

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. □

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 and wine at their annual observance of the "Lord's Evening Meal." (1 Cor 1: :20) It was reported that 8,927 persons partook of the emblems in 1986. Most of these are elderly and many are infirm. As to how "diligently" they have "engaged in fulfilling Jesus' prophecy" cannot be determined. More importantly, such a view restricts the identity of Christ's spiritual brothers to a narrow, sectarian pool of professed Christians and rejects anyone else outside that pool as being one of Christ's brothers. In this way they presumptuously approve themselves and adversely judge others.

There are more than 52,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. With less than 9,000 of them claiming to be one of Christ's brothers it is readily apparent that most Witnesses have never had any intimate contact or relationship with one of these "chosen ones" so as to minister to them as the parable says they do. Virtually everyone becoming a Jehovah's Witness today does so through the efforts and ministry of those who are called the "other sheep," of John 10: 16. Such ones do not view themselves as Christ's spiritual brothers. 99 percent of the public witnessing work is performed by these so-called "other sheep." When we consider that the Watch Tower Society teaches that there were to be only 144,000 of Christ's "chosen ones" in all history it becomes obvious that there could never be a large number of them alive and active at one time. Therefore, the scenario of people of "all nations" being confronted and challenged by these ambassadors of Christ does not comport to their perception of reality. Consider what they say. in the following quotation:

"The spirit-anointed 'brothers' of Christ have come under severe tests because of boldly preaching God's Kingdom, while maintaining separateness from the world. (John 15: 19,21) Some have experienced hunger, thirst and lack of clothing. Many have left their homes to serve in areas where they were strangers. While performing their ministry, they have undergone sickness and imprisonment, even death at the hands of persecutors. These experiences of Christ's 'brothers' have caused people of all nations to be confronted with a test. Would the love for God and Christ cause them to come to the aid of these ambassadors of the heavenly Kingdom?" ~*Survival Into it New Earth*, (1984) page 117.

Has anything approaching the above ever really happened? Have these "ambassadors of the heavenly Kingdom" confronted people of "all nations" as the above quotation says they have; or is it merely a rhetorical device used to conform to the wording of the parable without foundation in fact? The Watch Tower Society presents the above as though it were the real situation when they know it is not. The same book, on the following page, presents another perspective as to how people are confronted and put to the test of their love for God and Christ:

"How, though, is it possible for people of *all nations* to be judged on this basis? Did not Jesus say that his 'brothers,' to whom the Father would give the heavenly Kingdom, would be just a little flock?' (Luke 12:32) Many people never personally come in contact with one of them. True, but the 'brothers' of Christ make up the nucleus of the international organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. By means of this organized people, the vital Kingdom issue is being presented to people everywhere. All of this being directed by Christ himself from his heavenly throne and with the aid of the angels. In some 200 lands and island groups around the globe even where the preaching of God's Kingdom is under government ban the dividing work moves irresistibly forward, and a great crowd of persons are taking their stand on the side of God's Kingdom." ~*Survival Into A New Earth*, page 118 (italics in original).

So it is acknowledged by the Society that what is described on page 117 of the above book is not really taking place. Instead, they argue that by means of the "other sheep," people of all nations are being confronted by •• *the vital Kingdom issue.*" And what is that vital issue? Basically, it involves accepting the date 1914 as the year Christ returned invisibly to begin a

judgment work and that world events since then have been fulfilling the "sign" of which they speak. It includes the teaching that the "Gentile Times" ran out in 1914 and that the generation that saw the events of that year would live to see the end of the present world. It is accepting the Watch Tower Society as God's exclusive channel of communication to men on earth. Wherever Jehovah's Witnesses are to be found they represent the Watch Tower Society of Brooklyn, New York. The issue is *not how people feel about Christ's "brothers" or the Kingdom of God* but whether they accept the spiritual authority of the Watch Tower Society and its esoteric message! That, is the issue! If people fail to recognize this authority and accept the interpretation of the "SIGN" they end up being classed as "goats." The parable does not even hint at such a thing. The parable focuses on personal service rendered to those in need. It presents those described as the King's "brothers" as deprived and disadvantaged. To extrapolate the parable into some *issue* involving complex doctrinal issues designed to measure people's worth on the basis of accepting or rejecting these teachings appears unwarranted. The illustrative picture focuses on people in need and attitudes towards such ones without regard for their belief system.

