Governing Body. How

difficult life must have been made for many of those who put such faith in these false but strong statements about the time for the coming great tribulation by this Governing Body!

Since, this debacle by the Organization, they have continued to promote a very close time for the end of this system of things such as the statement in the *Watchtower* of 1/1/ 1989 (original copy before the wording was changed) which said:

“The apostle Paul was spearheading the Christian missionary activity. He was also laying a foundation for a work that would **be completed in our 20th century.**”

And finally, the Society continues to use such misleading phrases as: ‘Armageddon is right around the corner’ or “it is straight ahead,” when in fact, they cannot possibly know that! Again, please note Jesus’ warning in Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:6-7 and the fact that nothing has changed since he said those words for any organization to know otherwise.

§

PART EIGHT

Misunderstanding of Israel’s Future in God’s Purpose

45

Early and Later Watchtower Teaching About Ethnic Israel

Throughout the entire time of the leadership of Charles Taze Russell and a part of the presidency of Joseph F. Rutherford the following was the view of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society:

We find statements by both prophets and apostles which clearly indicate that in the times of restitution, Israel as a nation will be the first among the nations to come into harmony with the new order of things; that the earthly Jerusalem will be rebuilt upon her own heaps, and that their polity will be restored as in the beginning under princes or judges (Isa. 1:26; Psa. 45:16; Jer. 30:18).

The Divine Plan of the Ages, p. 294.

Usage of Replacement Theology by the Watchtower Society

In spite of this original recognition of Israel as still being within God's purpose, Watchtower publications since 1946 express the completely opposite view concerning Israel, namely that all the unfulfilled prophecies concerning natural Israel concern only 'spiritual Israel' i.e., Christians. This view is called Replacement Theology and in its extreme form concerns the teaching that Israel is **permanently excluded** from any future role in God's purpose. The initial details leading to this teaching were first presented in about the year 144 C.E. by the heretic Marcion because of his hatred for all things Jewish. The teaching was later developed and taught by Origen and was further developed by Augustine in conjunction with his allegorical interpretation of prophecy, all of which became early orthodox Catholic teaching concerning Israel and became known also as *supercessionism*.

THE SUPPOSED BASIS FOR THIS TEACHING

Because, in Matthew 23:38, Jesus said concerning Israel that, "*Your house is abandoned to you,*" the Society has taken this to mean that there is no further future for natural Israel in God's purpose. So, the Society understands Jesus' statement as **an irrevocable divorce decree**, indicating that God has no further interest in literal Israel or even a remnant of it. However, Jesus' words here were directed to "the scribes (teachers of the Law) and Pharisees;" in other words to the religious leaders of Israel. Furthermore, Jesus continued on to say: "*For I say to you, you will by no means see me from now on until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in Jehovah's name!'*" (Matt. 23:39). Indeed, the use of the phrase "until you say..." by Jesus has left the door open for these literal Jewish religious leaders to repent. So, this is not an irrevocable divorce decree, but rather it is a conditional statement. It is parallel to Jeremiah 3:8 where God gives Israel a certificate of divorce, but in verse 12 He appeals to her saying: "*Return, O renegade Israel*

...for I am loyal...I will not stay resentful forever.”

Why Jesus’ Statement Was Not an Irrevocable Divorce Decree

As most commentators note, the most natural contextual interpretation of the “house” in Matthew 23:38 that Jesus said would be abandoned to the Scribes and Pharisees would be ‘the temple.’ Metaphorically, this could also mean the loss of position in God’s favour for the Scribes and Pharisees. This would include other religious orders such as the Sadducees who failed to “say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in Jehovah’s name!’” and so to include all successor religious systems of Judaism up to the present day. So, Jehovah was indeed finished with the religious system of first century Israel with its sacrificial system; but this is not the same as His being finished with the Jewish people forever.

NOTE: The “certificate of divorce” that Jehovah gave Israel (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:6-8) was figurative of their broken relationship; yet Jehovah had earlier promised that, in time, this relationship with them would be renewed (Hos. 2:16, 19-20), and it evidently had been renewed at least by the time of the later prophets.

Why Natural Israel Is Not God’s People Today

The ‘body of God’s people’ is made up of any individuals who are faithful to Him—starting with Abel, through Noah to Abraham and the many in between. In time God chose to engage with the descendants of Abraham through Jacob and sought a bilateral covenant arrangement with them. Such a covenant was simply a codicil or legal supplement to the Abrahamic Covenant and was temporary and for the purpose of leading Israel to the Messiah, namely, Jesus so that he might begin another phase toward the fulfilling of the Abrahamic Covenant. During his ministry Jesus likened himself to **a vine** which, along with its then Jewish branches, made up the ‘body of God’s people’ (John 15:1-6); yet any one of the branches could be removed for not bearing fruit. Later the Apostle Paul likened the ‘body of God’s people’ to a cultivated “**garden olive tree**” from which some Jewish branches could be “broken off because of their unbelief” and to which some Gentile branches could be grafted in (Rom. 11:16-22).

ISRAEL’S UNBELIEF CUTS THEM OFF

Because the majority of Jews rejected their own Messiah they have lived **in unbelief**. So, as a nation they lost their status as the people of God and contrary to the teaching of Dispensationalism unbelieving

national Israel is not currently playing a role in tandem with the body of true Christians. Jesus indicated this when he told the Jews:

*“But I tell you that many from east and west will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens; whereas the sons of the kingdom **will be thrown into the darkness outside**. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be” (Matt. 8:11-12).*

Peter later reaffirmed that this being “**thrown into the darkness outside**” was to be the case for the unbelieving Jews. He comments that:

*“...it says in Scripture: “Look! I [Jehovah] am laying in Zion a chosen stone, a precious foundation cornerstone, and no one **exercising faith** in it will ever be disappointed” ... ^{7b}but **to those not believing**, “the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone” and “**a stone of stumbling** and a rock of offense.” They are stumbling **because they are disobedient to the word**. To this very end they were appointed”” (1 Pet. 2:6-8).*

It was because of being in the Mosaic Law Covenant that Israel had been constituted as the ‘people of God,’ and once that covenant became obsolete unbelieving Israel lost any status it had as the ‘people of God.’ This was demonstrated at the moment of Jesus’ death, when the veil in front of the most holy was ripped from top to bottom. From then on individual Jews had to accept Messiah Jesus if they wished to be part of the ‘people of God.’

Who Are “God’s People” After Jesus Had Made His Sacrifice?

In the letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul explains a little more about God’s purpose and how national Israel fits into it. He does this by using the illustration of branches broken from the natural olive tree and that possibly these may be grafted back into it at a future time. So, he asks Gentile Christians in Rome, whom he classifies as individual branches from a wild olive tree:

*“What, then? The very thing Israel is earnestly seeking **he did not obtain**, but the ones chosen obtained it. The rest had their sensibilities dulled ... ¹⁷However, if some of the **branches were broken off** and you, although being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became a sharer of the richness of the olive’s*

root, do not be arrogant toward them ... ¹⁹You will say then: “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true! **For their lack of faith**, they were broken off, but you are standing by faith. Do not be haughty, but be in fear. For if **God did not spare the natural branches**, neither will he spare you”

(Rom. 11: 7, 17, 19-21).

The fact that Paul says that “God did not spare the natural branches” of Israel tells us that he considered the Jews, as an unbelieving nation, to be no longer part of God’s people. Nevertheless, the Christian “body of Christ” has not permanently “replaced” the individual Jews. The reason is explained by Paul, saying:

*“They [the Jewish branches] also, if they do not remain in their lack of faith, **will be grafted in**; for God is able to graft them back in. For if you [Gentiles] were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into the garden olive tree, how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree!”* (Rom. 11:23-24).

So, the Abrahamic Covenant is with those who are believers and not with those who “remain in their lack of faith” whether Jewish or Gentile, “For not all who descend from Israel are really “Israel” (Rom. 9:6).

Only Spiritual Israel Is God’s People Since the First Century?

It is spiritual Israel which has become “the commonwealth of Israel” as explained by Paul:

*“Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ**, alienated from **the commonwealth of Israel** and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But **now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God **in one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to*

those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints** and members of **the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **In him** you also are being built together into **a dwelling place for God by the Spirit**”

(Eph. 2:11-21 ESV).

Clearly, Paul does not mean that natural, unbelieving Israel which rejected its Messiah is “**the commonwealth of Israel**” because it is not “**in Christ**.” So, the term “the commonwealth of Israel” refers to the body of believing Christians—initially Jewish and later incorporating Gentiles:

*“For neither is circumcision anything nor is uncircumcision, but a **new creation** is. As for all those who will walk orderly by this rule of conduct, peace and mercy be upon them, yes, upon **the Israel of God**”* (Gal. 6:15, 16).

Again, Paul is not referring to unbelieving Israel, but rather it is “the Israel of God”—the body of Christians which is “a new creation” and which is comprised of spiritual Jews: “**For we are those with the real circumcision**, we who are rendering sacred service by God’s spirit and boasting in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:3) and “he is not a Jew who is one on the outside, nor is circumcision something on the outside, on the flesh. But he is **a Jew** who is one on the inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart **by spirit**, and not by a written code” (Rom. 2:28, 29).

‘GOD’S PEOPLE’ ARE ONLY THROUGH CHRIST

Evidently, it is only through faith in Christ that one can be part of “the people of God” (Gal. 3:26) and therefore of “the Israel of God” and “the commonwealth of Israel.” Jesus had made this plain saying, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6) and with Peter emphasizing this fact when he said to the new Jewish converts that, “there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is **not another name** under heaven that has been given among men by which we must **get saved**” (Acts 4:12). So, from that time onward, every natural Jew must come to God through Christ if they wish to be part of “the people of God.”



46

Watchtower Goes Too Far in Using Replacement Theology

The Functions of Israel's Priesthood Were Transferred to the "Israel of God"

How far does the New Testament go in showing the application of the 'Replacement Theology' approach to natural Israel after Jesus replaced the Old Covenant with the "New"? Certainly, Jesus as the Lamb of God replaced the Jewish temple and its sacrificial system with himself as the new temple and high priest. Furthermore, the Apostle Peter later showed that from the first century, the Christian "*Israel of God*" (*Gal. 6:16*) has replaced natural Israel as an unbroken continuation of 'the people of God' in terms of the priestly **functions** originally assigned to ancient Israel. Peter stated to Christians that:

*"...you yourselves also as living stones are being built up into a **spiritual house** to be a **holy priesthood**, in order to offer up **spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**...that you should declare abroad the excellencies of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now you are God's people..." (1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10).*

However, does this mean that everything said in the Bible about Israel, including prophecies, gets transferred to Christians? Was the sacrifice of Christ the absolute end of the road for natural Israel?

