

PROBLEMATIC INTERPRETATIONS

1. DO THE 24 ELDERS IN REVELATION REPRESENT CHRISTIANS?

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's (WBTS) *Revelation* book presents the 24 elders as resembling the 144,000 of "*the Israel of God*", namely, 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 **angelic beings**.

THE 24 ELDERS SING ABOUT THE CHRISTIANS

❖ "...the twenty four elders fell down before the lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls that were full of incense, and the [incense] means the prayers of **the holy ones**. And **they** sing a new song, saying: 'You...bought **persons 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*).

An early misunderstanding was because the KJV 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**." So the context is of the 24 elders offering up "*the prayers of the **holy ones***" and the elders are the singers of the song about the priests to our God, the Christians. Therefore the 24 elders do not themselves represent 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 1: This can only be applied to anointed Christians because:

- "...there are 24 thrones, and upon these **thrones** [I saw] seated 24 elders dressed in **white outer garments**, and upon 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:

- ❖ "...the governments and the authorities **in the heavenly places**" (*Eph. 3:10*).
- ❖ "...things...created in the heavens...the **things invisible**, no matter whether they are **thrones** or lordships or governments or authorities" (*Col.1:16*).
- ❖ "For he [*Jesus*] went his way to heaven; and **angels** and authorities were made subject to him"

(*1 Peter 3:22*).

From these Scriptures it can be seen that there is no reason to think that Revelation 4:4 cannot be referring to angels.

OBJECTION 2: The 24 elders in Revelation 4:4 are shown to be dressed in white garments.

REPLY: The Scriptures also show angels to be wearing bright white garments because they are also righteous (John 20:12; Acts 1:10).

FURTHER PROOF THAT THE 24 ELDERS DO NOT REPRESENT CHRISTIANS

- In Revelation 11:16-18 the 24 elders are shown to be separate from the Christian *'holy ones'* (verse 18).
- In Revelation 14:1-5 these **elders are mentioned as separate** from the company of 144,000 'first-fruits' 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 a 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.
- 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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2. WAS THE PREACHING EXCLUSIVELY TO THE JEWS FOR 3½ YEARS?

This Jehovah's Witnesses 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. 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 3½ years until Cornelius and family as the first Gentiles were converted in 36 C.E. However, there is nothing in all the words of Jesus or the apostles to maintain such a teaching. In fact, 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 this 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 Volume 5. STUDY 3: HISTORICISM). 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 making it impossible for it to be dated to 36 C.E. as the WTS does.

NOTE. Seventieth **week** should properly be rendered "seventieth **seven**" as in the NIV and NLT.

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3. DID JESUS BECOME A SPIRIT-BEGOTTEN SON AT HIS BAPTISM?

The term *beget* 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 1 and Luke 3. To *beget* also has the dictionary definition of "to cause to exist." It is used figuratively of Christians when they come into existence spiritually – they are then termed 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 fulfilment 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. The writer of Hebrews uses the term "only-begotten" with reference to Isaac's being literally fathered by Abraham. John, however, uses the term in both its senses:

- ❖ "...those...who were born (*begotten* in footnote)...of God" (*John 1:12, 13*).

This is with reference to the new birth of Christians and therefore a figurative usage. 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 "*born again/born from above*" conversation with Nicodemus 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. John the Baptist recognized this 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) because 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, 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, but **says nothing of Jesus becoming spirit-begotten**, although becoming such as adopted sons is vital for all others who would "see the kingdom of God."

NOTE: At Acts 13:33 the NWT has rendered it as "resurrected" when the Greek only says "raised up" and does not say "raised up from the dead." This would change the application of Psalm 2 from being a prophecy of the Messiah's appointment to kingship to his becoming Son only at his resurrection. Although McGarvie argues that Psalm 2 always applied to Jesus' resurrection many other scholars do not and for sound reasons: (Heb. 1:5; 5:5; 2:9; Rev. 1:5; Col. 1:1).

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."

4. JESUS WAS 'THE CHRIST' 'THE SON' AT HIS BIRTH RATHER THAN JUST FROM HIS BAPTISM

Although as a baby it is evident the Jesus could not act as the Christ/Messiah he was still actually the Christ from that time as seen from the following texts:

- ❖ "There has been born a saviour, who **is** the Christ" (*Luke 2:11*).
The NWT footnote: Or "is to be" is an adoptionist/separationist approach. Such a rendering is not in any other translation because it is not what the Greek says.
- ❖ "Simeon ... revealed to him that he would not see death before he had **seen the Christ** ... for my eyes **have seen your salvation**...the glory of your people" (*Luke 2:25, 26, 29-31*).