It cannot be denied that the Witnesses represent an aggressive religious community. However, their efforts are not evenly distributed around the world. As pointed out in the last *Respondent* there are billions of people never reached by them. In some areas of the world the Witnesses cover the same ground over and over again while in other vast reaches of the earth they are practically non-existent. In the 33 unnamed countries wherein they are to be found under some restriction or ban there are a total of 255,148 active Witnesses. (see *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1987) One of these countries, China, is reported to have a population of over 1 billion people! If all 255 thousand Witnesses were located in this one country they still would be unable to reach everyone. Even in the countries where they are free to carry on their proselytizing active there is often a misrepresentation of matters. For example, the Watch Tower Society reports that in India the ratio of Witnesses to the general population is 1 to 105,946. It might seem to some that throughout the country this ratio prevails but it doesn't. It is only a *statistical* average. According to *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1986 "Only about 6.6 percent of the population have thus far been reached with the good news." (page 24) In other words, 93.4

percent of all Indians are not even being confronted by Jehovah's Witnesses; and we are talking about a country with a population of around 800 million people! And this is a country where the Watch Tower Witnesses have been active for 80 years.

What is said here is not intended to demean the strenuous efforts put forth by Jehovah's Witnesses to make disciples of their particular faith. They put most religions to shame in this regard. Their zeal is commendable and totally consistent with their world view. But they are not preaching the good news of the kingdom taught by Jesus and his Apostles nor are they reaching all people of all nations.

The Society says that the "dividing work moves irresistibly forward," but does it? They argue that since October 1914 the "lease of world domination without interference by God's universal sovereignty" has run out. (see *Respondent*, No.33, page 153) If, as the Society argues, Christ assumed his rightful kingship over the earth in 1914 why is it that the nations are able to prevent the Witnesses from reaching billions of people? If the lives of all people depend on their having an opportunity to accept or reject this new gospel being preached worldwide how is it that nations can still obstruct this? It is simply not true that the "work moves irresistibly forward." It is resisted in many countries. Nor is it true that the nations dominated the earth prior to 1914 "without interference by God's universal sovereignty." God has always done his will and made his person known without regard to the nations or their so-called "lease of power". The greatest intervention in world history by God's universal sovereignty took place nearly two thousand years ago with the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

At that time the Lord could say: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth. 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." -Matthew 28: 18.19 *New World Translation*.

"He did not appoint angels to be rulers of the world to come, and that world is what we are talking about. Somewhere there is a passage that shows us this. It runs: What is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him? For a short while you made him lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and splendor. You have put him in command of everything. Well then, if he has put

him in command of everything, he has left nothing which is not under his command. At present, it is true, we are not able to see that everything has been put under his command, but we do see in Jesus one who was for a short while made lower than the angels and is now crowned with glory and splendor because he submitted to death, by God's grace he had to experience death for all mankind." -Hebrews 2:5-9 *Jerusalem Bible*.

"He is at God's right hand, for he went his way to heaven; and angels and authorities and powers were made subject to him." -1 Peter 3 :22 *NW*.

Jesus' own testimony and that of his disciples is to the effect that all authority in heaven and earth has been exercised by the Lord as *priest-king* since his earthly ministry came to an end. Those prophetic psalms that speak of these things were fulfilled in the first century of our common era. (Acts 2:34,35; 4:25-27) The second Psalm says: "Let me proclaim Yahweh's decree; he has told me, 'You are my son, today I have become your father. Ask and I will give you the nations for your heritage, the ends of the earth for your domain. With iron scepter you will break them, shatter them like potter's ware.'" -Psalm 2:7-9 *JJB*.

We are further helped to understand that "today I have become your father," was prophetically spoken with the resurrection of Christ in view. This is shown by what the Apostle Paul writes at Romans 1: 1-4:

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." -*New International Version*.