Total Replacement Theology Regarding Israel Goes "Beyond What Is Written"

Certainly, Paul quoted several prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures and applied them to the Christian congregation e.g., Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 are quoted in Romans 9:25, 26. Yet Paul and then Peter in 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10 were under inspiration of God's spirit when making these applications. Therefore, no right is given to anyone else to apply

what was prophesied concerning Israel to the Christian Congregation. In fact, these same prophecies are not taken away from natural ethnic Israel, but still await a further fulfilment in them.

Unfortunately, the Society has adopted the version of Replacement theology most accepted by the various Catholic churches. This version teaches that all the many promises made to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures are actually fulfilled only in the Christian Congregation, and not ever in Israel. So, there is a spiritualizing or allegorizing of these prophecies concerning any future restoration of Israel, such that they are reapplied to the Christian Congregation. The problems with this view are that:

1. The Christian Greek Scriptures clearly teach that Israel and the Christian Congregation are different and that as “spiritual Israel” the Christian Congregation, in coming into existence only in the first century, can only appropriate to itself the promises made directly to it, including those that have already been made by the Christian writers. These are all found in the Christian Greek Scriptures and relate to the Abrahamic Covenant established before Israel existed.
2. The spiritualizing or allegorizing of these prophecies is part of the amillennial approach to prophecy in contrast to the well-established pre-millennial approach of Revelation 20:1-7 which the Society correctly teaches.
3. Paul shows, in Romans 9 and 11, that the rejection of literal Israel is temporary whilst they are in unbelief having “*had their senses dulled*” (Rom. 11:7) and that at the return of Christ a “*remnant... will be saved*” (Rom. 9:27) because they will at that time accept Christ.
4. Many of the promises that Jehovah made to Israel are unconditional, because He could foresee that a remnant of Israel would accept the Messiah at his future return.
5. The current rejection by God of literal Israel is conditional according to Romans 11:23, 25, 26. So later believing Israelites will then appropriate to themselves the unconditional promises God made to them.
6. Finally, if one tries to replace the word *Israel* with the words *Christian Congregation* in the Hebrew Scriptures and in many of the seventy-seven references to Israel in the Christian Greek Scriptures the thoughts become redundant and the passages becomes unintelligible.

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THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

In his book *The Old Testament Documents-Are They Reliable?* Walter Kaiser reveals the double standard in the most widely accepted version of Replacement Theology when he asks:

How, then, might we hear God in the prophets...Some have decided that the method of “replacement” could supply the answer, namely, **to replace the name “Israel” in all the positive places where it occurs with the new value, “the church.”** But this is no solution at all, since it must rewrite history and it contravenes even the Pauline expectation that God is not finished with Israel as yet (Rom 9-11). What is even more embarrassing for this suggestion is that it chooses to substitute the church for Israel only in those places where the reference to Israel is positive, **but not where it is negative.** But how can that be a consistent hermeneutic. p. 202.

This is the case with the Watchtower Society which repeatedly applies the positive prophecies about Israel to itself and applies the negative ones to the churches of Christendom, who they refer to as the apostate ‘spiritual Israel.’ However, why doesn’t the Society consistently apply all of these ‘Israel’ prophecies to itself?

Certainly, there is no Scriptural basis for applying any of these prophecies to anyone else except literal Israel. Indeed, in Paul’s olive tree illustration he shows that the cut-off branches can be grafted back, saying, *“They also, if they do not remain in their lack of faith, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them back in. For if you were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into the garden olive tree, how much more will these who are natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree!”*

(Rom. 11:23-24).

AN EXAMPLE OF AN UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE TO ISRAEL

“The spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah has anointed me to declare good news to the meek. He sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the wide opening of the eyes to the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of Jehovah’s goodwill” (Isa. 61:1-2a).

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus quotes this passage, but only up to the point concerning goodwill. However, the passage in Isaiah continues with details concerning, *“the day of vengeance”* and that *“they will rebuild the ancient ruins,” “restore the devastated cities,” “eat the resources*

of the nations,” “possess a double portion in their land,” and that Jehovah “will cause righteousness and praise to sprout before all the nations.” Clearly, a natural reading of this passage shows that it all refers to natural ethnic Israel. So, when Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1 and the first half of verse 2 he is showing this half as being fulfilled in his day as “the year of goodwill”; but the rest of Isaiah 61 was yet to be fulfilled during and after “the day of vengeance.” This means that any replacement theology which inserts Christians into this certainly would be inappropriate. Hence, there will be a literal future renewing of “*the devastated cities*” of Israel “*in their land*” with “*rejoicing to time indefinite*” and “*the sprouting of righteousness.*” All of these events are shown to be after the first advent of Messiah (verses 1 and 2a). However, none of these things has yet been fulfilled.

Misapplied Texts to Prove No Future for Natural Israel

Romans 2:28, 29

Do not Paul’s words that only being a “*spiritual Jew*” of “*the seed of Abraham*” is what matters mean that God has forever finished with natural Israel?

REPLY: Although Christians are certainly spiritual Jews this does not exclude natural Israel as a whole from also, at a single future time, converting to faith in Jesus. As above, Romans 9-11 shows that there is a future for “Israelites according to the flesh.” Clearly, at the point of the conversion of Israel “according to the flesh” each individual becomes a believer in Jesus as Messiah.

Matthew 21:43

“This is why I [Jesus] say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits.”

REPLY: Here Jesus was not talking to all Jews but only to the Jewish religious leaders up to that time. So, the *New International Bible commentary* (p.1143) states that: “The kingdom will be taken from the disobedient Jewish leaders; their rejection of the prophets and the Son makes them liable to judgment.”

A Practical Objection: The Land Will Not be Large Enough for the New Population

REPLY: The area of land that Israel currently occupies is relatively small

compared to the vast area that was promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:18). In addition to this complete area of land, God promised a further expansion, saying: “*Make the place of your tent more spacious ... for you will spread out to the right and to the left. Your offspring will **take possession of the nations**, and they will inhabit the desolated cities*” (Isa. 54:2, 3). (Also see Deut. 32:8, 9).

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47

The Prophecies for Israel Should Not Be Allegorized

An allegory is a figure of speech and to allegorize something means to give it a hidden meaning—a meaning other than its natural meaning. Certainly, the Bible does contain some allegories e.g., Galatians 4:21-31. However, it was Augustine, the earliest leading theologian of the Catholic church, who began to turn the many prophecies concerning the nation of Israel into allegories so that they were all applied to “the Israel of God” i.e., Christians.

Jesus Did Not Allegorize Natural Israel

When Jesus said: “*In the re-creation, when the Son of man sits down on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will sit upon 12 thrones judging (“to govern” Moffatt) the **12 tribes of Israel***” (Matt. 19:28) he was referring to natural Israel. Indeed, because this concerns events at the beginning of the Millennium there is no reason to spiritualize this statement. Almost all commentators view this as a simple reference to the literal twelve tribes of Israel. In fact, when the disciples asked, “*Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to **Israel** at this time?*” (Acts 1:6) Jesus did not tell them that they asked about a wrong subject, but only that they were not to know the time for the restoring of the kingdom to Israel.

Furthermore, in his great time-of-the-end prophecy on the Mount of Olives Jesus spoke of the literal temple during the attack upon the literal Jerusalem which must therefore concern literal Jews. This is in keeping

with the end-time prophecies in Zechariah 12 and 14.

Luke Did Not Allegorize Natural Israel

From the beginning of Luke's gospel with all that led up to the birth of the Messiah, he did not allegorize any of the details, but said, *"This one will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and Jehovah God will give him the **throne of David** his father and he will rule as King **over the house of Jacob** forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom"* (Luke 1:32, 33). Certainly, no Jew or Christian of the first century would have imagined that the throne of David was to be anywhere else but in literal Jerusalem; but rather God says, *"After these things I will return and raise up the tent of David that is **fallen down**; I will rebuild its **ruins** and restore it"* (Acts 15:16). The rebuilding of this is a reference to Amos 9:11 concerning literal Jerusalem and therefore things pertaining to literal Israel as discussed above. In fact, Peter references this literal restoration because for Jesus, *"Heaven must hold this one within itself **until** the times of restoration of all things of which God spoke **through the mouth of His holy prophets of old**"* (Acts 3:21). So, from all of the more than one hundred prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures this restoration evidently will involve literal Israel.

Paul Did Not Allegorize Natural Israel

Paul makes it very clear that Israel is not permanently rejected by God when he asks the rhetorical question, saying: *"I ask, then, God did not reject **his people**, did he? By no means! For, I too am an **Israelite**, of the offspring of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject **his people** whom he first recognized ("foreknew" most versions)"* (Rom. 11:1-2 NWT). The fact that Paul notes his tribe of Benjamin indicates that he is referring to natural ethnic Israel and in fact, the commentaries also show that this refers to an ethnic national identity, that is, the same nation of which Paul says, *"for it is because of **the hope of Israel** that I have this chain around me"* (Acts 28:20). So, when Paul recognizes that, *"Although the number of the **sons of Israel** may be as the sands of the sea, only the remnant **will be saved**"* (Rom. 9:27), he is not imagining that this is allegorical and so applying to Christians!

Natural Israel Stumbles Over Jesus as Being the Messiah

In Paul's comments about Israel in Romans 11 he never allegorizes it but asks: "What, then? The very thing Israel is earnestly seeking he did not obtain, but the ones chosen obtained it. The rest had their **senses dulled**" (Rom. 11:7). So, although there was a remnant in the first century, this did not fulfil all of the prophecies of the final purpose for Israel. So, Paul continues his comments with, "What I am saying is this: Was this stumbling to lead to their [natural Israel's] **final downfall**? Out of the question! On the contrary their failure has brought salvation for the gentiles, in order to stir them to jealousy. And if their fall has proved a great gain to the world, and their loss has proved a great gain to the gentiles—how much greater a gain will come when all is restored to them ... ¹⁵Since their rejection meant the reconciliation for the world, do you know what **their re-acceptance** will mean? Nothing less than life from the dead!" (Rom. 11:11-12, 15 NJB. Also note Ezekiel 37:1-14). Paul continues with considerable positiveness about natural Israel with the statement that:

*"They [natural Israel] also, **if** they do not remain in their lack of **faith**, will be grafted in [to the olive tree]; for God is able to graft them back in. ... ^{25b}A partial dulling of senses has come upon Israel **until** the ('fullness' KIT - not "full number") of the people of the nations has come in, and in this manner [Gk. houtos "**thus**" or "**so**"] **all Israel will be saved**. Just as it is written: "**The deliverer will come out of Zion** and turn away ungodly practices from Jacob" (Rom. 11:23, 25-26).*

In an attempt to prove that these verses speak of spiritual Israel the Society makes much of the Greek word *houtos* as meaning "in this manner" or "in this way." Certainly, these are perfectly correct translations. However, they do not support the Society's interpretation because the context of "the dulling" of Israel is **until** the Gentiles have "come in." So, there is a sequence here. 1) Natural Israel is dulled. 2) The Gentiles are gathered into Christianity. 3) At Christ's return a remnant of natural Israel repents, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah (Zech. 12:10, 11) and is grafted back into the "Olive tree" of true Israel (Rom. 11:16-24) so that "*all Israel will be saved.*"

THE NEW COVENANT

The promised New Covenant for "*the house of Israel*" (Jer. 31:31) was applied to those who became Christians (Luke 22:20). Does this mean that this promise will never be granted to natural Israel? No! From the future time of "all Israel's" corporate repentance and acceptance of

the Messiah they too will be brought into the New Covenant.