❖ “...every spirit that confesses that Jesus **Christ** has come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2).
Jesus was obviously “in the flesh” at his birth and so was clearly also the Christ from that time.

❖ “...**a sign**: Behold, a virgin [*maiden*] will be with child and bear **a son**, and she will call his name Immanuel (God is with us)” (Isa 7:14).
This was fulfilled at Matthew 1:23 concerning Jesus’ being begotten/conceived.

GOD’S PLEASURE CONCERNING HIS SON AT HIS BAPTISM

❖ “...in whom I found good pleasure” not “I have approved you” (Matt. 3:17 NWT).

❖ “...in you I thought well” (Mark 1:11 KIT). *The same is in Luke 3:21.*

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.

“SON OF GOD WITH POWER” AT HIS RESURRECTION

❖ “...his Son...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).

Or “declared (established) Son of God with (in) power” NAS, ESV, NAB, NRSV, NKJ, NJB.

So because Jesus was now immortal from the time of his resurrection he was now the “Son of God **in power**.”

In total the Scriptures give three stages of Jesus being confirmed as the “Son of God”:

- 1) At his birth
- 2) Publically at his baptism
- 3) At his resurrection as Messiah with power.

5. DID JESUS DIE ON A STAKE OR A CROSS?

Hanging was not one of the statutory Jewish ways of putting 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 till nightfall. The Roman method of execution was **crucifixion**. Yet under their occupation of Israel *hanging* and *crucifixion* came to be equated. Thus Josephus writes: “Even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset.”

Stauros is: “a stake sunk into the earth in an upright position; a **cross-piece** was often attached to its upper part” according to *Bauer’s N.T. Lexicon*. Also *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament* states concerning *stauros*:

“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”

Xylon is: “a wood, piece of wood” according to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*.

The historical and archaeological evidence is that the Romans executed prisoners **on a cross**. The one 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 stake.

Justus Lipsius’ woodcut shows 15 individuals executed on crosses and 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:

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.

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. This would have been unlikely if Jesus had had both hands together as shown in WTS drawings. Furthermore, **Matthew 27:37** says:

❖ "...they posted **above his head** the charge against him, in writing: 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews.'"

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.

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6. IS A DOOR TO DOOR MINISTRY A SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENT?

This is not to criticize those who preach from door to door but to show that it is not actually a scriptural requirement. The following Scriptures are used by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS) as the basis for requiring each Jehovah's Witness to go from house to house. Is this a legitimate application of these Scriptures? Furthermore, if it is, then it still does not make it a requirement because there is no command given to use this method, but is simply Paul's choice of method. However, there is certainly a command from Jesus to preach and teach (Matt: 28:19). Nevertheless, the following study reveals the WBTS misapplies the phrase "*from house to house*."

ONE MUST ALSO PREACH IN THE TEMPLE

❖ "Every day **in the temple** and **from house to house** (Gk. *kat' oikon*) they continued without let up teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus" (*Acts 5:42*).

So if an obligation to preach from house to house is assumed from this verse then so is an obligation to preach "*in the temple*" or its modern day equivalent. However, it is not WBTS policy for Jehovah's Witnesses to preach in any form of religious venue (temple/church) other than their own.

BACKGROUND

It is very well documented that the first century Christians met in the temple, the synagogues and in private homes ('house churches') (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19). So there is a parallel seen in the statements of Acts 5:42 and 20:20: "*publicly and from house to house*" and "*in the temple and from*

house to house.” So the **public** teaching was in the synagogues and/or the **temple**, and the “**house to house**” teaching was in the **various ‘house churches.’**

PAUL WAS REFERRING TO CHRISTIANS AND TO UNBELIEVERS

❖ “...while I [*Paul*] did not hold back from telling YOU [*the Ephesian elders*] any of the things that were profitable nor (KIT “**and**”) from teaching YOU [*the Ephesian elders*] **publicly** and **from house to house**. But I thoroughly bore *witness both to Jews and to Greeks about repentance* toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus ... I know that all of YOU among whom I went preaching the kingdom...” (*Acts 20:20, 21, 25*).