In summary on this point, it is my view that the kingship of Christ commenced from his resurrection and glorification and that this kingdom rule has continued down through the centuries in an unaltered manner. While it is true that the nations have not recognized his kingship that in no way abrogates it. It merely fulfills the prophecy that he would "Rule in the midst your foes!" (Psalm 110:2 *Revised Standard Version*) All during the Gospel Age there have been loyal subjects who have "bent the knee" to his sovereignty. I see no evidence to support the claim that a dramatic change took place in regard to this

kingship in 1914 or any other date in human history since his ascension.

If, as the Watch Tower Society insists, Christ arrived in 1914 with all his angels and began a separating work unlike anything done up to that time then we would expect to see that unlimited power demonstrated-but we don't. Nations still act independently of Christ. His servants are still persecuted in many countries and the spreading of the gospel is hindered and even banned. The so-called "SIGN" being read and preached under the direction of the Watch Tower Society as proving Christ's return in 1914 is of their own making. To better appreciate how statistical data has been misrepresented to appear to support the Society's date-setting chronology in relation to 1914 and world conditions since that time I would urge the reading of *The Sign of the Last Days-When?* by Carl Olof Jonsson and Wolfgang Herbst. (Commentary Press, P.O. Box 43532, Atlanta, GA 30336)

In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats both are presented as being unaware of the relevancy of their action or inaction. However, the Society's interpretation is that the sheep in the parable knowingly minister to the King's brothers: "They knowingly give aid for the furtherance of the Kingdom proclamation, because they pray for that world government and are in favor of it. That is why their aid to his spiritual 'brothers' counts with the King Jesus Christ." -*Our Incoming World Government -God's Kingdom*, page 165. They go on to argue that there would be no justice in a judgment wherein people were ignorant of the seriousness of their actions. In other words, the "goats" also, would have to knowingly neglect the King's "brothers" in order for them to be held accountable. Concerning this line of argument they say:

"If we say that the symbolic 'goats' were 'cursed' and condemned to destruction with the Devil and his angels merely for *ignorantly* neglecting Christ's 'brothers,' then, logically, we must argue that the symbolic 'sheep' were blessed and rewarded with a place in the Kingdom realm merely for *ignorantly* doing good to Christ's 'brothers.' What real merit would there be, then, in the good that the 'sheep' did to Christ's 'brothers'? Or what demerit in the neglect that the 'goats' did not realize that they were committing? Where, then, is the justice in rewarding the one ignorant class and punishing the other ignorant class? Justice is apparently nowhere in such treatment." -*Our*

Incoming World Government- God's Kingdom, page 168 (Italics in original)

The argument set out above is that there is no justice being done if people are judged by what they unwittingly (ignorantly) do. Is this argument sound? If a person ignorantly breaks a law can he plead "not guilty" on the basis of his ignorance? Hardly. On the other hand, if he performs an act of kindness towards a stranger and is unaware of that person's worth does that mean there is no merit or value in what he did? That would be a strange conclusion. Why does the Society set forth such tenuous arguments? It is in order to *read into* the parable their scheme of things. To take the parable at face value simply does not fit into their doctrinal schema.

Another important factor is that the separation of all people of the nations is immediate and permanent. The "sheep" are said to "inherit the kingdom" prepared for them. The "goats," we are told, are "cursed" and go off "into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:34,41) We must keep in mind that it is the Son of Man that is doing the separating. It is plain that eternal destinies are being fixed here. Thus this separating is not the byproduct of ordinary evangelism. If, as the Society argues, the separating referred to is being accomplished by Jehovah's Witnesses under the direction of Christ and all his angels how is it that many who become baptized Witnesses later fall away? Records show that literally hundreds of thousands of people have walked away from this fellowship. In addition, tens of thousands are disfellowshipped every year for various reasons. If by becoming Jehovah's Witnesses they are being separated to the King's right hand of favor, how is it that they may later leave that place or are subject to being expelled from that place offavor? Could it be that one who was a "sheep" later becomes a "goat" by being snatched out of the Lord's hand?

The Lord knows his own and no one can snatch them out of his hand: "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is something greater than all other things, and no one can snatch them out of the hand of the Father. I and the Father are one." -John 10:27-30 *New World Translation*.