§

48

Full Restoration of Israel Was Not from Ancient Babylon

When Israel gathered to the land of promise after the Exodus from Egypt this was not actually a restoration because Israel as a nation had never previously occupied the land of Canaan. In fact, biblical history shows that the **first time of restoration** for Israel came after 539 B.C.E when the Jews were released from Babylon; yet it came as only a minor fulfilment of the many prophecies recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Indeed, the complete fulfilment of these prophecies is still future as a second time as in Isaiah's words that:

*“In that day Jehovah will again offer his hand, **a second time**, to reclaim **the remnant** of his people who are left from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. He will raise up a signal for the nations and gather the **dispersed ones of Israel**, and he will gather together the **scattered ones of Judah** from the four extremities of the earth” (Isa. 11:11-12).*

So, **the second time**, as noted in Isaiah 11:11 will be at the time of the return of Messiah. Furthermore, this full regathering of Israel will include their spiritual restoration as prophesied in Jeremiah 24:7 where Jehovah says: “they will return to me with all their heart.”

However, the return of the Jews from Babylon in 538 B.C.E., amounted to only 50,000 whilst the vast majority remained there. Nevertheless, these returning exiles remained in a low spiritual condition requiring that they be constantly encouraged by their leaders to rebuild the city and the temple (Ezra 9:1-4; Neh. 5:1-9; 13:7-11, 23-29). Other than the brief Maccabean period Israel remained under foreign domination right up to Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70. So, scholar Robert Shank comments that:

The restoration prophecies remained largely unfulfilled in the post-captivity restoration under Zerubbabel. Nehemiah's prayer (Neh. 1:5-11) was not fully answered in the return of a small remnant in his day, for the promised return is to include all Israel (Deut. 30:3, 4, Rom. 11:26). *Until the Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom*, p. 79.

The Future Regathering of Israel Will Be Universal and in the Time of the End

Unlike the very limited restoration from Babylon, and as with the many nations listed in Isaiah 11:11-12, so too, a number of prophecies show that Israel's future restoration will be from many different lands. Right back to Moses' time Israel was warned that disobedience to Jehovah would lead to their captivity into many lands, but also to a later restoration from those lands because:

*"Jehovah your God will then bring back your captives and show you mercy and regather you from **all the peoples** where Jehovah your God has scattered you. Even if your people are dispersed to the extremity **of the heavens**, from there Jehovah your God will gather you and bring you back. Jehovah your God will **bring you into the land** your fathers took possession of, and you will possess it; and he will make you prosper and will multiply you more than your fathers" (Deut. 30:3-5).*

Much later Jeremiah records Jehovah as saying to Israel: "And I will gather your captives and collect you together out of **all the nations and places to which I have dispersed you**" (Jer. 29:14) and in Ezekiel's prophecy Jehovah says, "When I bring them [*the captives* verse 25] back from the peoples and collect them together from the lands of their enemies" (Ezek. 39:27). The fact is that the deportations of Israel by the Assyrians and of Judah by the Babylonians did not involve their dispersal to "**all nations**" and the return was only from Babylon. However, the much later invasions by the Romans in both A.D. 70 and 135 did lead to the Jews becoming scattered throughout "**all nations.**" Furthermore, the return was prophesied to be at the time of the end.

"In the final part of the days you will understand this. ^{31:1}At that time," declares Jehovah, "I will become God to all the families of Israel; and as for them, they will become my people" ... ⁸I am bringing them from the land of the north. I will gather them together from the remotest parts of the earth"

(Jer. 30:24b-31:1, 8).

Similarly, Hosea gives a further restoration prophecy, saying, “*Afterwards the people of Israel will come back and look for Jehovah their God, and for David their king; and they will come trembling to Jehovah and to his goodness **in the final part of the days***” (Hosea 3:5). So, Professor of Hebrew A. B. Davidson tells us that:

Every prophet *predicts the return of Israel* to its land in the latter days. In the final state of the Kingdom of God on earth, the people will again dwell in their ancient heritages. Now this idea of the prophets must certainly be taken literally, if we desire to understand what they mean.

Restoration of Israel Occurs Only When Messiah Has Returned

This major factor is shown by Jeremiah when he refers to King David as an ancestor of the future Messiah:

*“Look! The days are coming,” declares Jehovah, “when I will raise up **to David a righteous sprout [the Messiah]. And a king will reign and show insight and uphold justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will reside in security. ... Jehovah...who brought back the descendants of the house of Israel from the land of the north and out of all the lands to which I have dispersed them**” (Jer. 23:5-6, 8).*

There are many other prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures which show that a remnant of natural Israel has a future in God’s purpose. These are found in: Isaiah 60:1-14; Jeremiah 16:15-21, 25:29b-33; 32:37-41; Ezekiel 28:25, 26; Joel 3:1, 2, 12-14; Amos 9:11-15; and Zechariah 2:10-12). Although written in c.800 B.C.E., Amos’ prophecy is still unfulfilled. In Acts 15:16-18 the disciple James applied the words of Amos 9:11 and 12 to the future Messianic age when he adapted the words: “In that day” to “after these things [i.e., after Gentiles also became God’s people] I will return.” Most commentators understand this to refer to the future gathering of Israel. The tent of David probably refers to the House of David over which Messiah will rule and Edom is representative of all Israel’s previous enemies.

Restoration Prophecies in Zechariah Could Not Concern the 537 Return from ancient Babylon

Zechariah wrote his book in 518 B.C.E., some twenty years after the Jews had left Babylon, thereby making his restoration prophecies have a different and later fulfilment:

*“This is what Jehovah says, ‘I will return to Zion and reside in Jerusalem; and Jerusalem will be called the city of truth, and the mountain of Jehovah of armies, the holy mountain.’” ...⁷“Here I **am saving my people from the lands** of the east and the west. And I will **bring them in**, and they will reside in Jerusalem; and they will become my people” (Zech. 8:3, 7-8).*

Similar prophecies are made concerning natural ethnic Israel’s future in Zechariah 8:11-13, and 10:8-12. Certainly, all of the above listed prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures are full of literal statements pertaining to the future of Israel. Therefore, one cannot inconsistently take, for example, parts of Isaiah 60 and say that they must be turned into allegory or spiritualized. So, looking back to **Jeremiah 32:37, 40-41** we see a literal future fulfilment where Jehovah says:

*“Here I will gather **them together from all the lands** to which I shall have dispersed them in my anger and in my rage and in great indignation ... ⁴⁰ And I will make with them an **everlasting covenant**, that I will not turn away from doing good to them, and I will firmly plant them in this land in truthness with all my heart and with all my soul.”*

Only literal Israelites were dispersed by Jehovah; and yet this cannot refer to the restoration after 538 B.C.E because Jehovah did not conclude “an **everlasting covenant**” with them “that I will not turn away from doing good to them.” This is evident from the fact that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Furthermore, it was not in 538/7 B.C.E that Jehovah had planted “them in this land in truthness” because the Romans deported almost a million Jews. Evidently, full restoration of natural Israel is yet future when Messiah Jesus returns.

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PART NINE

Further Flawed Interpretations

49

Flawed Interpretations Concerning Jesus

Did Jesus Become a Spirit–Begotten Son at His Baptism?

The term “beget” or “became father to” is used either literally or figuratively in the Christian Greek Scriptures. It is most commonly used of the literal fathering of a child as with the genealogies of Jesus recorded in Matthew chapter 1. To *beget* also has the lexical definition of “to cause to exist.” It is used figuratively of Christians when they come into existence spiritually—they are then called spirit-begotten.

Throughout Scripture the term “beget” is used of Jesus in both the literal and figurative senses. It was applied to his literal coming into existence in Mary’s womb as recorded in Luke 1:35 in fulfillment of Psalm 2 by a partial quotation. Luke then restated this Psalm in Acts 13:33 and likely had the same literal begetting of Jesus in Mary’s womb in mind (see NOTE). Also, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses the term “only-begotten” with reference to Isaac’s being literally fathered by Abraham. Then there is the new birth of Christians and therefore a figurative usage (1 John 5:1). But with reference to the begetting of Jesus, *The Burton Coffman Commentary* says:

God’s recognition of His Son was **emphatic** upon the occasion of his baptism; but Jesus had been the **only-begotten Son from his conception**; and again, by the resurrection, God declared him to be Son of God **with power**. Romans 1:4.

The use of the term “born again” which is better expressed as “born from above” comes up in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). However, to use this to prove that Jesus would need to become spirit-begotten is inappropriate because Jesus was already “born from above”

at his conception by holy spirit (Luke 1:35). **He needed no adoption.** He was already God's Son as was Adam at the moment of his creation (Luke 3:38). As with Adam, Jesus was sinless which fact John the Baptist recognized by calling Jesus "*the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.*" Additionally, John tried to deter Jesus from baptism (Matt. 3:14) because he recognized that Jesus did not need to be "*born from water and spirit*" (John 3:5). He was already born of God (1 John 5:18) and was the Son of God from birth. (Luke 1:32, 35). The descent of the spirit upon Jesus was, according to John 1:31-34, primarily to enable John to identify "*the one that baptizes in holy spirit,*" and thereby "*make Jesus manifest to Israel.*"

CONCLUSION: God's declaration: "This is my Son the beloved," was **emphatic** of His recognition of Jesus as His Son at the time of his birth, but **says nothing of Jesus becoming spirit-begotten at his baptism** as taught by Watchtower. Nevertheless, although becoming sons of God is vital for all others who would "see the kingdom of God."

