

that it must have coincided with the first day of the Passover festival. It is claimed that this is what made it a "high" or special or great day-the fact that it was not only the Sabbath but also the first day of the Passover festival. Again, this would seem to indicate that Jesus could not have eaten the regular Passover meal with his apostles but died before then, This conclusion is entirely unwarranted though because the expression "high day" could be applied not only to the coincidence of the first day of the festival with the Sabbath, but to any day of the festival on which the Sabbath fell. (Note, also, how at John 7:37 the last day is called "the great day of the feast.") John is simply saying that the day after Jesus' death was special because it was not only the Sabbath, but the Sabbath which occurred during the Passover festival.

So it is not really contradictory to the accounts presented by Matthew, Mark and Luke. Therefore, the evidence points to the conclusion that Jesus ate the regular Passover meal with his disciples on the evening after Nisan 14 at the beginning of the Jewish day Nisan 15, and likewise died on Nisan 15 on the day of the week which would have corresponded with our Friday. All four Gospel accounts can be harmonized without straining matters. There seems to be no reason to take an adamant position to the contrary. □

The foregoing article demonstrates how commentaries can be helpful in offering solutions to problems presented in scripture. It is true, as Mitchell and Carlton acknowledge, not all Bible scholars agree on this matter. Be that as it may, each of us will have to make a personal determination regarding textual difficulties that present themselves. To this end I would highly recommend the book *Biblical Hermeneutics-a Treatise on the Interpretation of the old and New Testaments*, by Milton S. Terry and published by Zondervan Publishing House, 1415 Lake Drive S .E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. This analytical study of

biblical hermeneutics (interpretation) is divided into three main sections: (1) Introduction to biblical hermeneutics, (2) Principles of biblical hermeneutics, and (3) History of biblical hermeneutics. There is a fine bibliography as well an index to the hundreds of scripture texts that are used to illustrate and provide examples for the various principles set forth in this extensive volume. It is available either hardbound or in paperback. I would encourage anyone interested in making a scholarly approach to his Bible reading and study to obtain a copy of this book

Hopefully, we will be able to keep all textual difficulties in perspective by remembering that our faith rests in the persons of the Father and the Son not in the written record *per se*. This is not said to diminish the value of the Bible for it is the sacred record of God's past dealings and revelations of himself to mankind. Whatever problems exist with the received text- real or imagined-in no way changes that fundamental truth. The matter under consideration is a case in point. The Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel agree to the *fact* of Jesus' final meal and discourse to his disciples. That fact remains unchanged and unchallenged regardless of how we understand the accounts. Again, this is not said to minimize the importance of attempting to reconcile the accounts but, rather, to point out that minor discrepancies or points of controversy do not discredit or negate the more important underlying truths presented in the record of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. These things remain unchanged. The Bible will continue to be the one inspired record of sacred history and an unequalled source of divine wisdom: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."-2 Timothy 3:16,17 *NIV*. □

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## **Separating The Sheep and The Goats: Part 1**

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"The declaring of the kingdom worldwide is resulting in a clear separation of people. In illustrative language Jesus foretold for our day: '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.' Those who cooperate with the Creator's purposes are identified as being like sheep. Those who remain independent are said to be like goats. As for their destinies, Jesus said that the 'sheep' will reap 'everlasting life,' but the 'goats,' 'everlasting

cutting-off.'" (Matthew 25:32-46) *Life-How Did It Get Here? By Evolution Or By Creation?* (1985) page 247. The above quotation summarizes one of the Watch Tower Society's many exclusive doctrines. The "declaring of the Kingdom worldwide," is limited in its application to just what Jehovah's Witnesses are preaching under the supervision of the Watch Tower Society. Those who are declared to be "sheep" because they "cooperate with the Creator's purposes" are those who accept the Watchtower Society as the Creator's

exclusive "channel" and become Jehovah's Witnesses. Those who fail to believe and respond to their preaching are the "independent" ones judged to be "like goats." This is the world view held by Jehovah's Witnesses. Within a very few years their work will be finished and those who failed to join the ranks of the Witnesses will all be destroyed. This must transpire, according to current understanding, within the generation of people alive in 1914.

