

little flock of Jehovah's sheep-like ones. Romans 9:6; Revelation 7:4." *World-wide Security Under the "Prince of Peace"*, 1986, pages 10,11, par. 16.

According to the above Christ mediates for only 144,000 "men" throughout the gospel age. Today, fewer than 9,000 among Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be of this number. The remaining 3 million Witnesses are told that what Paul writes here at 1 Timothy 2:5 does not include them. They are without Christ as their mediator. To support the idea that the "men" of verse 5 must represent only a very small number of persons the next paragraph in the book quotes Luke 12:32 which says: "Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." -page 11, par. 17. This scripture is quoted to give support to the teaching that only a "little flock" (144,000) are to be given the kingdom. This raises the question regarding the standard of the remaining millions of Jehovah's Witnesses? If, indeed, they are excluded from what the apostle says at 1 Timothy 2:5; and Christ does not mediate for them what is their standing with God? Here is how the Watchtower Society answers: "In ancient times, there were non-Jews, such as the Nethinim and the sons of non-Israelite servants of Solomon, who were associated with the nation of Israel. (Ezra 2:43-58; 8: 17-20) Similarly today, there are men and women who are wholly dedicated to God through Jesus Christ but who are not spiritual Israelites. They are, however, associated with the remnant of spiritual Israel because of dedicating themselves to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ, 'who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all.' (1 Timothy 2:6) Today, these far outnumber the 144,000 spiritual Israelites, who are to inherit the heavenly Kingdom." --*Ibid.* page 11, par. 18.

Thus is laid the foundation for all that follows in this 189-page book studied by the Witnesses to understand their present relationship with God and their hope for the future. Both the Abrahamic Promises and the New Covenant will be interpreted from this Watchtower perspective. The premise will not be challenged or discussed in depth. It will simply be accepted. To seriously question the Watchtower Society's interpretation would be viewed as both presumptuous and ungrateful if not disloyal to Jehovah God. Nevertheless, there is much to challenge in just the three paragraphs already considered.

Does it not seem strange to conclude that 1 Timothy 2:5 applies only to a few while the very next verse applies (according to the Watchtower Society) to

everyone? Is there anything in the immediate context to suggest such a conclusion? Doesn't the simple fact that the apostle is discussing the universality of the Gospel shine through in these verses? One of the first principles of Bible study is that the most obvious understanding be accepted unless the context suggests otherwise? In many respects the Bible ought to be read as we would read anything to understand the viewpoint of the writer. Bear in mind that the Bible is the *revealed* Word of God. That which is *revealed* doesn't call for further revelation. Especially is this the case in pastoral writings such as Paul's letter to his protégé Timothy. If we allow 1 Timothy 2: 1-6 to explain itself, problems of interpretation are eliminated. "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a • quiet and peaceful life, godly and respectful in every way. • This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time." -1 Timothy 2: 1-6 *Revised Standard Version*.

The propriety of praying for *all men* including rulers and others in high political office is validated by the fact that God's will is that *all men* be saved. It seems obvious that the "all men" mentioned in verses 1 and 4 would be included in the "men" mentioned in verse 5. The ransom Christ paid was for "all men" -not just a few. It appears that what we read in verses 1 through 6 ought to be understood as it reads and not apply limitations to parts of it. The opportunity to be reconciled with God through Jesus Christ and be saved is universal. (John 3: 16; Romans 5: 18) The clarity of verses 1 and 4 is somewhat clouded by the *New World Translation* which reads: "all sorts of men." But their *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* shows that the Greek means *all men* in these verses.

And what about the suggestion that only a "little flock" is to receive the kingdom? (Luke 12:32) At the time Jesus spoke these words his disciples were few in number. He was addressing these few and giving them encouragement. There is nothing to suggest that this little flock of disciples was to remain small. Nor does the discussion of him as the shepherd of the sheep found in John 10 indicate that there were to be two flocks~one small and the other large. "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those also I

must bring and they will become one flock, one shepherd." -John 10: 16 *New World Translation*. The disciples did not know at that time that Gentile believers would soon hear the great shepherd's voice and respond in faith. These "other sheep" were not in the "fold" (sheep pen) as was the nation of Israel under the Law Covenant but that would not prevent the great shepherd from gathering these to himself to form "one flock under one shepherd." -John 10: 16 *The Amplified New Testament*. Does it seem plausible that the "other sheep" Jesus here speaks of identifies a class of believers that would not be appearing on the earthly scene for nearly two thousand years? Keep in mind that the Jewish disciples were as yet unaware that Gentile believers would be united with them to form one Christian flock of kingdom inheritors. Years later, when men like the Gentile Cornelius and his household became Christians would not these Jewish disciples reflect on what the Lord had said earlier? Without forcing the conclusion seems obvious. (Acts 10:34-47)