NOTE: At Acts 13:33 the NWT has rendered the Greek word *anastasis* as "resurrected." However, the *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* p.122 shows that *anastasis* also has "general senses not connected with resurrection (a) The vb. is used of raising up children... etc." So, in Acts 13:33 the Greek only says "raised up" and does not say "raised up from the dead." This would change the application of Psalm 2, which does not mention resurrection, from being a prophecy of the Messiah's appointment to kingship to his becoming Son only at his resurrection. The renowned scholar F.F. Bruce demonstrates that verse 33 gives the fulfilment of verse 23 which promises that God **will send the Messiah**, i.e., "raise him up" by putting him into the arena of human history; whereas verse 34 (Gk. *de*) does concern the resurrection of Jesus, when God raised him *from the dead* and a different proof-text is supplied for this fact." A.T. Robertson says: "'raised up Jesus" refers not to the resurrection but to the sending of Jesus." Also, *The IVP Commentary* says: "raised up Jesus" – bringing him into the arena of human history – God has fulfilled what he promised to the fathers. Jews and the early church took Psalm 2 messianically."

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Jesus Was 'The Christ' and 'The Son' at His Birth, Rather Than Only from the Time of His Baptism

Although as a baby it is evident the Jesus could not act as the Christ/Messiah, the Son of God, he was still actually the Christ from the time of his birth as seen from the angel Gabriel's announcement that:

“There was born to you in David’s city a saviour, who is the Christ” (Luke 2:11). Then after Jesus’ birth the devout man Simeon had it “divinely revealed to him by the holy spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ” (Luke 2:26), after which he is able to hold Jesus in his arms. So clearly Jesus was actually the Christ from his birth.

JESUS IS CONFIRMED AS GOD’S SON AT HIS BAPTISM

The Watchtower Society teaches that Jesus only became the Christ and the Son of God at his baptism. This is based on the NWT rendering of “I have approved you” in Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, and Luke 3:21 as if this is the time of approval for Jesus to become the Son of God, but in contradiction of the statements in Luke 2:11 and 26. However, the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* from the Greek renders these phrases as “...in whom I found good pleasure” (*Matt. 3:17*) and “...in you I thought well” (*Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:21*). Almost all other translations render these phrases similarly, e.g., “with whom I am well pleased” (*ESV*) and “in you I take delight” (*REB*). So, this was not a matter of having God’s special approval so as to be designated “Son of God” or “Christ” only from the time of his baptism. Nevertheless, Jesus did receive a divine anointing as “Son of God” at his baptism which confirmed his already being the Christ from birth and who was now to begin his public ministry.

“SON OF GOD WITH POWER” AT HIS RESURRECTION

A further stage of messiahship as Son of God came for Jesus at his resurrection because he now became an immortal being “in power” and so was now the Son of God in a special sense: “who with power was declared God’s Son (“Son of God **in power**” *KIT*) according to the spirit of holiness by means of **resurrection** from the dead” (*Rom. 1:3, 4 NWT*). Greater clarity here is evident in the following versions which render Romans 1:4 as: “declared (established) Son of God with (in) power” (*NASB, ESV, NAB, NRSV, NKJ, NJB*). In total the Scriptures give three stages of Jesus being confirmed as the “Son of God”:

- At his birth
- Publicly at his baptism
- At his resurrection as Messiah with power.

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Did Jesus Die on a Stake or a Cross?

Although not a vital issue because what counts is that Jesus died for mankind the Watchtower Society makes much of and promotes the idea that Jesus was executed on an upright stake rather than anything with a cross-beam as is presented in all other translations of the New Testament. To understand this issue, we must consider the background of the Jewish method of execution and then the Roman method of execution.

Firstly, hanging was not one of the statutory Jewish ways of putting a criminal to death. According to the Mishnah: ‘The court had power to inflict four kinds of death-penalty: stoning, burning, beheading, and strangling’ (Sanh.7.1). Hanging on an upright stake was imposed *after* the victim was dead from stoning, as an exhibition to others of the penalty for a serious crime, but only till nightfall. In contrast to this the Roman method of execution was crucifixion. Yet under their occupation of Israel *hanging* and *crucifixion* came to be equated. So, Josephus writes that: “Even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset.”

The Greek word *Stauros* refers to “a stake sunk into the earth in an upright position; a **cross-piece** was often attached to its upper part” according to *Bauer’s Greek-English Lexicon*. Also, *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament* states concerning *stauros* that it is “an instrument of torture, perhaps in the sense of the Latin **patibulum**, a cross-beam laid on the shoulders....an instrument of execution in the same form of a vertical stake and a cross-beam of the same length;” whereas, **Xylon** is: “a wood, piece of wood” according to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

The historical and archaeological evidence is that the Romans executed prisoners **on a cross**. In fact, the person who was to be executed usually carried the patibulum to the site where the stake was already fixed upright. He was then laid down and nailed or tied to the patibulum which was finally hoisted up and tied to the stake. By modern-day experimentation it seems most likely that the cross was of a capital T shape; whereby the two main pieces were cut in a mortise and tenon shape and then the patibulum was slotted down onto the top of the upright.

Justus Lipsius’ woodcut shows fifteen individuals executed on crosses and only one without the cross-beam with the comment that: “In the Lord’s cross there were 4 pieces of wood: the upright beam, the crossbar, a tree trunk (piece of wood) placed below, and the title (inscription) placed above.”

In 1968 a tomb, dating around the time of Christ was opened to discover the first skeletal remains of a **crucified** man. An article about it

appeared in 1985 in the *Biblical Archaeological Review* by Mr Tzaferis, a non-Christian who stated that:

At the end of the 1st cent B. C., the Romans adopted crucifixion as an **official punishment** for non-Romans...Following the beating, the horizontal beam (patibulum) was placed upon the condemned man's shoulders, he began the march to the execution site ... In order to prolong the agony, Roman executioners devised two instruments that would keep the victim alive on the cross for extended periods. One known as *sedile* was a small seat attached to the front of the cross. Both Irenaeus and Justin describe the cross of Jesus as having 5 extremities rather than 4; the fifth was probably the *sedile*. pp. 48-49.

THE BIBLICAL PICTURE OF JESUS' EXECUTION

Making it even more unlikely that Jesus was executed with his hands pointing upward and together on a stake are Thomas' words at **John 20:25**: "*Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and stick my finger into the print of the nails...*" This tells us that Thomas knew that more than one nail had been used in Jesus' hands, which would have been unlikely if Jesus had had both hands together as shown in Watchtower drawings. Furthermore, **Matthew 27:37** says that: "*...they also posted **above his head** the charge against him, in writing: 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews.'*" So, if Jesus' arms were lifted above his head, they would have obscured the words on the sign. If, however, the sign was placed higher, Matthew would have said 'they posted **above his hands** the charge against him' rather than the actual words of "they posted **above his head** the charge against him." Taken together with the above information this situation is better explained by there having been a cross used for Jesus' execution.

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The Watchtower Society Has Done Away with the Real Jesus

This very serious issue is because the Watchtower Society misunderstands the meaning of 1 Peter 3:18 that Christ "*was made alive in the spirit.*" So, the Watchtower Society proposes that Jesus was resurrected as an intangible immortal spirit creature—Michael the archangel, rather than as an immortal human. However, this is not the case according to the Christian Greek Scriptures (please see Chapters 1 to 4). Being "made alive in the spirit" means alive in his new transformed existence freed from the limitations and weaknesses of natural human

life, but nevertheless as an immortal human with a spiritual (not spirit) body which cannot decay and is with power and glory (1 Cor. 15:42-45).

Indeed, when Jehovah made the first promise concerning the offspring of the woman in Genesis 3:15 it is evident that this offspring of the woman was to be a human and never an archangel either side of his existence on earth. Firstly, Jesus is currently the mediator of all true Christians and yet Paul describes him as “*a man*” (2 Tim 2:5) and not as a spirit being i.e., Michael. Secondly, the term “the Son of man” refers to a human who is, in the future, to sit on his throne to judge the nations (Matt. 25:31-32) at the beginning of the Millennium.

So, because of Watchtower’s faulty teaching that Jesus was supposedly resurrected as a spirit creature, a major problem is created which is what happened to his physical body that was laid in the tomb? The Watchtower’s answer is that Jehovah simply disposed of it. However, the biblical reality is that Jesus was raised as a tangible, physical, but immortal human, yet the Watchtower disposed of him!

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50

Miscellaneous Flawed Interpretations

Is the U.N. “The Disgusting Thing That Causes Desolation”?

The Watchtower Society claims that from 1920 to 1940 the League of Nations Organization filled the role of “the disgusting thing that causes desolation” noted by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 (“abomination” or “sacrilege” in most other translations). This was because the League of Nations promoted world peace and that one clergyman claimed it to be God’s Kingdom on earth. However, after the League of Nations became defunct the United Nations Organization was brought into existence in 1945 and took over this role as “the disgusting thing that causes desolation” in Watchtower teaching. However, it is impossible for this antichrist figure to have appeared on the world scene up to the present time for the following reasons:

The striking change of pace in Jesus' forecast at Matthew 24:15 is signalled by the word "therefore" at the beginning of this section which firmly binds the section to "the end" in the previous verse. In this second major section of Matthew 24 the following events are listed in order:

- 1) The desecration of the temple, (Matt. 24:15), as Jerusalem is attacked (Luke 21:20).
- 2) The Christians must escape to the mountains (Matt. 24:16-18).
- 3) The great tribulation begins (Matt. 24:20-22).
- 4) False christs and false prophets perform miracles (Matt. 24:23-28).
- 5) There are signs in sun, moon and stars, roaring of the sea and trouble on earth (Matt. 24:29, Luke 21:25 ff).
- 6) Christ's return in power and glory (Matt. 24:30 forward).

All these events are tightly bound together by Jesus' repeated use of the Greek adverb *tote* with its meaning of "then" or "at that time" and so giving the thought of immediacy. *Tote* occurs seven times in this part of the Olivet discourse. So, after stating, "Therefore, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15) or "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, **then** know that the desolating of her has drawn near" (Luke 21:20) the order of events is:

"Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains"

(Matt. 24:16).

"Then there will be great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21).

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Christ' (Matt. 24:23).

"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven ('the sky' NASB)" (Matt. 24:30a).

"Then the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation"

(Matt. 24:30b).

"...and then he will send forth the angels, and will gather his chosen ones together from the four winds" (Mark 13:27).

This tight binding in time of these events means that if "the sign of the Son of Man" is yet future then so are all the preceding events. This, therefore, means that the "disgusting thing that causes desolation" has not yet appeared and so cannot be the U.N. Indeed, if "the disgusting

thing that causes desolation” was the U.N since 1945 (or the League of Nations from 1920) then Christians in Judea would, **at that time**, have fled to the mountains, and the great tribulation and Christ’s return would have occurred shortly after. Also, this tight connection of events is strengthened by Jesus’ words in verse 29: *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened”* etc. This has not yet happened.

All of this identifies this section of the Olivet discourse from verses 15-31 as a sequence of rapidly occurring ‘time of the end’ events that are to be completed within the relatively short time of less than 3½ years as detailed in the books of Daniel and Revelation. This makes no allowance for the appearance of “the disgusting thing that causes desolation” to have occurred back in 1920—some 99 years ago or of the United Nations Organization some 74 years ago.