In America, a recent demographic showed that people 80-years-old and older comprise not more than 1 percent of the total population. Such persons would represent the very *youngest* of those who could reasonably be considered part of the 1914 generation. If, as the Watch Tower teaches, those persons who witnessed the events of 1914 must live to see the end of the age, then, for all practical purposes, the time is ripe for God to act. To fulfill Watch Tower prophecy the end must come *within* the 1914 generation.

How well do the facts of their brief history and the Bible square with their contentions? Do the interpretations applied by the Society to this illustration fit? Do the various elements of Jesus' illustration dovetail with Watchtower interpretation or is there evidence of a forcing of sectarian ideas superimposed on the illustration? These are matters which this issue of *The Christian Respondent* will touch upon. Before doing that, however, it seems appropriate to set out the parabolic illustration in its entirety as found in Matthew chapter 25:

*"When the Son of man arrives 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 and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, YOU who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I became hungry and you gave me something to eat I got thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you received me hospitably; naked, and you clothed me. I fell sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous ones will answer him with the words, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and receive you hospitably, or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to you?'*

*And in reply the king will say to them, I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."-Matthew 25:31-40 New World Translation.*

The concluding six verses of the chapter present the Lord's judgment on the "goats" for their failure to respond to the needs of his "brothers" and the ultimate destinies of the separated ones:

*"Then he will say, in turn, to those on his left, 'Be on your way from me, you who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I became hungry, but you gave me nothing to eat, and I got thirsty, but you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, but you did not receive me hospitably naked, but you did not clothe me sick and in prison, but you did not after me.' Then they also . will answer with the words, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them with the words, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of these least ones, you did not do it to me.' And these will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life."-Matthew 25:41-46 NWT.*

Several factors seem clear from what we read about the sheep and the goats. It appears to be a *final* judgment. Those judged favorably are said to "inherit the kingdom" \_prepared for them "from the founding of the world." They go away to "everlasting life." On the other hand, those adversely judged are said to "have been cursed" and go away to "everlasting cutting-off. " There is no suggestion that this is merely a preliminary judgment but rather a final judgment that irrevocably fixes the destinies of those judged. Only the one having the power of life and death could administer this kind of judgment. only the one capable of reading the hearts and hidden motives of people could make the penetrating examination necessary to form the righteous basis for such a judgment. It is only the Lord Jesus Christ who has both the ability and the authority to do this kind of judgment work as other scriptures bear witness:

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead." -Acts 10:42 *New International Version*. "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." -Acts 17:31 *MV*. "In the

presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead." -2 Timothy 4: 1. "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment the Son." ~John 5:22 *MV*. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." -2 Corinthians 5: 10 *NIV*.

Rather than presenting the judgment described at Matthew 25: 31-46 as a momentary event at the very end of the present age the Watchtower Society teaches that it is a protracted affair covering many years-a generation of time. According to this view people have been undergoing a separation into one class or the other. They argue that since 1914 there has existed a new situation that forms the basis for this separation. That new situation is explained for us in the following quotation:

"So, then, in what sense is it that an the nations are gathered before him since his enthronement in heaven at the close of the Gentile Times in 1914? Well, the situation has changed for the nations since their lease of world domination without interference by God's universal sovereignty ran out in 1914 (Luke 21:24; Psalm 110: 1,2) ... He now faces them and inspects them as to their attitude regarding submission to the rightful Messianic rule. They are all treated as one worldwide political system, like a corporate group, and, together, they face him and deal with him over the paramount issue of world domination ... Because of the 'authority of his Christ,' God's enthroned Son is now authorized to 'shepherd all the nations with an iron rod' and to dash them to pieces in due time." (Revelation 12:5; 19: 15; Psalm 2:8,9) — *Our Incoming World Government-God's Kingdom* (1977) pages 161 , 162 .