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome to say that there was “*an eagerness on my part to declare the good news also to you there in Rome*” (1:15). Yet this was a letter to ones who had already accepted the good news. Therefore, Paul’s desire must have been to give these Christians all the additional information of “the good news” that can be found in the letter to the Romans. Similarly, Paul’s words in Acts 20:20, 21 were spoken to the elders of Ephesus and were likely concerning instruction for them to do their work as Christian elders well i.e. “the things that were profitable.” This instruction would have been given in their ‘house churches.’ Furthermore Paul’s statement about “*preaching the kingdom*” does not have to be an initial preaching, but rather just as when the resurrected Jesus spent 40 days “telling the things about the kingdom of God” to his apostles (Acts 1:3). Also Paul’s comment about his bearing “*witness both to Jews and to Greeks about repentance*” was also done initially in public i.e. sometimes in synagogues and later in the house churches.

IS “FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE” THE SAME AS FROM DOOR TO DOOR?

The Greek phrase ***kat’ oikon*** is used in the *distributive sense*. But this does **not mean consecutively**. That is, it does not mean *door to door* calling, but in the sense that a doctor may make house calls. Literally ***kat’ oikon*** means “according to house” and is translated as “**in private homes**” in the NWT in Acts 2:46: “...and they took their meals in private homes...”

TEACHING IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE BUT NOT FROM DOOR TO DOOR

The NWT footnote for Acts 20:20 regarding the plural term ***kat’ oikos*** (according to houses) gives “*and in private homes.*” The NAB, NJB, NEB/REB, Rotherham, Translator’s NT, Philips, Weymouth, and Barclay *all translate Acts 20:20 as “in your homes”*. Goodspeed *and* the Diaglott *render it as “at your houses.”* So the meaning of Acts 20:20, 21 is that Paul preached publicly (in synagogues and open spaces) to unbelievers, and also in the private homes that were used for Christian meetings—teaching elders, other Christians and newly interested ones.

MISAPPLIED TEXTS

1. When Jesus sent out the apostles:

Matthew 10:11-14:

“Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving, and **stay there until you leave**. When you are entering into the house, greet the household; and if the house is deserving, let the peace you wish come upon it; but if it is not deserving, let the peace from you return upon you. Wherever anyone does not **take you in** or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.”

2. When Jesus sent out the 70:

Luke 10:1, 5, 7:

“...the Lord designated seventy others and sent them forth by twos **in advance of him** into every city and place that he himself was going to come ... Wherever you enter into a house ... So **stay in that house**, eating and drinking the things they provide...Do **not be transferring from house to house.**”

These texts are misapplied by the WBTS to door to door work, but in fact apply to the *obtaining of lodging* as a base for the preaching work that would take place in a public location and in preparation for the arrival of Jesus.

WHAT IS THE MOTIVE?

However, the witnessing work of Jehovah's Witnesses has been expressed as being "in hopes of catching householders during a time that something adverse had happened in their lives since they were last visited." So Jehovah's Witnesses who are engaged in door to door work are unwittingly looking for people experiencing difficulties in life and who were therefore **vulnerable** to the WBTS message.

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7. IS THE LORD'S EVENING MEAL AN ANNUAL CELEBRATION?

- ❖ "...when you come together in a congregation ... the Lord Jesus...took a loaf, ...broke it and said ... "keep doing this in remembrance of me" ... For *as often as* you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives" (1 Cor. 11:18, 23, 24, 26).

The book *Reasoning from the Scriptures* states on page 269 under the heading **How often is the Memorial to be commemorated, and when?**

Jesus did not specifically state how often it was to be done. He simply said: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me."

This book then goes on to justify an annual celebration by saying that Paul's phrase "*as often as*" "can mean annually over a period of many years." This is then based on the concept of an anniversary and the Jewish annual Passover. However, is this what Paul really allowed for? All reasonable thinking upon Paul's phrase would understand that "*as often as*" is an **inducement to commune frequently**, albeit of indefinite frequency as in Revelation 11:6: "*as often as they wish.*" So an annual arrangement can hardly fulfil the admonition to commune "**as often as.**" (Please see Volume 7 Study 8).