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Do The 24 Elders in Revelation Represent Christians?

The Watchtower Society’s book entitled *Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand* presents the 24 elders as symbolic of the claimed literal 144,000 of “the Israel of God,” namely, multi-ethnic anointed Christians. This is also believed by many other groups who espouse the false theory of a pre-tribulation resurrection. The following analysis demonstrates that the 24 elders are a different group to the ‘body of Christ’ and are most likely to be **spirit beings**. So, firstly, because the 24 elders in Revelation 5 sing about Christians, they cannot be Christians. The passage informs us that:

*“...the twenty four elders fell down before the lamb, each one had a harp and golden bowls that were full of incense. (The incense means the prayers of **the holy ones**.) And **they** sing a new song, saying: ‘You...bought **people for God** out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made **them** to be a kingdom and priests to our God ...”* (Rev. 5:8-10).

However, an early misunderstanding was because the KJV wrongly translated the phrase as: “You made us to be a kingdom” thereby making it appear that the 24 elders were singing about themselves. However, all modern translations have rendered as above in the NWT. The correct translation of, “you made **them** to be...” shows the distinction between the singers as *“they sing a new song”* i.e., the 24 elders and *“the holy ones”* i.e., the Christians. So, the scenario here is of the 24 elders

offering up “the prayers of the **holy ones**” and these 24 elders are the singers of the song about the priests to our God, namely, the Christians. Therefore the 24 elders do not themselves symbolize Christians. The *Word Biblical Commentary* explains that: “**8c** “(which are the prayers of God’s people).” This phrase, like that in v 6, is an interpretive gloss or parenthetical explanation added by the author.” In harmony with that fact Moffatt renders verses 8 and 9 as:

*“The four and twenty Presbyters [elders] fell down before the lamb, each with his harp and with golden bowls full of incense (i.e., full of the prayers of the **saints** [the holy ones]), singing a new song: ...”*

This makes it clear that it is not “the holy ones” who are singing in this instance but two different groups are spoken of here.

OBJECTION

This can only be applied to anointed Christians because: “*All around the throne were 24 thrones, and on these **thrones** I saw seated 24 elders dressed in **white garments**, and on their heads golden **crowns***” (Rev. 4:4). This wearing of **crowns** is just as is promised to Christians (1 Cor. 9:25) and for them to be seated on **thrones** as also are the Christians described in Revelation 20:4.

REPLY:

Although it is certain that Christians will rule as kings and sit on thrones (2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 20:4), it is also evident that there are angelic authorities that are seen also to occupy thrones and therefore would be worthy of crowns. These are: “*...the governments and the authorities in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 3:10) also described as, “*created in the heavens...the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities*” (Col. 1:16) because Jesus “*went to heaven, and **angels** and authorities and powers were made subject to him*” (1 Pet. 3:22). So, from these Scriptures it can be seen that there is no reason to think that Revelation 4:4 cannot be referring to **spirit beings**.

Regarding these 24 elders in Revelation 4:4 as dressed in white garments the Scriptures also often show angels to be wearing bright white garments because they are also righteous (John 20:12; Acts 1:10). So, this fact is no proof that the 24 elders must symbolize Christians.

Furthermore, in Revelation 11:16-18 the 24 elders are shown to be separate from the Christian ‘holy ones’ (verse 18). Also, in Revelation 14:1-5 these **elders are mentioned as separate** from the company of 144,000 ‘first-fruits’ Jewish Christians. In this case the “elders” are **part**

of the audience. The fact that both the 24 elders (in 5:8, 9) and the 144,000 (in 14:2.3) sing “a new song” simply indicates that the 144,000 have also learned that new song at some later date. Furthermore, the “voice which I heard” was only “**as of harpers harping (KIT)**” so that it is simply a description of their voice. Furthermore, the 24 elders throughout revelation are never shown to have come from the earth as are the 144,000 and the great multitude.

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Will Adam and Eve Ever Be Resurrected?

Insight on the Scriptures Vol. 2 states that: “Under the Law the deliberate murderer could not be ransomed. Adam, by his wilful course, brought death on all mankind, hence was a murderer. (Ro 5:12) Thus, the sacrificed life of Jesus is not acceptable to God as a ransom for the sinner Adam” (p. 736). So, the view of the Society is that Adam will not be resurrected and is already eternally destroyed. However, on this basis no wilful murder would be covered by the sacrifice of Jesus. This could mean that King David, who was responsible for Uriah’s murder, would not be covered by the ransom and so would not be resurrected. It also means that the many individuals who become Jehovah’s Witnesses and yet had previously committed murder would not be covered by the ransom sacrifice.

ADAM COULD BE FORGIVEN

In the Society’s teaching of Adam’s annihilation, it has not taken into account certain factors of God’s character, especially when someone repents of their sins. Indeed, in his letter James states the principle that, “*Mercy exults triumphantly over judgment*” (Jas. 2:13). Also, in Paul’s witnessing to the men of Antioch in Pisidia he said:

*“Let it therefore be known to you, brothers, that through this One a forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, and that **from all the things** from which you could not be declared guiltless by means of **the Law of Moses**, everyone who believes is declared guiltless by means of this One” (Acts 13:38, 39).*

Although, in the *Insight* volume, the Society tries to put Adam under the Mosaic Law, he was, in fact, not under that Law. Yet, even if he was under the Law as a murderer, the above passage shows that provided he believed in Jesus as Messiah then he would receive “forgiveness of sins” and be “declared guiltless.” Of necessity he would need to be resurrected so that he might have the opportunity to accept Christ.

NOTE: When 1 John 3:15 says that “No manslayer has everlasting life remaining in him” this obviously refers to the person who maintains a murderous attitude which is clearly incompatible with having everlasting life and does not refer to someone who has committed murder for which they are later repentant.

WAS ADAM ACTUALLY A MURDERER?

Although it was **through** Adam that sin and therefore death was introduced into the world (Rom. 5:12); yet Adam is never referred to in the Scriptures as being a murderer/manslayer. However, Jesus, in John 8:44, does say that, “*the Devil...was a murderer when he began.*” So, the Scriptures seem to put the blame on Satan as the wilful murderer of the human race and Adam as being Satan’s weak, compliant, and somewhat misguided instrument. Indeed, nowhere in the Scriptures is Adam directly called a murderer. Indeed, from several angles there is no reason to imagine that Christ’s sacrifice would not be applicable to Adam and Eve.

NOTE: Although 1 Timothy 2:14 says that Adam was not deceived, this is in the context of pointing out that it was Eve who was directly confronted by Satan and so directly deceived by him. So according to *ISBE* Vol. 1: “Paul does not deny that Adam was deceived, but is saying only that he was not directly deceived” p. 49.

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Does James 5:14-16 Concern Spiritual Sickness?

It may seem strange to many Jehovah’s Witnesses that the vast majority of Christians view the passage in James 5:14-16 as concerning literal physical illness and the healing of it. The passage reads:

*“Is there anyone **sick** among you? Let him call the elders of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, applying **oil** to him in the name of Jehovah. And **the prayer of faith** will make the **sick one well**, and **Jehovah will raise him up**. Also, if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so **that you may be healed**. A righteous man’s supplication has a powerful effect.”*

In the *Comment* section in the *Word Biblical Commentary* Ralph P. Martin explains:

The Greek words *asthenei`n* and *kamnein* are **better understood to refer to cases of physical illness** ... In addition, *soozein* (Mark 5:23,

28, 34; 10:52; John 11:12) and *egeirein* (Mark 1:31; 2:9–12; 9:27; Matt 9:5–7; Acts 3:7) can be **used to describe someone who is healed of a physical malady.**

“If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

Though there is no strict equation of illness and sinfulness (a denial that goes back to the book of Job; cf. John 9:1–3; 11:4) **James leaves open the possibility that some sickness is connected with sin.** This use of the perfect participle suggests the power of past sins that affect the present situation of the sufferer. This **consequence may be in the form of continuing guilt**, or it may be **an illness that remains despite the prayer for healing.** If illness is related to sin, the asking of forgiveness of sin (as confessed both to God and to the injured party) will lead to healing.

16a *“Confess your sins to one another then, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”*

The confession of sin was then evidentially necessary if healing was to occur. The present imperative form, suggests that **James is requiring that confession become a repeated action.** The practice of public confession was important to Judaism and the early church...

The word “to heal”—except when it is part of OT quotations (e.g., Isa 53:6; 1 Pet 2:24)—is **always used in the NT to refer to the healing of physical illness.** This comports with the interpretation of the setting of vv 14–16 above. The present verse **suggests a corporate setting for the prayer of healing**, which is different from the admonition to enlist only the prayers of the elders in v 14. Davids believes that “James ... consciously generalizes, making the specific case of 5:14–15 into a general principle of preventive medicine.” By saying that church members other than elders can take part in **a ministry of intercessory prayer** (which is effective; see 5:16b), the author is showing that the prayer, **not the person** (i.e., not the elders), **is the channel** through which God’s power to heal is conveyed. **This speaks against the view that 5:14 is referring to “healing” as a spiritual charisma.** Moreover, though the elders are still responsible for the prayer of intercession on behalf of the ill (5:14), the text here widens to make prayer and confession and so pastoral responsibility the “privilege and responsibility” of **all in the congregation.** The precise setting of this pastoral reminder will be evident from 5:19–20.

16b *“The righteous person’s prayer is very powerful in its effectiveness.”*

James ... is quick to point out that such power is not limited to a special class of elite “charismatics.” There is no select group of Christians (e.g., the elders or the teachers) who have a monopoly in the matter of effectual prayer.

In fact, the word used in verse 14 refers to anyone who is “sick.” It is a most unnatural reading to take this as referring to spiritual sickness. Even though it is spiritual men who are called, it is “**the prayer of faith**” that is the significant factor in helping the sick person back to physical health. The fact that he calls the elders to him indicates that he is on a sick bed. The sickness may even be due to the person’s sin but that does not turn it into spiritual sickness only.

.....

Was the Preaching Exclusively to the Jews for Three and a Half years?

This Watchtower Society teaching is held so as to conform to the faulty Historicist teaching that Daniel’s 70 weeks of years came to an end in the first century C.E. The teaching states that the mid-point of the 70th week occurred when Jesus died in 33 C.E and the second half of the week continued for another three and a half years until Cornelius and family, as the first Gentiles, were converted in 36 C.E. However, there is nothing in all of Jesus’ words or those of the apostles to maintain such a teaching. In fact, soon after his resurrection Jesus commanded the very opposite when he said:

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of **people of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20).*

There is no indication in the Scriptures that Jesus put a time limit on when preaching to the Gentiles was to begin. The record in the book of Acts shows that very early on Samaritans (Acts 8:5) were preached to as a result of the persecution by Saul which scattered the disciples out of Jerusalem. Also, the prophetic goals of the 70th week have not yet been accomplished. (Please see *Prophecies Related to the Return of Jesus*). Furthermore, regarding the second half of the 70th week, this cannot be made to fit with the conversion of Cornelius because the Scriptures give no time scale for determining when this event occurred and so making it impossible for it to be dated to 36 C.E. as the Society does.

