

## Who Is Who? A Great Muddle Over Identity

The dedicated people who arrive at your door in pairs, the loyal adherents of the Watchtower, or Jehovah's Witnesses, can be greatly helped if you will ask them a number of direct questions. This will enable them perhaps to reconsider and correct some of the more amazing things they have accepted (uncritically) from their "system."

We all need faithful friends to pose us searching, gently challenging questions. These can serve as the lever for much needed correction of our thinking. Here is what the JW's will *not* tell you. (It might even scare themselves if they were to say it openly!) They will not tell you that their belief system means that they (the ones at your door) are 1) not saints in the NT sense, 2) not born again, 3) not part of the body of Christ, 4) not anointed.

This almost never publicized self-(mis)identity must rank as one of the most astonishing features of religious misunderstanding of Scripture ever! Yes, the JW's at your door have put themselves, in their own thinking, outside the pale of the NT. Everyone, I suppose, knows that the NT is addressed to the followers of Christ, Christians, born again believers and saints (holy ones), members of the Body of Christ. Paul definitively said that if someone is not anointed, does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ, is not a believer. Jesus made the easy, categorical statement that unless a person is born again he cannot be saved (John 3:3).

How do the approximately 7 million JW's arrive at this astonishing misunderstanding? It is based on a passage in Revelation 7 which describes a list of believers as 144,000 in number drawn from the tribes of Israel, in connection with a great crowd of others drawn from all the nations.

The important thing to grasp here is that this part of the vision of Revelation deals with people who "come out of the Great Tribulation" and have been purified by that great trial. Since that Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) has not yet happened it would be impossible to imagine an application of this special text to any believers from the first century until now! **The Great Tribulation** lies in the future (no dates are known for its beginning) and it will be triggered, Jesus said, by the appearance of "the Abomination of Desolation standing where HE ought not to" (Mark 13:14). Jesus warned his followers that they should flee with all urgency to the mountains, if they are living in Judea. Jesus announced the appearance of the Abomination as the key sign of the impending end of the age.

The admonition by Jesus that believers in Judea are **to flee to the hills** eliminates of course any possibility of a PRE-Tribulation rapture/resurrection to heaven! You don't advise someone to head for the hills, if the real escape route is to be taken up to heaven by the secretly returning Jesus! Neither Jesus nor Paul believed that Jesus was going to come back in two separate stages separated by 7 years. It would be most unwise to rely on a pre-Tribulation rapture/resurrection which is not going to happen!

The JW's at your door believe, by taking a single passage describing an event which has *not yet even happened*, that there are only 144,000 anointed true believers. Further they are convinced — the ones at your door — that they are not personally part of that special elect group, Rather they belong to a "great crowd" of second-class believers (but not born again!).

We are faced then with the amazing situation that 7 million sincere people take on themselves the task of teaching the Christian faith to the public worldwide, while believing that they themselves are *not* Christians in the NT sense, as anointed, born again or part of the Body of Christ! The facts unspoken are therefore like this: "Let us come and study the Bible with you, persuade you of our teachings and eventually baptize you into the Watchtower, but we ourselves are not within the NT definition of a Christian. Only that special 144,000 are. Those special ones alone will go to heaven. The rest of us will be on earth when Jesus comes. Only the 144,000 will rule the earth with Jesus."

How incredibly bizarre all this is. But it signals the amazing fact that whole, huge, international blocks of very sincere and committed human beings can be *completely* taken in by teaching which could not possibly be rooted in Scripture. No one in the history of serious commentary on the Bible has ever imagined that one can be a Christian in the biblical sense if one is not born again, and has not received the spirit of Christ, and is not a "holy one," saint — not a member of the Body of Christ.

The destiny of *all* the truly faithful in the Bible is to inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10) and live in it and help to rule that renewed earth with Jesus, when he comes back to the earth to take up his destined position on the throne of David. According to the men and women at your door, the elite group, the 144,000 will go to heaven. The problem is: Jesus will not be there! He will be on the earth. After all did he not promise to come back?

A further fundamental belief of Jehovah's Witnesses is that the Second Coming happened in 1914, invisibly! That too is an astonishing mistake. Jesus described his future Parousia = arrival as a spectacularly visible event, like lightning flashing from east to west!

Jesus instructed all his followers to take the wine (symbol of celebration) and bread of the communion "as often as you do it." Jehovah's Witnesses first confuse this with an *annual* event (like the Jewish Old Covenant annual Passover) and then require that only members of the elect 144,000 anointed class may take the communion! This mistake involves not only misunderstanding the meaning of the "Lord's supper," but also directly refusing Jesus' clear instructions to "do this in remembrance of me." The NT church certainly did not restrict the Lord's Supper, commanded by Jesus for all believers, to an annual event! Not to be allowed to take the communion means a flat-out rejection of and disobedience to Jesus.

What are *you* doing to try to rescue your fellows from the almost incredible beliefs which they have espoused with zeal? The task is very great. And you may want also to consider assisting your Mormon friends to abandon their convictions that 1) God was a man before becoming God; 2) Mary Magdalene and Jesus were married; and 3) God currently has several wives. Can such beliefs be healthy? They also think that Yahweh is Jesus and Elohim is GOD!

And while you are at it, what are you doing to convince some of your friends and acquaintances that Mary is not the "mother of God"? Then there are a billion other human persons who need your help. They have swallowed the amazing fiction that Jesus did not die on the cross, and that God was not his Father, because God cannot have a Son. This amazing set of beliefs afflicts some billion human beings.

You may want also to help Christadelphian friends not to eliminate from the Bible the whole dimension of supernatural evil. They have been taught to think that "the Devil," "the Satan" is human nature! This is fundamentally false. Demons in the Bible spoke to and recognized Jesus as Messiah, and Jesus spoke to them. The Greek word *daimonia* never designates a human being. It never means a mental illness.

No wonder Jesus told us to pray, "Your Kingdom come," and long for the day when the Devil (who is not your human nature!) will be bound "so that *he* can no longer deceive the nations" (Rev. 20:3). At present he is the "deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). Jesus doubted that the faith would be surviving when he returned (Luke 18:8). He knew that our human tendency to believe what is false is a chronic sickness. And giving up false beliefs requires major spiritual surgery. Some abandon wrong belief only after much kicking and screaming!

Will anyone gently challenge Dave Hunt of *The Berean Call*? Are you suitably provoked by his attempt to define God? He writes in his tract on the Trinity that *elohim* in Genesis 1:1 has a plural meaning, and thus "it *literally* means 'gods.'" So then, "In the beginning gods created..."? He tells us that the *Shema* reads in Hebrew "Jehovah our *elohim* [gods] is *echad* [one] Jehovah."

Christians are those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36, etc.). Are we getting busy with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), which is to announce "this Gospel about the Kingdom" to all the nations (Matt. 24:14)? "And then [and only then] will the end come." ✧