BREAKING OF BREAD

Unlike most Christian denominations the Watchtower Society denies that the phrase "*breaking of bread*" in Acts 2 refers to the Lord's Evening Meal. However, Acts 2:42 describes such communing together by the earliest Christians and shows that "*breaking of bread*" was no ordinary meal, but was synonymous with the Lord's Evening Meal (1 Cor. 11:20).

THE FOUR DAILY SPIRITUAL HABITS

- ❖ "...they [*the disciples*] continued devoting themselves to the **teaching** of the apostles, to the common participation (**fellowship**), to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayers**"
(Acts 2:42 - based on the KIT).

So the "breaking of bread" is linked with three other essential spiritual habits. Therefore, they must have been meeting together for these four things. Ignatius shows that the Lord's Evening Meal [*the Eucharist*] was the focus of the church's life—Jesus being the "*bread of God.*" This practice was in their homes because such homes were used as "house churches" in the earliest days:

- ❖ "And *day by day* attending the temple together **breaking bread** in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46).

CHANGED TO A WEEKLY CUSTOM

This custom of celebrating daily eventually changed to a **weekly custom** on the first day of the week, which was a Sunday:

❖ “On the first day of the week when we were gathered together *to break bread...*” (Acts 20:7).

Barnabas in the 2nd century wrote that: “We keep the 8th day for rejoicing, in which Jesus also rose from the dead.” And the 8th day was what Luke records as “the first day of the week”—.

THE FULFILLMENT OF SEVERAL HEBREW SCRIPTURE SHADOWS

The Lord’s Evening Meal is a fulfilment of the Old Covenant practices of:

- a) “*eating the sacrifices*” (1 Cor.10:18-21; Lev. 7:6)-----and so **more than annually**.
- b) “*sprinkling with blood*” (Ex. 24:7-11)-----which is the initiation of one into the New Covenant.
- c) “*Christ our Passover has been sacrificed*” (1 Cor. 5:7)-----hence permanent and continuous.

Paul’s comparison of the Lord’s Evening Meal with the priests’ regular eating of the sacrifices, which was often, is a strong indicator that the Lord’s Evening Meal should be eaten much more often than once a year. Furthermore, the Lord’s Evening Meal is not the annual Passover because Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law regulations, yet it does also reflect it.

THE WT MEMORIAL INSULTS CHRIST

A more serious and damaging aspect to the annual Memorial conducted by Jehovah’s Witnesses is the fact that there is virtually no participation in the celebration. This is because as the bread and the wine are passed from person to person it is not eaten or drunk by anybody. So there is no communion with Christ or with other Christians – those in attendance simply classify themselves as observers. However, in most cases there is nothing to observe because, in most congregations, nobody claims to be an anointed Christian. This is, of course, the same as claiming to be not a Christian (please see Study 10). All of this absolutely insults Jesus who instructed Christians to observe this by participating in the bread and the wine in remembrance of his death to inaugurate the New Covenant (Luke 22:19-20) and his return when “the kingdom of God comes” (vs. 18).

“UNTIL HIS RETURN”

❖ “For as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, **until he arrives**” (1 Cor. 11:26).

According to the Watchtower Society Jesus returned (*his parousia*), albeit invisibly, in 1914 and set up his invisible kingdom. If that was the case, should they still be arranging for a memorial at all? Surely they should have ceased such an arrangement as “proclaiming the death of the Lord” in harmony with 1 Corinthians 11:26 back in 1914. If, however, they conclude that they should continue this arrangement because he hasn’t returned in the sense of his “revelation” to destroy the wicked at Armageddon, then we have a contradiction because Jesus said: “I will **not drink again** from the product of the vine **until the kingdom of God arrives** (KIT says “comes”). So this aspect of his return concerns his being reunited with his disciples and not the aspect concerned with the destruction of the wicked. So from a WTS perspective the celebration of their memorial should have ceased in 1914.

Furthermore, there is nothing in the context of this verse to indicate that Jesus would do other than resume the drinking of literal wine when reunited with his disciples. So Jesus must return literally in the future to physically drink wine with his disciples as he promised. However, even this supposed 2nd stage of return is not viewed as a literal physical return by the WBTS so that Jesus never literally comes back to do this. The biblical fact is that there is no 2 stage coming of Christ. The *parousia* and “the revelation” are the same future event. (Please see Studies 2-4).

