

I would like to preface this letter by stating that I was raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses and that I have been baptized for 35 years. I wish to express my gratitude for all the remarkable and wonderful people I have been able to get to know as a result. I will always cherish the scores of good memories with friends, conversations over campfires, spending time together in nature, and discussing God's word, Bible history, and future possibilities. I am deeply appreciative for the times I was generously helped by friends when I was seriously ill. I also would be amiss if I did not express praise where it is due, for all the good which individual Jehovah's Witnesses are doing—introducing people to the Bible, taking a sincere personal interest in others who need help and helping them in practical ways, and hopefully being kind in an unkind world.

From a young age, I was instructed to cultivate and train my conscience according to the Bible and its principles. My conscience has been increasingly troubled by the chasm separating what I read in the scriptures from the teachings of the publications of JWs. It has reached a point where I can no longer in good conscience ignore the discrepancies. I present them below. Although not an exhaustive list, I feel this presents most of the main issues.

Part 1, Teachings which conflict with irrefutable evidence from secular history

The Fall of Jerusalem was 587/6, not 607 BCE.

(This contains a lot of detail from secular history and archaeology. The TL;DR version is that secular evidence solidly establishes 587/6 as the date of the fall of Jerusalem.) There was a two-part series of articles in the Watchtower magazine in 2011 which asserted that 607 BC is the date which secular archaeological evidence and the Bible uphold as the established date for the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. But the article repeatedly used straw man fallacies to frame its argument—falsely represent contrary evidence, then undermine that misrepresentation. The spotlight was placed on Berossus' *Chaldaica* and Ptolemy's Royal Canon as the supposedly main sources of historical information and also focused on VAT4956. A claim

was made that a lunar eclipse recorded on VAT4956 actually refers to another eclipse which occurred ~20 years 3 months earlier, and that this was a tidy explanation for shoring up 607 as the correct date. The article also used false equivalency: Stating that 607 is the date “the Bible supports” when in reality the Bible contains no absolute dates and any researcher requires secular history and secular evidence outside of the Bible to establish dates. 607 is based entirely on speculative private interpretation. Regarding the claim that the lunar eclipse of VAT4956 occurred approximately 20 years 3 months earlier, thus providing a plausible explanation for a discrepancy of 20 years, this does not hold up upon research. The lunar eclipse of July 15, 588 BCE was recorded by the Babylonians on another cuneiform tablet, BM 38462, No. 1420 in A. Sachs’ LBAT catalogue, and No. 6 in H. Hunger’s *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia (ADT)*, Vol. V (Wien, 2001). The entry containing the record of the July 15, 588 BCE eclipse (obverse, lines 16-18) is dated to year 17, not year 37, of Nebuchadnezzar! This entry reports two lunar eclipses in this year, one “omitted” and one observed. The first, “omitted” one, which refers to the eclipse of July 15, 588, is dated to month IV (Duzu), not to month III (Simanu). So it cannot be the eclipse dated to month III on VAT 4956. That this eclipse really is the one of July 15, 588 is confirmed by the detailed information given about the second, observed lunar eclipse, which is dated to month X (Tebetu) of year 17. Proposing that the eclipse which occurred approximately 20 years earlier provides a satisfying explanation to account for a discrepancy of 20 years of history proves entirely untenable under scrutiny. The Watchtower article then resorted to glaring and deliberate omission of and suppression of multiple independent unassailable lines of evidence, several of which are first-hand contemporary sources:

- I. The Uruk King’s list
- ii. NeoBabylonian Chronicles, including the Nabonidus Chronicle (BM35382) linking Nabonidus’ 6th year with Cyrus’ defeat of Astyages and the capture of Ecbatana. All the following are firsthand contemporary sources:

Iii. Nabonidus (no.18) gem: 2nd year of Nabonidus is astronomically fixed to 554/553 by a distinct lunar eclipse whereupon the moon set whilst eclipsed on Ululu 3.

Iv. Hillah Steele (No.8) From Nabopolassar's 16th year to the accession year of Nabonidus is 54 years.

V. Adad-Guppi Stele contains the reigns of all Neo-Babylonian kings (with the exception of Labashi-Marduk, as he reigned for only 2-3 months).