According to the above the basis for judgment has to do with recognizing that the nations "lease of world domination" ran out in 1914 and a failure to recognize and submit to God's Messianic kingdom. This raises a number of questions. First of all, it is not clear just how the nations are expected to go about doing what they need to do in order to demonstrate that they are submitting to Christ's rule since October, 1914'1 Should they all give up the reins of government and disband the parliamentary order of things? A close examination of what the Watchtower Society is teaching boils down to just their evaluation of the world situation based on their time-setting regarding the end of the " Gentile Times. " They say that in 1914 "world domination without interference ... ran out. "

But what is there to prove such a claim? The nations are still in power and, in fact, there are many more nations now than there were in 1914 when their time supposedly ran out! When the time of the Babylonian rule came to an end by the decree of Heaven there was no misunderstanding on anyone's part as to the *de facto* reality of this. The monarch was clearly informed and God's power clearly demonstrated. (Daniel chapter 5)

The Society applies Psalm 110 and Psalm 2 as being fulfilled in regard to the events of 1914 and afterward but the Apostles of the Lord applied these prophecies to events of their own day. For example, on the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter bore witness regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus and said:

"This Jesus God resurrected, of which fact we are all witnesses. Therefore because he was exalted to the right hand of God and received the promised holy spirit from the Father, he has poured out this which you see and hear. Actually David did not ascend to the heavens but he himself says, 'Jehovah said to my Lord:' 'Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for a certainty that God made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you impaled." -Acts 2:32-36 *NWT*

According to Peter's application, the 1 10th Psalm underwent fulfillment at the time of Christ's resurrection. This same Psalm also speaks of the glorified Christ as a priest" according to the manner of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4) What was the "manner" (order) of Melchizedek? The manner or order of his priesthood was unique in that it incorporated the offices of both priest and king. (Genesis 14: 18) In this way he was a type of the coming priest-king Jesus Christ. The writer of the book of Hebrews discusses this for us and makes further application of the prophetic Psalm: "Here we have an anchor for our soul, as sure as it is firm, and reaching right through beyond the veil where Jesus has entered before us and on our behalf, to become a high priest of the order of Melchizedek, and for ever. You remember that Melchizedek, king of Salem, a priest of God Most High, went to meet Abraham who was on his way back after defeating the kings, and blessed him; and also that it was to him that Abraham gave a tenth of all that he had. By the interpretation of his name, he is, first, 'king of righteousness' and also king of Salem, that is, 'king of peace'; he has no father, mother or ancestry, and his life has no beginning or ending; he is like the Son of God. He remains a priest for ever ... For it was about

him that the prophecy was made: (Ps.110:4) You are a priest of the order of Melchizedek, and for ever." - Hebrews 6: 19-7: 3,17 *Jerusalem Bible*

If Christ is God's high priest he is also king because the two offices are combined in him. He must have assumed both offices at the same time to conform to the Melchizedekian type. He has functioned both as priest and king during all the many centuries since his first advent. He is the king of a kingdom and has

"ruled in the midst of his enemies." (Psalm 110:2) He will continue to rule until all enemies have been crushed~including the "last enemy, death!" All these many centuries he has been recognized as Lord, High Priest & King by many millions of loyal subjects. He is not more a king or less a king at any time since his resurrection. The 2nd Psalm confirms these matters when it says: "The kings of earth take their stand and high officials themselves have massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one, saying, 'let us tear their bands apart and cast their cords away from us' ... at that time he will speak to them in his anger and in his hot displeasure he will disturb them, saying: 'I, even I, have installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain.' let me refer to the decree of Jehovah; He has said to me: 'You are my son. I, today, I have become your father.'" Psalm 2:2,3,5-7 *NWF*

When was this Psalm fulfilled? Again, we find the Apostles making application of this prophetic Psalm to events in their own day. Following the release of Peter and John from custody by the Jewish leaders they returned to their own people to relate their experience before the Jewish high court. Upon hearing these things they exclaimed: "Sovereign lord, you are the one who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them, and who through holy spirit said by the mouth of our forefather David, your servant, 'Why did the nations become tumultuous and people meditate upon empty things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one.' Even so, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with men of the nations and with peoples of Israel were in actuality gathered together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed." -Acts 4:24-27 *NWF*

We must keep in mind the God interprets his own prophetic utterances. (Gen 40:8) It is not for us to invent new interpretations and applications according to our own vision of matters. The doctrine of the "Gentile Times" ending in October, 1914 is Charles T.