Another question that presents itself in connection with those millions of Jehovah's Witnesses who are told that Jesus Christ is not their mediator is how can it be said that they are "wholly dedicated to God through Jesus Christ"? Does not the fact that such dedication is said to be *through* Jesus Christ demonstrate that he is their mediator? The Greek word used by the apostle Paul at 1 Timothy 2:5 translated mediator in English is *mesites* (from *Mesos*: meaning middle and *eimi*: meaning to go). It defines the role of a go-between two parties seeking peace. The Bible clearly teaches that peace with God can only be obtained through the person of Christ. (Acts 4: 12) To claim at the same time that you have made a dedication to God through Jesus Christ and at the same time say he is not your mediator is a contradictory statement. Note what the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, by Gerhard Kittel, says regarding the use of *mesites* at 1 Timothy 2:5:

"Here the mediator concept is Christianized. The statement confirms the universality of the divine will to save stated in v.4 ... He [Christ] is expressly called man to emphasize that he belongs to all who bear the face of man. The universal validity of His mediatorial self-offering to death gives all a share in salvation from God's standpoint. This saving act is the central theme of the apostolic witness addressed to all. The [mediator] is the One who represents God to men and men to God, and brings them together." -V.O. 4., page 619.

The Watchtower Society points out that Moses was not the "mediator between Jehovah God and mankind in general," and therefore "Jesus Christ is not the mediator between Jehovah God and all mankind." I believe this argument is scripturally refuted at 1 Timothy 2: 1-6. Furthermore, the covenant between Israel and God mediated by Moses is more often contrasted to the New Covenant than compared with it. The king-priest concept of the New Covenant is foreign to the Law Covenant. The Law mediated by Moses had a holy place on earth; the holy place of the New Covenant is in heaven. The Law had a written code; the New Covenant does not. (see Hebrews chapters 7 through 10) The Law was a temporary institution and designed to direct the seed of Abraham to Christ. (Galatians 3: 19) The Watchtower Society says that spiritual Israel is limited to 144,000 members. Where in the Bible does it say that? Does it say that at Revelation chapter 7 and 14? In chapter 7 of Revelation it speaks of 12,000 being sealed "out of" each of the 12 tribes listed. If these "tribes" represent "spiritual Israel" as the Society says they do then it would appear that there remain others in these tribes that are part of spiritual Israel. It doesn't say that there are *only 12,000* in each of these tribes. It only says that 12,000 are *taken out of each of these tribes*. Moreover, the book of Revelation is highly symbolic as the Watchtower Society well knows. To argue that the number 144,000 (12,000 X 12) must be taken literally while everything around it is symbolic is certainly debatable.

The Society has published four different commentaries on the book of Revelation in 71 years! *The finished Mystery* (1917), *Light*, 2 Vols. (1930), *Babylon the Great Has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules* (Rev. chaps. 14-22, 1963) *Then is Finished the Mystery of God* (Rev. chaps. 1-13, 1969) and *Revelation Its Grand Climax At Hand* (1988). Each of these four different commentaries claimed (claim) to represent God's revealed truth regarding this book. Each commentary contradicts 'truths' set forth in the one preceding it. Consider the shelf-life of each of these commentaries! What confidence could a reasonable person put in such 'scholarship'? Does it seem wise to accept Watchtower conclusions regarding the symbolic meanings of this book to radically alter the universality of the gospel of Jesus Christ? To do so does not appear to be the course of wisdom. Especially so when such interpretations are subject to revision and change over and over. again. • The Watchtower Society justifies such changes in interpretation by saying that the 'light keeps getting brighter.' (Proverbs 4:8) While reserving

the right to change their teachings they insist that whatever they teach at a given time must be accepted as truth and publicly preached as truth! Their history has demonstrated that what was viewed as 'light' (truth) was really darkness (error). Those persons religiously stumbled by errors in teaching and predictions are always discredited as not having the right attitude.