It is rather obvious that the "separating work" being carried on by the Watch Tower Society is just

another religious movement wherein sectarian measurements are being applied to put people in one class or another. Men, no matter how sincere or gifted, can never presume to accomplish what can only be accomplished by Jesus Christ himself. He, alone, is charged with the separating and judgment of all men. That the destinies of the "sheep" and "goats" are fixed at the time of their separation to either the right or the left hand of the Son of Man is clearly set forth in the parable: "Then they [the goats] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous [the sheep] to eternal life." (Matthew 25:46 *NIV*) According to Watch Tower doctrine these destinies are fixed now-before Armageddon. Concerning this they say:

"It would be a serious mistake to reason that, because the destruction of the "goats" is everlasting, the parable could not apply until later on, perhaps during the Millennial Reign of Christ. On the contrary, Jesus gave this parable as part of the sign of 'the conclusion of the system of things.' (Matthew 24:3) What he describes takes place after he is enthroned but also while his 'brothers' are still in the flesh and experiencing the hardships that he mentions. *We are living in that time, and it is fast running out.*" -*Survival Into A New Earth*, page 120 (italics added).

In view of the above one might conclude that they teach that the "sheep" also receive their inheritance of life at the same time, but this is not the case. Those who survive Armageddon do not yet have the gift of life, according to the Society. Those Armageddon survivors will have to undergo a *millennium* of rejuvenation before they are brought to human perfection. Do they receive the right to life then-at the conclusion of the Millennium? No. Before they have their names written in the book of life they must yet pass another post-Armageddon test put upon them by God who enlists the cooperation of a resuscitated Devil to apply the test. If they pass this test then they will finally inherit the kingdom and everlasting life. About these things they say:

"During the Millennium, the enthroned Lamb, Christ Jesus, together with his 144,000 associate kings and priests, will apply a program of spiritual and physical 'curing of the nations.' (Revelation 22: 1,2) Such 'nations' will be made up of the survivors of the great tribulation, any children born to them after Armageddon, and those who come back in the 'resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.' (Acts 24: 15) All who put faith in Christ's blood and accomplish appropriate 'deeds' will

eventually have their names written in 'the book of life.'" -*The Watchtower*, December 1, 1985, pages 17,18. "Immediately after the Millennium, Christ will hand over to his Father a perfect human race. (1 Corinthians 15:28) 'Satan will be let loose' for a decisive test of mankind. (Revelation 20:7,8) The names of any who fail under the test will not be 'found written in the book of life' ... Those who prove loyal to Jehovah will have their names indelibly written in the 'book of life,' as being perfect in integrity and worthy of the right to everlasting life on earth." -*The Watchtower*, December 1, 1985 page 18.

According to this view it will be more than a thousand years-at the very earliest-that the "sheep" inherit the (earthly) Kingdom prepared for them. It is not until after Satan is allowed to apply a final testing of the perfected human family following the Millennium that they will have proved themselves "worthy" of life. At any point in this protracted period of time one could be cut off in destruction. This makes the receiving of everlasting life conditioned on works performed over hundreds and hundreds of years following the time frame in which the parable of the sheep and goats is set! It is yet another example of how many Watch Tower teachings do not square with the very scriptures they use to support their views. And, in the process of their convoluted exegetics, they often distort the plain meaning of the scriptures.

The parable of the "Sheep and Goats" follows on the heels of two other parables that relate to the professed followers of Jesus Christ. The latter parable, unlike the former, is broadened out to include "all the nations." (Matt,25:32) In the former parables the Lord is identified as "the bridegroom" and "the master" - both terms having a unique meaning to those espoused to him and part of his household of faith. (Matt.25: 1,19) In the final parable he is called by the broader term "the Son of man." (Matt.25:31) As "the Son of man" the Lord is brother to all men having emerged from their stock and shared their humanity. During his life and ministry he showed an affinity for those lesser ones in the community of men. On one occasion, when a teacher of the Law inquired of Jesus who he should view as his "neighbor," Jesus responded by setting forth what has come to be called the parable of the good Samaritan. (Luke 10:29-37) In this story it was the man who showed compassion, concern and took steps to heal the wounds and look after the needs of a complete stranger that demonstrated his neighborliness. At the conclusion of the story the Lord advised: "Go and do likewise."