Russell's legacy to the Watch Tower Society. This time feature was but one link in a chain of time feature speculations. The failure of the world to end by that year demonstrated that the chain had no substance in reality. It was proven hypothetical-mere conjecture-the product of a fruitful, religious mind. All of Russell's many calculations were discredited by the failure of 1914 to produce what was predicted.

The current Watch Tower doctrine holds to 1914 as the end of the Gentile Times-the lease of world domination by the nations. It simply makes 1914 the first link of a new chain of time feature speculations forged after the old chain began to dissolve following 1914. As these matters relate to the present discussion there seems no reason to conclude that the destinies of "all the nations" are to be determined by accepting certain time feature speculations postulated by the Watch Tower Society or any other religious group. The basis for judgment is presented in the parable as rendering, or failing to render, personal services to those identified as Christ's "brothers." It has nothing to do with structured doctrine. The Lord appears to be judging attitudes and the conduct that flows from those attitudes. Our heart attitude can be shown both by what we do and what we fail to do. Especially so if we are unguarded and unaware of the true situation.

In the several illustrations regarding the rendering of judgment by the Lord found in Matthew 25 (Parable of the Ten Virgins, Parable of the Talents and The Sheep and Goats) there is to be found a common factor. In all cases adverse judgment is rendered on the basis of some form of neglect. The five foolish virgins neglected to bring sufficient oil for their lamps; the unfaithful servant neglected to invest his talent; the goats neglected the humanitarian needs of others. All were judged by what they failed to do. Those who received a favorable judgment were appropriately active in whatever circumstances the Lord found them. It is a sobering thought to realize that when the Lord returns to judge the world people will be caught being themselves. What we are as individuals appears much more important in this light than what we believe. The judgment of all men will be a penetrating judgment unlike any that you and I have ever shared in. We judge by what we see and hear.(Acts 4:20) Men learn how to gain the approval of other men. Outward conduct and appearance cannot be trusted as a measure of the heart or spirit of the man. There can be hidden motives behind our actions. Our failure to perform an appropriate action may be due to lack of understanding or a lack of heart-good motive. Only the

Lord can judge such things and we do well to leave it with him. The prophet foretold this righteous judgment when he wrote: "He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist." -Isaiah 11 :3,4 *NIV*. The Watch Tower Society teaches that the Lord's judgment proceedings have been going on since 1914 and are about completed. They continue to say that a portion of the generation of 1914 will live to see the end of the world and the execution of judgment. Accordingly, there could be only a few years, at best, remaining wherein billions of people are to have their destinies determined.

This raises a serious question, namely, how can people be judged on the basis of an issue never presented to them? How can a person make a reasoned decision about something he has never even heard of? Yet that is the position the Society takes and the Witnesses accept. Many, if not all, Jehovah's Witnesses expect the end at any moment. This is but the end result of their having accepted the Watch Tower Society as God's modern-day prophet. Many expected-even hoped-that the end of the world would come in 1975 as the Society led them to conclude. What is disturbing about this is that Jehovah's Witnesses were more than willing to see God execute everyone on earth-billions of people-who were not in their religious fellowship. At present there are about 4.5 billion inhabitants of earth. According to the last official report of worldwide activity (1986) the Witnesses number, on average, about 3 million active members. While these figures are impressive to the Witnesses they are minuscule when compared to the world population. Nor is there a uniform distribution of the numbers around the world.

While in some western nations the ratio of Witnesses to the population is quite high this is not true throughout Asia and a number of third world nations. In Bangladesh, for example, the ratio is 1 to 4.5 million. In Pakistan it is 1 to 384,000; Nepal 1 to 390,000; Algeria 1 to 511,000. China is said to have a population close to 1 billion but there are very few Witnesses in that country. According to their figures there are 273,381 Witnesses active in 33 unnamed countries in which their work is carried on underground. This would include China, the Soviet Union and a number of communist states. It takes little

reflection on this imbalance of numbers and distribution to appreciate that there are billions of people who have not even heard of Jehovah's Witnesses much less know what they teach. How is it, then, that these billions can be judged on individual choice? Yet this is what the Society teaches:

"We should note that the King Jesus Christ does not separate the nations into two classes, one class against another class in political differences. Rather he divides the people who live in those nations, thus allowing each person to make *his own individual choice* regardless of what the national government over him does ... On what basis does this separating work take place? *On the basis of their support of Christ's kingdom or their rejection of it.*" -*Our Incoming World Government-God's Kingdom*, page 163 (italics added)

In this regard we are reminded of Paul's words:

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" -Romans 10: 14 *NIV*.