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8. KNOWING JESUS NOT ONLY KNOWING ABOUT HIM

- ❖ “This means everlasting life, their **taking in knowledge** of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ” (*John 17:3 NWT*).

This is a misleading translation of the Greek words because it gives the impression that one only needs to **acquire knowledge about** God and Jesus. Yet KIT gives the rendering: “*they may be knowing you*” and UBS Interlinear and Marshall’s Interlinear give: “*that they may know you.*” All other translations correctly give as NASB: “*that they may **know** you...and...Jesus.*” We can know Jesus by listening to what he says.

A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

- ❖ *Paul wishes “... to **know him** and the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:10).*
- ❖ “I am the fine shepherd, and I know my sheep and my sheep **know me**” (*John 10:5, 14*).

The governing body of Jehovah’s Witnesses generally focuses attention toward *the organization* and considerably less toward Jesus. This is seen in their literature by the disproportionately low number of times Jesus is mentioned in matters of importance, such as loyalty, as compared to the high number of references to the organization in this regard. However, if a person fails to get to know Jesus this may result in Jesus’ rejection of that person:

- ❖ “Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?’ And yet then I will confess to them: I never **knew you!** Get away from me you workers of lawlessness” (*Matt. 7:22, 23*).

9. IS THE NAME JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES APPROPRIATE FOR CHRISTIANS?

“‘You are my witnesses,’ is the utterance of Jehovah” (**Isa. 43:10**).

This is a phrase showing a function rather than a name. This utterance was said to Israelites who were **condemned** in verse 22 because: “*you have not called even me, O Jacob, because you have grown weary of me, O Israel.*” Then their many **failures** are detailed. So to use this as a name for Christians would associate them with rebellious Israelites and not bring any sense of pride.

SCRIPTURAL NAMES FOR CHRISTIANS:

- “Christians” (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).
- “Church [Congregation/Assembly] of God” (1Cor.1:2, 10:32 and 15:9).
- “Congregation (Assembly) of the Firstborn” (Heb. 12:23).
- “Churches [Congregations/Assemblies] of Christ” (Rom. 16:16).
- “The Way” (*Possibly*) (Acts 24:14, 22).

10. REVERSING THE ORDER OF ‘TIME OF THE END’ EVENTS

GATHERING OF CHOSEN ONES

In Jesus’ Mount of Olives discourse as recorded in Matthew 24 the WTS, since 1973, views Jesus’ “coming on the clouds” (verse 30) as yet future. However, confusion is caused by the WTS’ claim that

the event of sending “*forth his [Jesus] angels with a great trumpet sound, and they will **gather his chosen ones** together from the four winds...*” (verse 31) has been going on since 1919. Yet the order of events is very plain in these verses:

- that first Jesus comes on the clouds and
- then he gathers his chosen ones.

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, **25** and the stars will be falling out of heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. **26** And **then** they will see the ***Son of man coming in clouds*** with great power and glory. **27** **And then** he will send forth 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 of Jehovah’s Witnesses views Matthew 24:30 as referring to its own work of gathering people into the organization rather than according to Jesus’ own words a physical gathering from geographical locations. Part of the confusion goes back to the early decision of the WBTS to state that Jesus had returned in 1914. However, all the statements and parables referring to separation are timed at the future return of Jesus. Furthermore, the scriptures show that it is angels that will do this separating work and not Christians who are, in fact, the ones that will be separated from unbelievers.

THE FUTURE RETURN OF JESUS

- ❖ “Keep on the watch, therefore, because YOU do not know on what day YOUR Lord is coming. **43** “But know one thing, that 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. **44** On this account YOU too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that YOU do not think to be it, **the Son of man is coming** (*Matt. 24: 42-44*).

The 1973 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? **46** Happy is that slave if **his master on arriving** finds him doing so. **47** Truly I say to YOU, He will appoint him over all his belongings. **48** “But if ever that evil slave should say in his heart, ‘My master is delaying,’ **49** and should start to beat his fellow slaves and should eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards, **50** the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect and in an hour that he does not know, **51** and will punish him with the greatest severity and will assign him his part with the hypocrites. There is where [his] weeping and the gnashing of [his] teeth will be” (*Matt. 24: 45- 51*).