Vi. business, administrative, legal documents FROM EACH YEAR for the entire duration of the Neo-Babylonian period. Hundreds of corroborative cuneiform documents for EACH KING

Vii. Careers of great houses, temples, or individuals with kings' ruling years as dates for the transactions. Family records include the Nur-Sin family and the Egibi family (the Neo-Babylonian analog of the Rothschilds, if you will). Temple archives include the Eanna temple to Ishtar at Uruk and the Ebabbar temple to Shamash at Sippar. Some of these documents tracing the history of individuals or families source not only from Uruk and Larsa, but also from Borsippa and Ur.

Viii. Documents spanning the reign of 2 successive kings, thus enabling us to lock in the regnal sequence with yet another means of confirmation

Ix. Corroboration with contemporary Egyptian Chronology. Contemporary Egypt recorded the death stelae of the sacred Apis bulls throughout the Saite period and the 26th dynasty. This documentation used the year of the reigning Pharaoh as a reference point. Other documents, both Egyptian and Babylonian, record interactions, including military campaigns, between the Pharaohs and the Neo-Babylonian Kings, enabling us to corroborate who was ruling in both Egypt and Babylon and when. At at least 3 points, we can also corroborate with the reigns of the Judean Kings according the Bible: 2 Kings 23:29, Jeremiah 46:2, and Jeremiah 44:30.

It should be noted that the Bible never says the Jews would be exiled at Babylon for 70 years. If we simply read what is stated, consider the context, compare it to relevant references, and let the scriptures speak for themselves, we arrive at the conclusion that the 70 years mentioned at

Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10 were of Babylon's dominance over the surrounding nations. As was observed in the Watchtower 2011 10/1 pp. 26-31:

“According to secular chronology, the Babylonians dominated the land of ancient Judah and Jerusalem for some 70 years, from about 609 B.C.E. until 539 B.C.E. when the capital city of Babylon was captured.” What, then, of the period of the desolation of Jerusalem? How does it fit into this? The 70 years of desolation for Jerusalem mentioned at Zechariah 1:12 and 7:1-7 refer especially to the status of the temple and run from the destruction of the temple to its rebuilding (approximately 586 to 516).

Let us consider these passages. First, let us read Zechariah 1:12 (dated the second year of Darius the Great, which according to Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 2 p. 1225, is 520 BCE):

12 So the angel of Jehovah said: “O Jehovah of armies, how long will you withhold your mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with whom you have been indignant these 70 years?

The question is answered in verse 16:

16 “Therefore this is what Jehovah says: “I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and my own house will be built in her,” declares Jehovah of armies, “and a measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem.”

When the angel asks when this ongoing period of Jehovah's indignance and withholding of mercy will end, the answer given is that Jehovah's merciful return will be associated with the building of his own house. Ezra 6:8 documents that they completed the house in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. This is relevant, because we had established earlier that the second year of Darius corresponds to 520 BCE. So four years later, the sixth year of Darius' reign, corresponds to ~516 BCE as the year of the completion of the temple.

Now let us draw our attention to Zechariah 7:1-7:

1 And in the fourth year of King Da·ri'us, the word of Jehovah came to Zech·a·ri'ah on the fourth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Chis'lev.

2 The people of Beth'el sent Shar·e'zer and Re'gem-mel'ech and his men to beg for the favor of Jehovah, 3 saying to the priests of the house of Jehovah of armies and to the prophets: “Should I weep in the fifth month and abstain from food, as I have done for so many years?” 4 The word of Jehovah of armies again came to me, saying: 5 “Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, ‘When you fasted

and wailed in the fifth month and in the seventh month for 70 years, did you really fast for me? 6 And when you would eat and drink, were you not eating for yourselves and drinking for yourselves? 7 Should you not obey the words that Jehovah proclaimed through the former prophets, while Jerusalem and her surrounding cities were inhabited and at peace, and while the Neg'eb and the She-phe'lah were inhabited?"

What events mentioned in verse 5 were the priests remembering, grieving over, and commemorating with fasting?

The Watchtower 96 11/15 p. 5 on the topic of fasting explains:

"...at one time the people of Judah had four annual fasts to commemorate the calamitous events associated with Jerusalem's siege and desolation..."