There is no numerical quota involved in who may or may not become a son of God. It is all conditioned on faith. In Romans, chapter 5, Paul contrasts the effect of two men on the human race--Adam and Jesus; Due to the sin of one man all were condemned to die but through the other forgiveness and life are made possible. This harmonizes well with the promise given to Abraham, namely, "In your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 22: 18) The "seed" here referred to is Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3: 16) The very first 'family' to receive that blessing was the natural descendants of Abraham--the nation of Israel. (Acts 3:25,26) Later, the Gentile nations or 'families' were blessed by this 'seed' so that God's promise to Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations," was fulfilled. (Romans 4: 17; Galatians 3:6-9; Genesis 17:5)

This fundamental Christian doctrine of redemption is confused in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses. The reason for the confusion is the Watchtower Society's teaching regarding the seed of Abraham through whom all families of the earth were to receive a blessing. While acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the promised seed (offspring) of Abraham through whom the blessings would come they enlarge this 'seed' to include the 144,000 that they say make up spiritual Israel--a secondary seed of Abraham along with Jesus Christ. Then they say: "If Christ and the 144,000 are the seed of Abraham who are the nations that are to be blessed by this seed?" In this way they create the need for another class of believers to be "blessed" in addition to the 'Israel of God.' But matters are not put that way in the New Testament. There is only one seed (singular) of Abraham through whom the blessings come:

"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. It says, not: 'And to seeds,' as in the case of many such, but as in the case of one: 'And to your seed,' who is Christ." -Galatians 3: 16 *New World Translation*. "You are all, in fact, sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ ... Moreover, if you belong to Christ, you are really Abraham's seed,

heirs with reference to a promise." -Galatians 3:26,29 *NWT*. "Surely you know that those who adhere to faith are the ones who are sons of Abraham. Now the Scripture, seeing in advance that God would declare people of the nations righteous due to faith, declared the good news beforehand to Abraham, namely: 'By me of you *all the nations will be blessed*.' 'Consequently those who adhere to faith *are being blessed* together with faithful Abraham.'" -Galatians 3:7-9 *NWT*.

It is not difficult to put the above statements by the apostle Paul in their proper perspective in relation to the promises given to Abraham. He was told that he would have a seed or offspring through whom the blessings would come. That seed proved to be *the* Christ. Abraham was also told that he would be the father of many nations. These, too, as the above texts show are all sons (seed) of Abraham. Because they put faith in Christ the Gentile believers were "being blessed" because they were drawn from among "all the nations" due to be blessed by means of Abraham. But their being sons of Abraham did not make them a part of the seed (singular) of promise which is Jesus Christ alone. By confusing this aspect of Paul's discussion they distort the gospel and make themselves, the Governing Body along with the thousands who claim to be sons of God, part of the "seed of promise" through which the blessings were to flow to others. Note how they weave this into their different gospel:

"So a new sheepfold had to be opened up to accommodate the spiritual sheep of the resurrected Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ. The self-sacrificing Fine Shepherd is also the symbolic door to this sheepfold. (John 10:7) Those brought into this new sheepfold under the Fine Shepherd become the spirit-begotten sons of the Greater Abraham and thus part of His 'seed.' (Romans 2:28,29) True to this fact, during these last days a remnant of that spiritual 'seed' has been serving as a blessing to increasing millions of people in more than 200 lands." - *Worldwide Security Under the Prince of Peace*, pages 80,81.

You'll note that they don't speak of themselves as *receiving a blessing* but rather are "*serving as a blessing*." In this way they have themselves sharing the role with Christ as the seed *through whom* the blessing would come. When you take into consideration that the Witnesses are taught that they have no mediator and that it is only by association with the Watchtower Society that they can receive God's blessing and approval it helps to understand the hold

that the organization has on these people. It also helps to explain the extreme difficulty many experience in getting a true perspective of their relationship with God once they leave the organization. Unless they have come to understand the real gospel of salvation in the process they may remain spiritually crippled the rest of their lives. This is but one of the bitter fruits that comes from putting faith in men and organizations. (Psalm 146:3,4)

Once a false premise is allowed to stand the Bible can be used to teach just about anything. Earlier mention was made that those whom the Watchtower Society call the "other sheep" were likened to the Nethinim and the sons of Solomon's servants in the nation of Israel. Not much is known about these people who are only briefly mentioned in the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah. How can it be scripturally established that such persons typified a class of believers appearing on the earth since 1935? Does the Bible confirm that conclusion or is it just assumed to be correct? The Society once listed 42 individuals or groups that they say typified these non-spiritual Israelites. Among those included on this list were: Lot and his daughters, the second set of 10 children born to Job, the queen of Sheba, Noah's sons and daughters-in-law, Joseph's 10 half-brothers, the seamen who shipped with Jonah, and the repentant Ninevites to name but a few. ( *You May Survive Armageddon into God's New World*, 1955, pages 367,368) What scriptural support is there for teaching that these were intended by God to serve as types? Just because a book written by uninspired men says they were hardly establishes the assertion as true. The course of wisdom would seem to suggest that the example of the Bereans be followed in such circumstances. (Acts 17: 11 )

It is relatively easy to take some prophetic writing and apply it in such a way that it appears to be undergoing modern fulfillment. An example of this is to be found in *Worldwide Security Under the Prince of Peace*. On page 88 application is made of the prophecy found at Zechariah 8:23: "In this 'conclusion of the system of things,' those spirit-begotten Christians, who are Jews on the inside with a circumcision of their hearts, make up the Jew class that is foretold at Zechariah 8:23, where it is written: 'This is what Jehovah of armies has said, It will be in those days that ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will actually take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew, saying: 'We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people.'