So, because the “Son of Man” i.e. “the master” has not yet arrived, there could not have been an appointment of a “Faithful and discrete slave” in 1919. However, please see STUDY 19 to understand that the phrase “faithful and discrete slave” applies to individuals and such appointments will be future.

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11. IS THE U.N. “THE DISGUSTING THING THAT CAUSES DESOLATION”?

The governing body of Jehovah’s Witnesses claims that the United Nations and before it the League of Nations fulfils the role of “*the disgusting thing that causes desolation*” noted by Jesus in

Matthew 24:15. The League of Nations organization came into existence in 1920 and the United Nations in 1945. However, it is impossible for this “*disgusting thing that causes desolation*” to have appeared on the world scene up to the present time for the following reasons:

EVENTS THAT MUST HAPPEN IN QUICK ORDER

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 escape to the mountains (Matt. 24:16-18).
- 3) The Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:20-22).
- 4) False christs and false prophets performing miracles (Matt. 24:23-28).
- 5) Signs in sun, moon and stars, roaring of the sea and trouble on earth (*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* giving the thought of *immediacy*. *Tote* occurs 7 times in this part of the Olivet discourse:

- “Therefore, when you catch sight of *the disgusting thing that causes desolation* (*Or as Luke 21:20* puts it: “*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies*”), **then** recognize that her desolation is near.” (*Matt. 24:15*).
- “**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. 24:30*).
- “**Then** the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation” (*Matt. 24:30*).
- “**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 of these events temporally 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. 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...”

All of this identifies the 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 approximately 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 90 years ago.

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12. 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 WBTS appeals to:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10:

“...it is righteous on the part of God to repay tribulation *to those who make tribulation for YOU*, but, to YOU who suffer tribulation, 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 upon **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 he comes** to be glorified...”

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. Rather than resisting the WTS version of “the good news” they will **resist** the very evident ‘**good news**’ concerning Jesus’ visible return and thereby **directly oppose** God’s Kingdom. These ones are depicted in Jesus’ parable of the 10 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**’ ... ‘I [*Jesus*] say to you ... these enemies of mine that did not want me to become king over them bring here and **slaughter** before me’” (*Luke 19:14, 26, 27*).

According to Revelation 19 Jesus’ enemies will include the Wild Beast, 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 3 billion survivors based on early 21st century population statistics.

IT IS ‘NATIONS’ THAT WILL BE RULED

- ❖ “Ask of me, that I may give **nations** as your inheritance And the ends of the earth as your own possession. You will *break them with an iron scepter*, As though a potter’s vessel you will dash them to pieces. And now, **O kings**, exercise insight; *Let yourselves be corrected*, O judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear And be joyful with trembling *Kiss the son*, that He may not become incensed And YOU may not perish [from] the way, For his anger flares up easily. Happy are all those taking refuge in him” (*Ps. 2:8-12*).
- ❖ “And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike **the nations** with it, and he will **shepherd them with a rod of iron**. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty” (*Rev. 19:15*).

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.

THE WORLD’S KINGDOMS BECOME GOD’S KINGDOM

- ❖ “And the seventh angel blew his trumpet. And loud voices occurred in heaven, saying: “The kingdom **of the world** *did become the kingdom of our Lord* and of his Christ, and **he will rule** as king forever and ever” (*Rev. 11:15*).
- ❖ “And 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 the rulerships** will serve and obey even them” (*Dan. 7:27*).

Zechariah shows that at the time of the end and the earliest stages of the Millennium non-Christian individuals will have to comply with God’s arrangements:

- ❖ “And it must occur, as regards everyone **who is left remaining of the nations that are coming against Jerusalem** they must also go up year to year to bow down to the King, Jehovah of armies ... if the family of Egypt itself does not come up... **the scourge** will occur... This itself will prove to 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*).

Zechariah 14 entirely concerns the time of the end when “*Jehovah must 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 7 million Jehovah’s Witnesses, but possibly ½ 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. Both this chapter in Zechariah and the one in 1 Thessalonians are completely literal. 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.

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 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.”

- ❖ “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*).
- ❖ “And 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*).

The governing body of Jehovah’s Witnesses 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.

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13. DO THE KINGS REALLY RULE FROM HEAVEN?

“...and they are to rule as kings **over** the earth” (*Rev. 5:10* NWT).

This text has been misused by Jehovah’s Witnesses in an attempt to show that the “holy ones” will rule from heaven over the earth rather than on earth over the population.