We can observe that the date of this passage in Zechariah 7 is the fourth year of Darius, or 518 BCE. If the destruction of Jerusalem occurred in 587/586 (more on this later), then the priests' inquiry makes sense—they were drawing close to the end of that 70 year period. But if the destruction of Jerusalem occurred in 607 BCE, then we have a period of 90 years. We cannot explain it away by claiming that as soon as some of the Jews returned in Cyrus' first year that the 70 year period was over, for the entire book of Zechariah clearly shows through the questions asked, answers given, and narration provided that the period of denunciation was ongoing and was not a matter of terminating as soon as the ruined city was sparsely populated but rather was closely associated with Jehovah's choosing of Jerusalem, returning to Jerusalem with favor and mercy and the rebuilding of the temple. The allusions to the 70 years mentioned at Daniel 9 and 2 Chronicles 36 refer to Jeremiah's words and are not prophecies in of themselves. To review: There was an initial period of 70 years of Babylon's dominance over surrounding nations from ~609 (sack of Harran) to 539 (Persian conquest of Babylon) (Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10). There was a period of 70 years from the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in ~587/6 to the completion of the rebuilding of the temple in ~517/6. Multiple independent lines of cuneiform evidence and their accompanying astronomical evidence confirm that Jerusalem fell in 587/6.

Part 2, Teachings which conflict with the Bible

Prophecies regarding 1914 are sheer private interpretation.

Daniel 4 states that the prophecy of the chopped tree was fulfilled on Nebuchadnezzar with no hint at a 'secondary fulfillment' or 'greater fulfillment'. Moreover, the Aramaic term for 'times' ('iddan) may have referred to months or seasons (not necessarily years), and there is nothing whatsoever in the Bible to connect it with the 'trampling' of Jerusalem by the nations/Gentiles.

Prophecies regarding 1914 did not originate with the IBSAs or JWs.

For the origins of 1914, I recommend looking up the theories of John Aquila Brown (especially *The Even-Tide*), William Miller (especially his 1843 Prophetic Chart), and Nelson Barbour.

None of Russell's prophecies and predictions for 1914 came true.

Russell co-authored publications with Barbour and completely espoused his views on prophecy, despite the fact that the Second Advent of Christ had been predicted by Barbour in 1874. When Christ failed to show, Barbour changed the narrative to claim it was an 'invisible' presence and that he had gotten it right after all. Regarding 1914, Russell proclaimed that the final battle would occur, the saints would be gathered to heaven, the kingdoms of the earth would be overthrown, and the millennial rule of Christ would begin. When Christ failed to show, the narrative was gradually changed to claim it was an 'invisible' presence and that he had gotten it right after all. The date 1874 was changed to 1914, and the new narrative was ready to be spun, despite the fact that there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that 1914 was in any way significant.

Christ began ruling in 33 CE, not 1914.

The scriptures are crystal clear about this.

Christ received kingly authority in 33 CE. Christ himself testified at Matthew 28:18 that *all* authority had been given him in heaven and on earth. *All* authority, meaning there was no withholding of authority or that there would be more to give at some point nearly 2,000 years in the future. 1 Timothy 1: 15 says of Christ: "He is the King of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords..." Christ is identified in Revelation 1:5 as "the Ruler of the kings of the earth". Christ was depicted in the scriptures throughout the first century following 33 CE as standing at his father's right

hand in heaven or having sat down on his throne at his father's right hand in heaven. Acts 7: 55,56 Stephen witnessed 'the heavens opened up and the Son of man standing at God's right hand.' Hebrews 1:3 'after he had made a purification for our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.' Hebrews 8:1 'he has sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.' Revelation 3:21 'to the one who conquers I will grant to sit down with me on my throne, just as I conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.'

God's Kingdom, the government with Christ as its reigning king, has been active since 33 CE. Colossians 1: 13 "He rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son." The kingdom was actively being used as God's means of salvation in the first century. Since the scriptures never mention Christ ruling over *multiple separate kingdoms* for the sake of the salvation of humankind, this verse is quite clear: The messianic kingdom was active in the first century, with Christ as its head and reigning king.

Psalm 110:1,2 was fulfilled in 33 CE, which is to say that Christ began ruling in 33 CE. Psalm 110:1,2 'Jehovah declared to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet." 2 Jehovah will extend the scepter of your power out of Zion, saying: "Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.'" Compare this with the explanation in Ephesians 1:20-22: "20 which he exercised toward Christ when he raised him up from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named, not only in this system of things but also in that to come. 22 He also subjected all things under his feet and made him head over all things with regard to the congregation, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills up all things in all."