Along with a number of other religious groups and individuals the Watchtower Society preaches about the "sign" of Christ's presence (parousia) and teaches that world conditions (Wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, etc.) "prove" Christ's invisible presence since 1914. The reading of this sign by the Watch Tower Society and their gospel (good news) based on that reading prompts them to declare worldwide: "The due time has approached." (Luke 21: 8) The Lord cautioned not to follow such men. It is not possible to know "the times or seasons (*appointed times*) which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction." (Acts 1:7 *NWT Interlinear*) All that Jesus had to say about his second advent is consistent with this declaration.

His disciples were told that all they needed to do was act as his witnesses and remain spiritually awake. (Acts 1 :8; Mark 13:32-37) If they did this they would not be at a disadvantage when he returned unexpectedly. Because the Lord's return was to be unannounced it would, by its very nature, catch people being themselves-their true selves-not 'pumped up' by some prediction based on some 'sign.' All such things run contrary to the spirit of truth. It results in misreading of events and even a manipulation of facts to support a preconceived premise. It results in an arbitrary judgment of others who fail to agree with

your reading of the 'sign.' It results in presumptuousness-a taking of one's self too seriously.

It misrepresents God and Christ and misleads people to accept a concept that is simply untrue. □

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## **Separating The Sheep and The Goats: Part 2**

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The previous issue of the *Respondent* began a discussion of Jesus' parable of the "sheep and the goats," found at Matthew 25:31-46. This parable was the last of three parabolic illustrations used by Jesus to explain the final judgment. The first two parables (The Ten Virgins and The Talents) specifically allude to the Christian community and individuals in that community. The last parable concerning the sheep and goats is presented as a universal judgment taking in "all the nations." (Matthew 25) It was pointed out in the previous issue that the Watch Tower Society teaches that people of all the nations are now experiencing the separation into either the sheep or goat class. The basis for the Lord's judgment rests completely on the acceptance or rejection of, the "good news" being preached under their direction. The foundation of this "good news" is the date 1914 and the world events since that date which, according to Watch Tower dogma, makes up the composite sign of Christ's invisible presence. If one accepts their gospel and becomes an "approved associate" within the ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses he is viewed as having experienced a favorable judgment by the Lord and is put at his right side as one of his "sheep." More specifically, these sheep like ones are approved because they minister to the King's brothers-the remnant of the 144,000 heirs of the heavenly kingdom. By becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses one is, in effect, ministering to the enthroned King, Jesus Christ. The Society explains it as follows: "By the reference, 'my brothers,' the King Jesus Christ means 'his chosen ones,'" those who are 'heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ.' (Matthew 24:31; Romans 8:17) Of these spiritual brothers, there is yet a small remnant left on earth. All of these have been diligently engaged in fulfilling Jesus' prophecy, 'This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations,' for they know by the 'sign' of Christ's invisible 'presence' or parousia that the kingdom of God is near at the doors." -*Our Incoming World Government-God's Kingdom*, (1977) pages 164, 165.

There are about 3.2 million Witnesses currently active in about 200 countries. of this number less than 9,000 of them lay claim to being one of the "chosen ones" spoken of above. Who makes the determination that they are a member of that elite "remnant" of which they speak? Does the Watch Tower Society really know these people so as to be able to say that "all of these

have been diligently engaged in fulfilling Jesus' prophecy."? Laying claim to being one of the "chosen ones" is a private matter between the individual and God. It is understood, however, that since 1935 the quota for being of this number (144,000) has been filled. Witnesses are told that since that year the invitation God gives is to be an heir to the *earthly realm* of the kingdom. The only means the Society has for identifying the number of Witnesses claiming to be one of Christ's "brothers" is by the number partaking of the Memorial Emblems of bread