THE TRANSLATION ISSUE

According to the Kingdom Interlinear the phrase is: “...reigning **upon** the earth” (Gk. *epi tes ges*). The UBS 4th edition Interlinear says the same as KIT.

Most translations have “**on**” or “**upon**” the earth, but 10 lesser known translations by individuals have “over” including Weymouth and Goodspeed. However, all examples of this Greek phrase *epi tes ges* are translated as “upon the earth” in the NWT in Revelation **except 5:10**. These are: Rev. 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, 17:8, 18:24.

Furthermore Hebrews 11:13 in the NWT is translated *epi tes ges* as “in the land.” There are also many similar phrases: Rev. 3:10: “...upon the whole inhabited earth.”

10:5a: “...upon the sea.”

14:14: “...upon the cloud.”

The Greek word *epi* is also many times translated as *over* when the reference is to authority. However, in Revelation 11:6, although the 2 witnesses: "...have authority over the waters," *they are still on the earth*.

THE INTERPRETATION ISSUE

So if one interprets "earth" literally as the planet, then one would be obliged to translate *epi* as "on" as in all standard translations. If, however, one interprets "earth" figuratively as *the earthly society of humans* one would be obliged to translate *epi* as "over" because the kings will have authority over them.

THE HOLY ONES ARE ON EARTH

"The holy ones" of Revelation 5:8 are described in **20:9** as being attacked by the misled nations when the 1,000 years have ended:

- ❖ "And they advanced over the breadth of the earth and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city."

Only an unwarranted interpretation, to the effect that these are different "holy ones" at the end of the Millennium than before it, can make Revelation 20:9 lose its force to show that 5:10 refers to these ones **reigning on earth**.

NO NEED TO BE IN HEAVEN TO RULE OVER PEOPLE

Adam was to rule over the creation yet he did not need to be in heaven to do so:

- ❖ "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule over** the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, **over** the livestock, **over** all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (*Gen. 1:26 NIV*).

Although the NWT has "have in subjection" the meaning is virtually the same and the NIV here is fully in line with the Hebrew Interlinear and most other translations. Of course, these kings 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 including prophecies of his reign on David's throne, which no Jew of the time would have imagined to be anywhere but on earth (Luke 1:32,33). Please see STUDY 2. JESUS RETURNS VISIBLY TO EARTH.

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14. WILL ADAM AND EVE BE RESURRECTED?

Insight on the Scriptures Vol. 2 states:

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 governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses 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

- ❖ “Mercy exults triumphantly over judgment.” (*James 2:13*).
- ❖ “Let it therefore be known to YOU, brothers, that through this One a *forgiveness of sins* is being published 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 the governing body 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 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, John 8:44 does say that “*the Devil...was a manslayer when he began.*” So the Scriptures seem to put the blame on Satan as the wilful murderer and Adam as his weak, compliant and misguided instrument.

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.

ADAM'S FUTURE

From several angles there is no reason to imagine that Christ’s sacrifice would not be applicable to Adam and Eve. Please Study 13: FOR WHOM AND WHEN IS THE RESURRECTION.

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15. FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE THORN IN HIS FLESH
WAS IT JEHOVAH OR JESUS THAT PAUL PLEADED WITH?

- ❖ ““I three times pleaded with **the Lord** that it [*Paul’s thorn in the flesh*] might depart from me; yet he really said to me: ‘My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for **my power** is being made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore will I boast as respects my weakness that **the power of the Christ** may like a tent remain over me”” (*2 Cor. 12:8, 9*).

Clearly “the Lord” referred to here is not Jehovah as in the teaching of the governing body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, but Christ. Paul’s reference to “**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.

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16. THE ‘ASTROLOGERS’ DID NOT VISIT A ONE OR
MORE YEAR OLD JESUS

In both *All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* (p. 287) and *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2 (p. 63) it is presented that Jesus was born 2 B.C.E., c. Oct 1; but that the “astrologers” (magi) visited the child Jesus in 1 B.C.E. or 1 C.E. Although, in other Watchtower material Jesus is called an infant, the above scheme would make Jesus about one year old rather than an infant when the Magi visited him. However, the WT magazine April 1 2010 states concerning the magi: “Evidently they arrived some months after Jesus’ birth.” Yet to match the above chronology this really must mean about a year

after Jesus' birth. So generally there are three reasons given for this chronology:

1. Because the decree of Herod the Great was to slaughter all the boys of two years of age and under; so Jesus must have been at least one year old.
2. Because Jesus is termed a child (Gk. *paidon*) in Luke 2:40 rather than a newborn (Gk, *brephos*) therefore Jesus must have been a toddler by then.
3. Because by then Joseph and Mary are living in a house (Matt. 2:11) rather than a stable/barn (Luke 2:7); indicating that a different time is being described in the accounts.