This passage offers no ambiguity: All things were subjected under Christ's feet in the first century CE. (However, it should be noted that attempting to somehow use Psalm 110 as a disclaimer that, although sitting on the throne and having received all authority including kingly authority, Christ did not begin ruling at that time because of a technicality in the wording of a poetic prophecy from a thousand years prior seems...desperate and far-fetched.)

Satan was cast out of heaven in 33 CE.

Revelation 12:1-6 describes a symbolic woman of celestial origin giving birth to a male child who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. (Reference Psalm 2:6-9 and Revelation 2:26,27—the male child is Christ, who already possesses the iron rod in the vision given in Revelation.) The dragon (identified in v. 9 as Satan) sought to devour this male child at birth. We have already seen that the scriptures clearly state that Christ received all power in 33 CE—far above all other kings and rulers. So this symbolism of depicting Christ as an infant would hardly be appropriate after that time. As for when Satan would be cast out of heaven down to the earth, note what the decisive factor was in this victory. Revelation 12:7-12 contains the account; verse 11 provides this particular detail: “And they conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witnessing, and they did not love their souls even in the face of death.” Verse 10 adds additional details as to when this occurred: “Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down, who accuses them day and night before our God!” So we have multiple coinciding lines of evidence in these passages pointing to 33 CE as being the time of salvation, power, the authority of the Christ, the Kingdom of God, and the debasing of Satan. But this really should not come as a surprise. After all, did not Christ himself make statements during his ministry on earth supporting this? Luke 10:17,18 “Then the 70 returned with joy, saying: “Lord, even the demons are made subject to us by the use of your name.” 18 At that he said to them: “I see Satan already fallen like lightning from heaven.” This prescient glimpse was clarified and reiterated: John 12:31 “Now there is a judging of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” The day had nearly arrived when Christ’s life would be offered in atonement. This sacrifice would be the basis for judgement and for the ruler of the world to be debased—not some imagined prophecy postponing it for another 1900 years. Note the consistent pattern which the scriptures demonstrate: Satan, the constant accuser of God’s faithful servants, was conquered because of the blood of the Lamb. This was accomplished upon God’s acceptance of Christ’s ransom and coincided with Christ coming into his authority as King of God’s kingdom. All of the aforementioned came to pass in 33 CE.

The ‘last days’ began in 33 CE.

Peter was inspired to quote Joel’s prophecy regarding the last days which foretold God’s spirit being poured out on sons and daughters at Acts 2:17. He applied it to the events of Pentecost 33 CE. At any rate, Christians are told repeatedly regarding Jehovah’s day that there are times which the Father keeps in his jurisdiction and that such ‘does not belong’ to us as followers of Christ. Instead we are admonished simply to ‘keep ready’ and ‘keep on the watch’. We are still living in the last days, after all.

What JWs refer to as the ‘sign of the times’ in Matthew 24: 4-8 and Luke 21:8-11 has no significance in predicting the approach of Jehovah’s day.

After being asked the tripartite question which led to the Olivet discourse, Christ basically said, “Here’s what will happen first—some phenomena will occur which might make you think the world is ending. Ignore those things, they must happen first but they are just a beginning of pangs of distress (despite how things may seem)”. Luke 21:9: “Furthermore, when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified. For these things must take place first, but the end will not occur immediately.” Matthew 24: 6-8: “You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet.” Luke 21:7,8: “7 For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. 8 All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress.” Even if someone were to somehow reject Peter’s words in Acts 2 affirming that the last days began in 33 CE, it would be scripturally inaccurate to point to wars, reports of wars, great earthquakes, food shortages, and infectious pestilence as being in any way proof indicating that the end is nigh. Christ stated clearly that such things must take place first and that the end is *not yet*.

Christ specifically warned against false anointed ones claiming an invisible return of Christ, but rather said his return would be readily apparent.

Matthew 24: 23-27 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look! Here is the Christ,’ or, ‘There!’ do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones. 25 Look! I have forewarned you. 26 Therefore, if people say to you, ‘Look!

He is in the wilderness,' do not go out; 'Look! He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For just as the lightning comes out of the east and shines over to the west, so the presence of the Son of man will be." The word used for 'Christ' literally means 'anointed one'. Verse 24 is warning regarding false anointed ones performing signs so as to mislead the chosen ones. Verse 26 warns Christians against believing teachings about Christ's return being secret, invisible, or in a hidden place. Rather, verse 27 says his coming will be a visible, unmistakable event.