For the Removal of the Thorn in the Flesh, Who Did Paul Plead with - Jehovah or Jesus?

Paul said:

*“Three times I begged **the Lord** about this [his thorn in the flesh vs. 7b], that it would depart from me. But he said to me: ‘My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you, for **my power** is being made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly, then, I will boast about my weaknesses, in order that **the power of the Christ** may remain over me like a tent” (2 Cor. 12:8-9).*

Clearly, “the Lord” referred to here is not Jehovah as in the teaching of the Watchtower Society, but Christ who was the one who confronted Paul on the road to Damascus and who later called Paul to his ministry. Paul’s reference to the one who speaks of “**my power**” is evidently “**the power of the Christ.**” Therefore, it is Christ who says: “My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for **my power** is being made perfect in weakness.” Almost all commentators recognize this fact.

Do All Who Are Not Jehovah’s Witnesses Die at Armageddon?

In their attempt to prove the teaching that **only** those who are baptized Jehovah’s Witnesses (predominantly the “other sheep”) will survive into the Millennium the Society appeals to **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 which states that:**

*“This takes into account that it is righteous on God’s part of to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you. But you who suffer tribulation will be given relief along with us **at the revelation** of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance on **those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.** These very ones will undergo a judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength, **at the time when he comes** to be glorified in connection with his holy ones”*

This passage concerns the intense persecution during the future great tribulation which occurs just before “**the revelation** of the Lord Jesus from heaven” and “**at the time he comes** to be glorified.” Then many will

refuse to “**know God**” and to “**obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.**” The internal context of this passage concerns, “*those who make tribulation for you*”—the Christians. So “**those who do not know God**” and “**do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus**” are “those who make tribulation” for Christians at that future time and who will not acknowledge God by their rejection of the returning Jesus as God’s appointed King and as announced earth-wide by the angel who has “*everlasting good news to declare*” (Rev. 14:6). However, rather than these ones resisting the Watchtower’s version of “the good news” they will resist the very evident real ‘good news’ concerning Jesus’ visible return and thereby directly oppose God’s Kingdom. These ones are depicted in Jesus’ parable of the ten minas:

*“But his citizens hated him and sent out a body of ambassadors after him, to say, ‘We do **not want this man to become king over us**’ ... ²⁶ ‘I [Jesus] say to you ... ²⁷bring these enemies of mine here who did not want me to become king over them and **execute them in front of me**” (Luke 19:14, 26, 27).*

According to Revelation 19:19-21 Jesus’ enemies will include the Wild Beast (Antichrist), the False Prophet, their armies and **many supporters**. The literal statements of Revelation give an approximation of one third or possibly even half of the world’s population as being destroyed at that time. That would still leave more than 4 billion survivors based on early 21st century population statistics.

IT IS ‘NATIONS’ THAT WILL BE RULED OVER

The Bible never speaks of the destruction of absolutely all of the nations. In fact, during the Millennium the mortal nations will be the inheritance of Jesus and the Christians who will by then have been granted immortality. This promise, includes keeping such non-Christian nations under control while admonishing them to serve God:

*“Ask of me, that I may give **nations** as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession. You will break them with an iron sceptre, and you will smash them to pieces like a piece of pottery. So now, **you kings**, show insight; Accept correction, you judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear and be rejoice with trembling. Honor the son, or God will become indignant and you will perish from the way. For His anger flares up quickly. Happy are all those taking refuge in him” (Ps. 2:8-12).*

In the Revelation the Apostle John hears a similar teaching, namely, that:

*“To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give **authority over the nations**—²⁷ that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’—just as I have received authority from my Father” (Rev. 2:26-27 NIV).*

It makes no sense to say they will rule other Christians with an iron rod. So, here the Watchtower’s teaching fails when it says that only Jehovah’s Witnesses will be left alive after Armageddon. Certainly, individual JWs may come from just about every nation, but this does not make them into whole “nations”! Similar to Psalm 2, Revelation says that, “out of his [Jesus’] mouth protrudes a sharp long sword with which to strike **the nations**, and he will **shepherd them with a rod of iron**” (Rev. 19:15). Again, this does not just concern individuals from the nations but, indeed, whole nations. Yet, nothing is said in the Scriptures about these nations or their kings as joining any particular organization or that they are Christians—even second-class ones!

Furthermore, Zechariah shows that in the earliest stages of the Millennium non-Christian individuals will have to comply with God’s arrangements, saying that:

*“Everyone who is left remaining of all the nations that come against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to bow down to the King, Jehovah of armies ...¹⁸if the family of Egypt does not come up...they will have **the scourge** ...¹⁹This will be the punishment for the sin of Egypt and the sin of all **the nations** that do not come up to celebrate the Festival of Booths”*

(Zech. 14:16, 18, 19).

Zechariah 14 entirely concerns the time of the end and the earliest stages of the Millennium when “Jehovah will become King over all the earth” (verse 9). Clearly, there will be whole nations of non-Jehovah’s Witnesses who will survive, not just the several million Jehovah’s Witnesses, but possibly half or more of the world’s population. If these nations begin to resist God’s decree to go annually to Jerusalem, then they will suffer **the scourge**. This is hardly likely to apply to those who are classed as true Christians. Furthermore, there is no good reason to take this chapter in Zechariah as symbolic. It is as completely literal as the words in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. So, it would be inappropriate to try to play one off against the other by ignoring the very real picture given to us in Zechariah 14.

THE WORLD’S KINGDOMS BECOME GOD’S KINGDOM

John (in the Revelation) shows that God’s kingdom will rule over the initially non-Christian entire nations because at the seventh trumpet,

*“The kingdom **of the world** has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and **he will rule** as king forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15) which was earlier foretold by Daniel in prophesying that: “the kingdom and the rulership and the grandeur of **the kingdoms under all the heavens** were given to the people who are the holy ones of the Supreme One. Their kingdom is an indefinitely lasting kingdom, and **all rulerships** will serve and obey even them” (Dan. 7:27).*

REPENTING NON-JWs AT THE TIME OF JESUS' RETURN

Many millions of individuals have been given little or even no knowledge of the Scriptures. Additionally, there are many non-Jehovah's Witnesses who do study and apply the Scriptures. For both of these categories of people it is unthinkable that absolutely all would resist Jesus and the Kingdom when it will be so evident that “the kingdom **of the world** has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and **he will rule** as king.” Indeed, Jesus foretold that after the great tribulation:

*“Then the sign of the Son of Man **will appear** in heaven, then all the tribes of the earth **will beat themselves in lamentation**, and they will **see** the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great **glory**” (Matt. 24:30).*

*“He is coming with the clouds and **every eye will see him**, and those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will **beat themselves in grief** because of him” (Rev. 1:7).*

The Watchtower applies these phrases to wicked people's regret because of looming destruction for them. However, the phrases more naturally refer to regret because they “pierced him” and which leads to remorse and repentance and so their lives are spared by God's mercy.



Appendices

Appendix A

Summarizing the Society's Faulty System of Dates

1. Rather than the biblical reference being to 70 years of servitude of Judah from 607 to 537, it refers to 70 years of **Babylonian supremacy** from **609 to 539** B.C.E. Hebrew scholars point out that the KJV (and therefore the NWT) is incorrect in its rendering of 'At Babylon' (*Jer. 29:10*). Indeed, the Hebrew Interlinear shows that the correct rendering is "For Babylon."
2. It was also 70 years of overall **servitude (vassalage) of many nations** to Babylon as shown in Jeremiah 25:11-12.
3. The Bible record shows that there were four deportations of the Jews rather than three as the Society teaches.
4. The four deportations lasted about 68 years from 605 to 537 B.C.E., many of which occurred long before Jerusalem was destroyed.
5. The 70 years ended when Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E. and not according to the Watchtower Society's date of 537.
6. The paying off the Sabbaths was not directly connected with the 70 years but lasted 49 years when the land was substantially deserted from 586 to 537 B.C.E.
7. It was not Jehovah's will that the land be totally uninhabited as is taught by the Society. See Jeremiah 27:11.
8. Nebuchadnezzar's accession year was 605 B.C.E and not 625 as the Society proposes.
9. Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year was 586/7 B.C.E., and therefore the destruction of Jerusalem occurred in that year and not 607 as the Society proposes.
10. The Society's **Claim #1 that 607 is the correct start date for the Gentile Times is proved wrong:** All historical and archaeological evidence proves the Jerusalem was destroyed in **586** B.C.E, in contradiction of the Society's teaching that it occurred in 607. It occurred in: "*the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. And at that time the military forces of the king of Babylon were laying siege to Jerusalem*" (*Jer. 32:1*).

11. The Society's **Claim #2** that the "Gentile Times" is 2,520 years long **is proved false**. There is no genuine biblical basis for the day = a year theory (see Appendix B). Also, the Society's use of a solar year instead of the lunar year makes the concept unworkable.
12. The Society's **Claim #3** that Nebuchadnezzar's "seven times" of the **chopped down tree is the same as "the Gentile Times" is proved false**: There is no proof:
 - That these "seven times" had any further fulfilment beyond Nebuchadnezzar's times of madness.
 - That if the trampling of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24) started on earth that it later shifts to heaven for completion.
 - That the reign of a pagan dictatorial emperor would be used by God as a symbol of God's loving rule through the Davidic dynasty.
 - That Nebuchadnezzar's 7 years of **powerlessness** could represent the 2,520 years of vicious domination by the Gentile nations.There just is no logical connection between the two events.
13. With the above three claims shown to be false there is no basis for the Society's use of 1914 for trying to prove that Jesus returned invisibly at that time to establish God's kingdom or that the Society was chosen by God in 1919 to be His one organization.



Appendix B

History of the Day/Year Theory and the Gentile Times

The Historicist approach to interpreting prophecy, which the Watchtower Society uses, but only partially, was unknown to the early Christians. It first appeared about the **middle of the 12th century** in the teachings of the Cathari.

Joachim de Floris (1202 C.E.) assigned a day/year value to the 1,260 days of Revelation. From then there have been 36 different starting points proposed by Bible researchers up to the year of 1823—all supposedly leading to the return of Christ.

John Aquila Brown (1823) gave an application of 622 A.D - 1844. He

later applied the day/year rule to the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 so that they ended in **1843** (later 1844). Next, he expounded *the seven times* of Nebuchadnezzar's dream giving an application of **2,520 years** running from 604 B.C to 1917 A.D.