However, these are not sound reasons because:

#1. Herod was an absolutely ruthless man who decreed the slaughter of anyone who got in his way of securing or of maintaining power, including three of his own sons and his wife. So the decree's encompassing two year olds is simply typical of his 'overkill' mentality.

#2. This is not factual. The word *paidon* is also used of infants e.g. John the Baptist at 8 days old is called a *paidon* (Luke 1:59, 66, 76) as is Christ as a newborn (Luke 2:17) and when he was only 40 days old (Luke 2:27).

#3. There is no sound reason to imagine that Matthew 2:11 refers to a different time frame from Luke 2:7 just because Joseph and Mary are in a house. It is quite logical for them to move into a nearby house very soon after the birth of Jesus and no doubt such a house was available for Joseph because Bethlehem was his home town (Luke 2:2-3).

- It is inconceivable that it would have one year before Herod had known about Jesus' birth. This is because the shepherds heralded it (Luke 2:17, 18) and the priests in Jerusalem (only 5 miles from Bethlehem) would have known of it within a relatively short time.
- Furthermore, if Jesus was about one year old when the Magi visited, then it should have been Nazareth that they came to rather than Bethlehem because **Jesus was in Nazareth** having recently been brought back from Egypt:

❖ "And he [*Joseph*] rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that **Archelaus was reigning over Judea** in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went **and lived in a city called Nazareth**, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: 'He shall be called a Nazarene'" (*Matt. 2:19-23*).

❖ "And **when they had performed everything according to the Law** of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of **Nazareth**. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him" (*Luke 2:39, 40*)

The performing of "**everything according to the Law**" concerned the things described in vs. 22 i.e. "their purification" which was to be done 40 days after Mary had given birth (Lev. 12:2-6). Evidently the time spent in Egypt occurred after the purification and before the return to Nazareth. However, the biblical record is clear that everything to do with the Magi's visit concerned Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5-11).

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17. DOES JAMES 5:14-16 CONCERN SPIRITUAL SICKNESS?

- ❖ "Is there anyone **sick** among YOU? Let him call the older men of the congregation to [him], and let them pray over him, greasing [him] with **oil** in the name of Jehovah. And **the prayer of faith** will make the **indisposed one** well, and **Jehovah will raise him up**. Also, if he has committed sins, it

will be forgiven him. Therefore openly confess YOUR sins to one another and pray for one another, **that YOU may get healed.** A righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force."

In the *Comment* section in the *Word Biblical Commentary* Ralph P. Martin explains:

15 "And the request based on faith will make the sick one well; and the Lord will raise him up."

The verb *swvzein* is often used in the NT to refer to the eschatological salvation of believers, suggesting to some scholars that James is referring to deliverance from **spiritual death**. This argument gains support if *ajsqenei`n* (v 14) means "to be **spiritually weak**" (as in Rom 14:2; 1 Cor 8:11–12), as may be the case with *kavmnein* (in v 15: see Heb 12:3). Moreover, *ija`sqai* ("to cure") can conceivably be understood as referring to a restoration to spiritual wholeness. **Yet these are exceptional meanings attached to the vocabulary, ajsqenei`n and kavmnein are better understood to refer to cases of physical illness ... ija`sqai most naturally refers to the curing of a person who is sick.** In addition, *swv/zein* (Mark 5:23, 28, 34; 10:52; John 11:12) and *ejeivrein* (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 (*pepoi`hkwv*) 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, *eixomologeiv`sqe*, 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 *ija`sqai* ("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 *cavrisma*.** 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.

OUR COMMENT

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.

By Raymond C. Faircloth
www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk

RECOMMENDED WEBPAGES

Frank Toth (<http://formerjw.homestead.com/steps.html>).

http://www.jwinfo.com/Documents/prophecy/pf_last_generation.htm

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