The book of Zechariah was written during the post exile period of Jewish history. About 50,000 exiles had returned to Jerusalem following their release from Babylon in 538 B.C. By 536 this repatriated community had laid the foundation for the rebuilding of Jehovah's temple. However, they allowed the opposition of their Samaritan neighbors to prevent them from completing the rebuilding work. About 16 years had elapsed since the laying of the temple's foundation when Zechariah was inspired to write in 520 B.C. A contemporary prophet, Haggai, also prophesied during this period. Zechariah addressed himself to the failure of the Jewish community to serve Jehovah God faithfully and uttered a series of prophecies that reinforced God's promised blessings on Jerusalem and its people. The book had an immediate application and value as well as a future one. A number of Zechariah's prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. The Watchtower Bible dictionary, *Aid to Bible Understanding*, (1969), draws attention to these:

"Numerous other prophecies contained in the book of Zechariah find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus-his entry into Jerusalem as king, 'humble, and riding upon an ass' (Zech.9:9; Matt.21:5; John 12: 15), his betrayal for 'thirty silver pieces' (Zech. 11: 12, 13; Matt.26: 15; 27 :9), the subsequent scattering of his disciples (Zech.1~:7; Matt.26:31; Mark 14:27), Jesus' being pierced with a spear while on the stake (Zech.12: 10; John 19:34,37) and his role as king-priest. -Zech.6: 12,13; Heb.6:20; 8: 1; 10:21" ~*Aid To Bible Understanding*, page 1685.

As can be seen from the above there were a number of striking fulfillments of Zechariah in connection with the Messiah. We know that beginning with Pentecost there was a remarkable display of God's power resting on the apostles and other disciples of the Lord. People of all nations began to be drawn to this new religious movement. Especially was this so from the time of Cornelius' conversion. It would seem likely that what we read at Zechariah 8:23 regarding 'ten men taking hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew' was also fulfilled during this period. In fact we do find a link between this text and what we read at 1 Corinthians 14:25:

"Tongues then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever

or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" -1 Corinthians 14:22-25 *New International Version*.

A number of translations have cross references in connection with the last clause in the above quotation. Four different translations key the phrase; "God is really among you!" with Isaiah 45:16 and Zechariah 8:23. These several translations are : *New International Version, Jerusalem Bible, King James Version, and New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* [1950 edition]. It seems obvious, therefore, that a number of translators felt there was a direct relationship between what had been prophesied by Zechariah at 8:23 and what was happening with the Christian church in the first century. The great influx of Gentiles was in keeping with the fact that Christ Jesus was to "stand as a banner for the peoples," and that "the nations will rally to him." (Isaiah 11: 10) They were rallying to those called "the Israel of God" -Jesus' collective body of disciples.

The point of all this is simply to demonstrate that prophecies can be made to fit different situations. These applications can stimulate thinking and reflection as we await the final outcome of events relating to God's prophetic word. (2 Peter 1: 19) Oftentimes prophecies are not understood clearly until after the fact. Many of the things Jesus said and did were not fully appreciated from the prophetic standpoint by his disciples until after his resurrection. (Matthew 16:21-

23) Sometimes events in history are thought to fulfill certain prophecies. This was true of the French Revolution that changed the course of European history and broke the power of the Roman Catholic Church. Many 19th century expositors linked these events with prophetic utterances found in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Even though the events could be made to *fit* the prophecy the expectations created thereby led to false prognostication and disappointment. The lesson to be learned from this is that because something fits a certain Bible prophecy that does not necessarily mean it represents the true fulfillment.

We may see something in world events that seems to fulfill a certain prophecy. We may even speak of it and offer our opinion as to what we think it means. But we should be extremely careful to avoid dogmatism. Nor should we conclude that those brothers who do not see matters as we do are somehow lacking in spiritual discernment. Modesty would dictate that we merely express our thoughts and then patiently await the outcome. Speaking dogmatically and insisting that all others see matters in the same unquestioning way only serves to further divide and fragment Christ's disciples. It often glorifies error preached in God's name and stumbles those careless enough to be caught in its trap. If we content ourselves to focus on those issues of life and worship clearly defined in the Bible we will not stray far in our walk of faith .• While continuing to give attention to the prophetic word and praying for the early return of our Lord we will wait patiently (for God to act. according to his time-table not ours or someone else's.(ActsJ:6-8) □