William Cunningham (1826) at the Albury Park Prophetic Conferences was the first mistakenly to connect these sorts of calculations to the "Gentile Times."

Edward Bishop Elliott (early/mid 1800s), although reckoning the 2,520 years from 727 B.C to 1793 A.D in his work 'Horae Apocalypticae,' was the first to mention **1914** by considering the possibility of the calculation as being from Nebuchadnezzar's accession year of 606 B.C.E. (note the error of no 'zero year').

In 1860 **N.H. Barbour** visited the library of the British Museum and studied Elliott's 'Horae Apocalypticae' and concluded that the 2nd coming would be in **1873** (based on the 1,335 days/years of Daniel 12). This failed and so 1874 was focused on as the date of fulfilment. This too failed, leading to the conclusion that Christ returned **invisibly**. The readership of his paper drastically dwindled. As of the June issue of his new paper 'Herald of the Morning' he introduced the calculation of "*the gentile times*" as being 2,520 years and terminating in **1914**.



Appendix C

Could the "Last Days" Run for 120 Years?

In case the Watchtower Society eventually realizes that its "overlapping generations" teaching is seen by the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses as a human scheme which is not a Bible teaching, there is another angle from which Watchtower may approach the problem of maintaining the concept that Jesus returned in 1914, so that Armageddon supposedly, will happen in 2034. This idea that the 120 years mentioned in **Genesis 6:3** could indicate that "the last days" would run for a very long period of 120 years from 1914.

However, this idea cannot be sustained because the 120 years do not refer to a period of historical time i.e., the amount of time between God's statement that he planned to destroy mankind and the actual destruction

in the Flood. Such a view does not fit the immediate context or the context of the various genealogies in Genesis which all **concern the longevity and vitality of humans** at different periods. In fact, Genesis 6:3 simply shows that the longevity of mankind was to be drastically reduced after the Flood. So, the *Word Biblical Commentary* on Genesis 6:3 says:

“His days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” In the immediate context of Gen 6:1–4 the meaning of this remark appears quite obvious: **from now on nobody shall live to more than 120 years of age**. However, within the wider setting of Genesis this interpretation is problematic, for Noah and many of his descendants live hundreds of years (Gen 11). Even Abraham lived to 175; Isaac, to 180; and Jacob, to 147 years. On the other hand, according to 5:32, Noah was 500 years old when he fathered Ham, Shem, and Japhet, and 600 years old when the flood began (7:6), so some commentators (e.g., Keil, König, Kidner) have suggested that 120 years represents a period of grace before the flood. It may be, however, that the author thought of the 120 years as a maximum life-span that was **only gradually implemented**; cf. the slow-acting curses of Eden 3:16–19. In the post-flood period, the recorded ages steadily decline (chap. 11), and **later figures very rarely exceed 120**. After the time of Jacob, the longest-lived include Joseph (110, Gen 50:26), Moses (120, Deut 34:7), and Joshua (110, Josh 24:29). Only Aaron (123, Num 33:39) exceeds 120.

Furthermore, this statement of 120 years is not connected to the unstated period of time for Noah to preach to the world (2 Pet. 2:5). The fact that the first of Noah’s sons was born when Noah was 500 years old (Gen. 5:32) and that the time of the flood was when he was 600 years old (Gen. 7:6) is not stated as being the period of Noah’s preaching to warn the world. So, for the above reasons there is no basis for imagining that “the last days” will be 120 years long or any other very long period. Rather “the last days” period seems to be closely associated with the great tribulation Jesus spoke of and which will be a relatively short burst of Satan’s anger on God’s people and which both Daniel and John (in Revelation) record as lasting for an undetermined time somewhat less than 3½ years.

An important point on this subject of “the last days” is to consider what sort of terminology was used by Jesus in relation to them? Did Jesus even speak directly of “the last days”?



Appendix D

Ethnic Israel Returns to the Literal Land

Israel Returns in a State of Repentance

*“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of favor and supplication, and they will **look to the One whom they pierced**, and they will wail over him as they would **wail over an only son**; and they will grieve **bitterly** over him as they would grieve over a firstborn son” (Zech. 12:10).*

Also see Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7.

Israel Returns in Phases

Ezekiel 37:7-8, 10-14:

FIRST PHYSICALLY

*7“Then I prophesied just as I had been commanded. As soon as I prophesied, there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones began to come together, **bone to bone**. Then I saw **sinews** and **flesh** come on them, and **skin** covered over them. But **there was still no breath in them.**”*

This is not a reference to the 1948 establishing of current Israel back into the land of Palestine, but rather a future re-establishing of them.

THEN SPIRITUALLY

*¹⁰ “So I prophesied just as he had commanded me, and **breath came into them**, and they **began to live** and to stand on their feet, an extremely large army.*

*Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Here they are saying, ‘Our bones are dry, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.’ So prophesy and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “I will open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people, and **bring you to the land of Israel**. And you will have to know that I am Jehovah when I open your graves and when I raise you up out of your graves, O my people.”’ I will **put my spirit in***

you and you will come to life, and I will settle you on your land; and you will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have spoken and I have done it,' declares Jehovah."

The same pattern of natural Israel returning to the literal land, first physically and later spiritually is seen earlier in the prophecies of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 11:17, 18-20:

FIRST PHYSICALLY

¹⁷"Therefore say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "I will also collect you from the peoples and **gather you from the lands** to which you have been scattered, and **I will give you the land of Israel.**"

THEN SPIRITUALLY

¹⁸"And they will return there and remove from it all its disgusting things and detestable practices. And I will give them **a unified heart, and I will put a new spirit in them;** and I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh, in order **that they may walk in my statutes** and observe my judgments and obey them. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God."

Again, the same pattern is to be found in Ezekiel 36:24-27 and Jeremiah 23:3-4 of the returning of the nation of natural Israel, first physically to the land first and then spiritually to God.



Suggested Reading and Presentations

- Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven* Anthony Buzzard
The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah Anthony Buzzard
(Both available from the Restoration Fellowship)
The Gentile Times Reconsidered Carl Olof Jonsson
The Sign of the Last Days - When? Carl Olof Jonsson
- The Approaching Advent of Christ* Alexander Reese
(unfortunately this book is very difficult to obtain).
- The Blessed Hope* George Eldon Ladd

The Presence of the Future (339 pages) George Eldon Ladd
The Church and the Tribulation Robert Gundry
First the Antichrist Robert Gundry
Prophecies of the End of the Age James Mattison
End-Time-Timeline James Mattison
 (Both available from the Restoration Fellowship)
Empires of the End-Time Charles Ozanne
The Fourth Gentile Kingdom Charles Ozanne
 (both available from The Open Bible Trust).
Rebooting the Bible S. Douglas Woodward

YOUTUBE PRESENTATIONS

Berean Pickets with Eric Wilson
 ExJW Analyser with Jon Leger
 JW Critical Thinker with JT and Lady Cee
 JWfacts with Paul Grundy

WEBSITES AND WEBPAGES

Research on the Watchtower <http://Corior.blogspot.com> (especially 'Notes on the Proclaimers book').
 JWfacts.com
 JWleaks
 JWsurvey
 Watchtower Examination
 Watchtower Society Archive

REFERENCE LITERATURE

The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament
 John R. Kohlenberger III.
The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon.
New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis
 (5 vols) Editor - Willem A. Van Gemeran
New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (4 vols) ...
 Editor - Colin Brown

Bauer's Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament.

Revised by Frederick William Danker.

Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words

The New Greek English Interlinear New Testament (UBS 4th edition, Nestle-Aland 26th edition)

Translators: Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort.

Greek Grammar - Beyond the Basics Daniel B. Wallace.



SUBJECT CONCORDANCE

1. A SINGLE CLASS OF TRUE CHRISTIANS

All Genuine Christians Are Born Again (Regenerated)

Matt. 13:18-23 (Luke 8:11-15); John 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23.

All Who Believe Are “Sons and Daughters of God”

Matt. 12:50 (Mark 3:34, Luke 8:21); John 1:12; 3:3; 6:53-54; 10:16;

Rom. 4:11b; 8:13-17; Gal. 3:7, 26, 29;

1 Pet. 1:23; 2:5-7; 4:16-17; 1 John 5:1; Rev. 7:9, 14 (5:9-10).

All Genuine Christians Are Baptized into Messiah and His Death

Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12.

All Genuine Christians Are in the New Covenant

Jer. 31:31; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20, 28; 1 Cor. 11:25; Rom. 4:17; 9:6; Heb. 8:8-12.

2. THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RESURRECTED JESUS

The Resurrected Jesus Is a Human

Acts 2:22, 13:38; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:21; 15:47; 1 Tim. 2:5.

Jesus' Own Physical Body Was Resurrected

Luke 24:39; John 20:25b, 27; Acts 2:26; 2:31; 10:40, 41; 13:37; Col. 2:9.

The Return of Jesus Will Be as a Man

Matt. 24:30; Mark 14:62.

Misapplied Texts Concerning Jesus' Body

1 Cor. 15:44-50; 2 Cor. 5:16; 1 Tim. 6:14-16; 1 Pet. 3:18.

Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearances

Luke 24:16; 24:31; 24:35 KIT; John 20:13-15; 21:4b; 21:12; Acts 7:56; 10:40, 41; 1 Cor. 2:15; 15:42, 44

Jesus' Sacrificed Life in Relation to His Body

Isa. 53:12; John 10:15, 17, 18; Heb. 9:15; 9:22; Titus 2:14

3. HOW AND TO WHERE DOES JESUS RETURN?

Messiah's Return – Literal and Visible

Matt. 24:27, 30 (Luke 17:24, 30), 42, 44, 50; 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; **3:20-21**; Heb. 9:28
1 Cor. 1:7; **Phil. 3:20**; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8b;
Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Rev. 1:7; 2:25.

Jesus Will Come Right Back to Earth

Matt. 25:1; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 1Thess. 1:7, 8; 2 Thess. 2:8; 4:16-17; 1Tim. 6:14; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 2:28.

The Kingdom of God Will Be on Earth

Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44; 7:27; **Matt. 6:10; 8:11; 26:29**; Luke 22:30; Heb. 11:8, 10; **Rev. 5:10**; 11:15.

The Kingdom Is Paradise

Gen. 2:8; Matt. 5:3, 5; 6:10; 8:11; Luke 22:18; 22:29, 30; 23:42-43; Acts 1:6; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:5, 7, 13; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 5:10 KIT.

“Kingdom of the Heavens” Means “Kingdom of God”

Matt. 19:14 (Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16); **19:23-24**.