Probably no other one thing demonstrates our spirit of Christ more than does our attitude towards those who are socially disadvantaged, ill or impoverished. It is one thing to be hospitable and respectful of those we look upon as our peers and those from whom we may gain certain benefits but quite another to show hospitality and have an active concern for those from whom we stand to gain nothing in the way of advantage. If the doing to others as we would have them do to us "sums up the Law and the Prophets," then we can begin to appreciate the validity of a judgment founded on this principle. (Matt. 7: 12) Such a basis for judgment among those who have never heard of Jesus Christ is righteous on God's part. There is an inborn sense of duty and responsibility within the human psyche which displays itself in our conduct. While our parental training, or lack of it, and our environment can modify these instinctive traits it is there nevertheless.

As in the two previous parables found in Matthew chapter 25 the basis for condemnation is neglect of responsibility. The "goats" are guilty of sins of omission. Failure to render appropriate aid and assistance to one of those called "brothers" is a failure to render it to the Son of man. Addressing this matter in his commentary on this parable the American scholar Albert Barnes says the following: "If it be asked how the heathen who never heard of the name of Christ can be justly condemned in this manner, it may be answered (1) That Christ acknowledges all the poor, and needy, and strangers of every land as his brethren. (2) That by neglecting the duties of charity they show that they have not his spirit-are not like him. (3) That these duties are clearly made known by conscience and by the light of nature, as well as by revelation, and men may therefore be condemned for the neglect of them. (4) That they are not condemned for not believing in Christ, of whom they have never heard, but for a wrong spirit, neglect of duty, open crime; for being unlike Christ, and therefore unfit for heaven." ~Albert Barnes *Notes on the New Testament*.

We are told that the Son of God is destined to judge the living and the dead. (2 Tim.4: 1) Everyone-believer and unbeliever alike-must stand before his judgment seat. (2 Cor.5: 10) We should have confidence in his ability to do what is consistent with his spirit in this regard. The one who can read the thoughts and determine the motives of people is fully qualified to render a righteous judgment on all men. While it should be our aim to acquaint all men with the good news of Christ, as that is part of our Christian

responsibility, we need not despair. if circumstances have prevented the gospel from being Update: With the publication of *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1995, the Society set forth a new interpretation of the parable of the sheep and the goats. For the last fifty years or more the Witnesses have been taught (and they have been preaching) that the parable has been undergoing fulfillment since the 1914-1918 period. Now the Society says that isn't true. Concerning this they now say: "If we analyze Jesus' activity in the parable, we observe him finally judging *all the nations*. The parable does not show that such judging would continue over an extended period of many years, as if every person dying during these past decades were judged worthy of everlasting. death or everlasting life ... In other words, the parable points to the future when the Son of man will come in his glory." (page 22). As to when this 'future' is to be they add: "It will take place after 'the tribulation' mentioned at Matthew 24:29,30 breaks out and the Son of man 'arrives in his glory.'" (Compare Mark 13:24-26) Then, with the entire wicked system at its end, Jesus will hold court and render and execute judgment." (page 23).

We have in this new "adjusted understanding" (page 19) another example of the Watchtower Society's doctrinal instability. We are. not dealing (in the parable of the sheep and goats) with a complicated doctrinal proposition. We are dealing with a simple illustration of what will happen at the end of the present age. It plainly sets out the final judgment rendered on all the nations. Christians have always understood this timing of the judgment.

The new "adjusted understanding" salvages their misconceptions regarding their place in the judgment process. They still insist that the acceptance or rejection of their message will determine how Christ will render judgment. Regarding this they say:

"Preferring the wicked world, goat-like ones reject the Kingdom message, whether hearing it directly or indirectly. (1 John 2:15-17) Of course, in the final analysis, Jesus is the one who is appointed to render judgment. It is not for us to determine who are sheep and who are goats." (page 26)

Note that while they say that "it is not for us to determine who are sheep and goats," yet they argue that their "Kingdom message" (either accepting or rejecting it) is the basis for the future judgment! Are they not saying that it is how people treat *them* and *their message* that determines their standing before

Christ? It is most unfortunate that they remain securely locked in the notion of their importance.

Nothing has really changed. -*Updated April 8, 1997.* □