The God's Holy People Rule on Earth with Messiah

Dan. 7:27; Matt. 5:3, 5; 8:11; 26:29; Luke 22:29, 30; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21; **5:10**; 20:9; 22:5.

Kingdom Rule Is Yet Future

Matt. 19:28; Luke 19:12; 21:31; 22:18; Rev. 11:15.

A Taste of the Kingdom Now

Matt. 12:28; Rom. 14:17; Colossians 1:13; Heb. 6:4, 5 ESV.

Jesus Will Rule from Literal Jerusalem

Ps. 110:2; Isa. 1:26; Isa. 2:3c; 24:23b; Jer. 3:17; Jer. 33:16; Mic. 4:2; 5:2-4; Zech. 14:4; Matt. 5:35; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:8-10, 16; 12:22-24; 13:14; Rev. 14:1; 20:9; 21:2.

Jesus Returns Just Once—Post-Tribulation (Gk *parousia* = *epiphania* = *apokalipsis* = *erchomai*).

Matt. 24:29-31; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; **2 Thess. 2:1-3, 8**; **Heb. 9:28**; 1 John 2:28.

The Day of the Lord (God's Wrath) Comes After the Great Tribulation

Matt. 24:21, 29 (Joel 2:31; Isa. 13:6, 9); Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 5:9.

4. WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF TRUE CHRISTIANS?

Biblical Usage of the Words 'Heaven' and 'Heavenly'

Matt. 21:25; Luke 15:21; John 3:27; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 3:1; 6:4, 5; 11:16
Matt. 8:11//Luke 13:28; Rev. 21:2.

SUBJECT CONCORDANCE

Texts Often Misapplied to the Concept of Going to Heaven

Matt. 5:12; John 14:2; 14:19; 2 Cor. 5:1-9; Phil.1:21-23; 3:14; Col. 1:5; Heb. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:4.

The Christian's Destiny Is Not Heaven

Ps. 37:11; 115:16; Prov. 11:31; Matt. 5:5 Acts 2:34; Rev. 5:10; 22:12

The Christian Inheritance Is the Promise Given to the Ancestors

Psalms 37:1; Matt. 5:5; **Rom. 4:13, 16; 15:8; Gal. 3:16-18, 29; 4:28**; Heb. 6:12; 11:13 (Luke 13:28-29).

The Future Paradise Will Be on Earth

Luke 22:43; 2 Cor. 12:3; Rev. 2:7.

Earth Is Man's Natural Home

Ps. 37:9-11; 115:16; Prov. 2:21, 22; Matt. 5:5; 6:9, 10; Rom. 4:13.

God's Promises Are for the Earth

Gen. 12:2, 3; 13:14-17; 17:7, 8; 26:2-4; 28:13-14; Ps. 105:8-11; Acts 3:20, 21; Rom. 4:13; 15:8; Gal. 3:14, 16, 29.

The Promises Not Yet Received

Acts 7:4b-5; Heb. 11:13; 11:39-40.

Paul Did Not Expect to Go to Heaven

Acts 13:32; 26:6-7; 28:20; Eph. 4:4; Heb. 6:12.

Uniting with Christ Occurs When He Visibly Returns

Psalms 110:1; Matt. 16:27; 19:28; Acts 3:21; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:13; 5:4).

5. CLARIFYING THE DETAILS OF THE RESURRECTION

What Is Meant by Resurrection?

Gen. 22:1-3; Ps. 13:3; Job 14:14-15; Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:1-14; Dan. 12:2; Luke 20:35; Acts 24:21; 1 Cor.15:12, 17-18, 21, 42; Col. 1:18; Heb. 11:17-19;

Rev. 20:4, 5

The Dead Are in God's Memory

Job 14:13-14

All Are Resurrected in One of Two Phases Separated by 1000 Years

Dan.12:2; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15; Phil. 3:11; Heb. 9:27 NASB; Rev. 20:4-5; 20:11-15.

For Whom Is the First Resurrection?

Matt. 8:11; Luke 14:14; 20:35-36; John 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:24-25; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 15:21-23, 51-54; Phil. 3:11; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Titus 2:13; Heb. 11:16-35; 11:39-40; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 3:2.

The First Resurrection Is Yet Future

Matt. 24:21-31; 1 Cor. 15:22b-23; 15:51b-52 KNT; 1 Thess. 4:16 to 5:6; 2 Thess. 2:1-3, 8-9; Rev. 11:15, 18

Christians Can't Be "Caught Up" Before Jesus' Future Return

Matt. 24:15-16, 21, 23-24; 24:29-30; 1 Cor.1:7-8; 1 Thess.5:23; 2 Thess.1:6-7, 10; 1 Tim. 6:14; Jas 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:7; 1:13.

6. FALSE TEACHINGS ON THE TIME OF THE END

Is It "This Generation" Since 1914 That Will See Armageddon?

Ps. 14:5; Prov. 30:11 CJB; Matt. 16:4; 24:34; Mark 8:38; Luke 16:8 CEB; Acts 2:40).

The End of the Age Is Not Yet

Matt. 24:6-13 (Dan. 11)

Sign of the End

Matt. 24:15, 21; 24:29, 30; 24:33; John 6:40.

Jesus Cannot Have Returned in 1914

Matt. 24:36; 24:42-44; 24:45-46; Luke 21:8; Acts 1:6

Jesus Returns Once and Only After the Great Tribulation

Matt. 24:21, 29-30; 2 Thess. 1:6-7, 10; Heb. 9:28;

Rewards Are Given Only When Jesus Appears

Luke 14:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:4; 1 John 3:2b.

7. MISGUIDED CALCULATIONS FOR THE TIME OF THE END

Jerusalem's Destruction Was Not in 607 B.C.E – the Evidence

2 Chron. 36:7; 36:20-21; Jer. 25:9; 25:11-12; 27:11; 27:17; 29:10 ("for Babylon"); 32:1b-2; 42:10; Dan. 1:1-3; 2:1 ESV.

70 Years Were Not for Paying Off the Sabbaths

Lev. 26:34, 35; 2 Chron. 36:20-21; Dan. 9:2.

The True Chronology of the Deportations of Judah

2 Kings 24:12-14; 2 Chron. 36:6-7; Jer. 52:28-29; 52:30; Dan. 1:1-3 ESV; 2:1.

Judah's other 70 (68) Years without God's Blessing 587 to 519 B.C.

Zech. 1:7, 12, 16; 7:1-5.

Watchtower's Faulty Scheme to Make Itself God's Organization

Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:5-6; Dan. 4:4-27//Luke 21:24; Matt. 24:36; Luke 21:8; Acts 1:7.

The Great Tribulation-Not God's Day of Wrath or Armageddon

Dan. 7:21-22; Joel 2:31; Zeph. 1:14-15, 17; Matt. 24:15-31; Acts 14:22; Rev. 2:10; 7:9, 14; 12:9, 12, 13; 13:7; 16:14, 16).

Christians Will Not Suffer During the Time of God's Wrath

Matt. 13:49-50; Luke 17:26-27; 17:29-30; Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10.

The Day of Jehovah Does Not Extend Through the Millennium

Isa. 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15-17, 19; 2:1, 2; 3:13-16; Obadiah 15; Zech. 14:1-3.

World Improvements Soon After the Kingdom Begins

Ps. 2:6, 9-10, 12; **110:1, 2**; Isa. 2:2, 4; Matt. 6:10; 19:28; 25:31-46; Acts 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 11:15; **12:7-9**; 12:10, 12.

Abridgement of Genealogies

Gen. 10:22, 23 and 11:12, 13 (LXX)//Luke 3:36; 1 Chron. 6:13, 14//Ezra 7:1-5

8. MISUNDERSTANDING OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE IN GOD'S PURPOSE

A Believing Remnant of Israel Has a Future

Isa. 61:2b-11; Jer. 23:23; Hos. 3:4-5; Mic. 2:12; Zech. 13:8, 9; Matt. 19:28 (Luke 22:29); 23:39; Rom. 9:27; 11:1-2, 11, 23, 25-26.

Jerusalem as the Future World Capital

Isa. 2:3; 62:7; Zech. 2:12; 8:3; 14:16-17; Matt. 5:35; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; Rev. 3:12; 21:2-3, 10-22.



Other paperback and Kindle books in this series by Raymond Faircloth are also available from Amazon. These are:

Vol. 1. --- *Can There Be Three Persons in One God? - Why You Should Question the Trinity Doctrine.* This new presentation was previously entitled: *God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit*. It deals with the main subject of Christianity, namely: who is God? Did Jesus literally pre-exist? Is the holy spirit a third person in an essence that makes up the God-head of a trinity? The biblical answers are shown to be that God is ONE person and that Jesus only pre-existed in God's mind, but not literally so (350 pages).

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Vol. 6. --- *When Marriage Goes Wrong...Biblical Answers on Divorce and Remarriage.* Many Christians consider that they already know the answers on this subject. However, in reading one Gospel one would conclude that Jesus allowed for no divorce. In reading another Gospel one's conclusion would contradict that because Jesus allowed for divorce if one of the partners committed adultery. In reading Paul's words on the subject there would appear to be a further inconsistency.

The answer to all this confusion is to examine the entire biblical record and context, the meaning of terms used, and the known background of the times. This book helps one to get a clearer picture of God's view of this subject (214 pages).

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book shows what Jesus and his emissaries stated is required for a person to become a Christian, including baptism as full immersion in water and the keeping of the Lord's Supper. It also shows the many ways that love is to permeate the Christian community as well as answering concerns over whether or not women can teach in the church. For caring for the interests of the Christian community it is important to know what the role of elders and deacons is and how they are to be qualified to do this care-giving work for all members of each congregation. Two major issues which the book deals with concern that of homosexuality and that of how far Christian may go in terms of defence of self, family, and community (251 pages).

Vol. 12. --- *Christ Died for Us While We Were Still Sinners - How God, Through Christ, Dealt with Sin.* This book analyses the many models proposed over the centuries to explain why Jesus had to die i.e. the Atonement and describes the multifaceted approach that is necessary and has been put forward by N.T Wright and other skilled theologians.

The Shackled Mind of the Jehovah's Witness - Why They Surrender Their Lives to the Watchtower Organization. This book looks at the policies of the Watchtower Society which cause the subtle removal of the free will of members, and psychological damage to them. In particular situations certain Watchtower policies cause the break-up of Jehovah's Witness families, and even literal death of members (260 pages).

The Kingdom of God Version - The New Testament (Third edition). This Third Edition has been further refined for greater ease of reading and further accuracy of terms, especially in the Book of Revelation. It is a literal-idiomatic version, but without the jargon of many other versions. The significant notes at the back provide the reasons for the various word and phrase choices along with explanatory and interpretive comments which make clear that God is one person and not a triadic trinity as well as giving clarity on many other Bible teachings (502 pages).



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