'Parousia' in ancient Greek refers to a king's arrival, the formal arrival or visit of a monarch or ruler to a city.

This is common knowledge among Bible translators and scholars. More important than the exact word used in English (presence, advent, coming, arrival) is understanding that it conveys the concept of a monarch arriving *in full regal pomp in person as an official visit.*

The 'critical times hard to deal with' in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 refer to situations within the Christian congregation which arose beginning in Timothy's time.

Note the mention of men who go on opposing the truth in verse 8. Paul says they will 'make no further progress' in verse 9. The 2013 NWT study bible study note relates that Paul had warned the overseers in Ephesus of the arrival of false teachers (Acts 20:29,30). But, just as Jannes and Jambres initially had a measure of success in the court of Pharaoh but were ultimately disproved and disgraced, so it would prove to be with the false teachers in Ephesus in the first century. Paul counsels Timothy in verse 5, "Have nothing to do with such people." (NIV) This entire passage describes *conditions within the congregation in Ephesus in the first century* and it is inaccurate to strictly apply them to modern times as a prophecy.

The number of the spirit-anointed children of God is far greater than 144,000.

Galatians 4:27 'For it is written: "Be glad, you barren woman who does not give birth; break into joyful shouting, you woman who does not have birth pains; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of her who has the husband.'"

For context, I encourage the reader to read Galatians 4. This is an example of an explicit type/antitype in the scriptures. The children of the barren

woman (Sarah) correspond to the spirit-anointed adoptive children of God, and the children of the woman with the husband (Hagar) are literal Jews, the literal nation of Israel during the mid-first century. According to Josephus, when Jerusalem fell after intense internecine factional strife, prolonged siege-induced famine, and war, about 1.1 million Jews died and about 100,000 survivors were sold into slavery. But the 'children of the desolate woman', spirit-anointed Christians, outnumber those according to Galatians 4:27. Do we find any other passages confirming this?

Hosea 1:10,11 "And the number of the people of Israel will be like the grains of sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it will be said to them, 'The sons of the living God.' 11 And the people of Judah and of Israel will be gathered together into unity and will choose for themselves one head and go up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jez're-el."

Paul quotes Hosea's words above and applies them to spirit-anointed Christians. Romans 9:23-26:

"23 And if this was done to make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory, 24 namely, us, whom he called not only from among Jews but also from among nations, what of it? 25 It is as he says also in Ho-se'a: "Those not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not loved, 'beloved'; 26 and in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

Peter also quotes Hosea's words, also applying them to spirit-anointed Christians. 1 Peter 2:9,10:

"9 But you are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies" of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 For you were once not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not been shown mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Please note that Hosea was inspired to foretell that the number of these spirit-anointed children of God would be like the grains of sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.

Regarding the 144,000 bought from the earth, Revelation 14:4 describes them as "*firstfruits* to God and to the Lamb", implying that the group numbering 144,000 (which may be literal or symbolic) constitutes only a small part of the sum of the spirit-anointed children of God. As this group

of 144,000 is described as being sealed out of the tribes of Israel, this harmonizes with the pattern of the ingathering of the spirit-adopted children of God beginning in 33 CE. The invitation was initially given to literal Israelites/Jews, then Samaritans, then people of all tribes and peoples and nations.

The ‘other sheep’ of John 10:16 are spirit-anointed Christians gathered from the nations (non-Jews).

John 10:16: “And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those too I must bring in, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd.”

Ephesians 2: 14-18: “For he is our peace, the one who made the two groups one and destroyed the wall in between that fenced them off. 15 By means of his flesh he abolished the enmity, the Law of commandments consisting in decrees, in order to make the two groups in union with himself into one new man and to make peace, 16 and to reconcile fully both peoples in one body to God through the torture stake, because he had killed off the enmity by means of himself. 17 And he came and declared the good news of peace to you who were far off, and peace to those near, 18 because through him we, both peoples, have free access to the Father by one spirit.”

Ephesians 4:4-6: “One body there is, and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

This is a significant thought—that there is only one hope and one baptism for all Christians. It coincides with and agrees with all other passages in the Christian Greek scriptures which speak of the hope which Christians hold dear.

The new covenant is for all mankind, with Christ as a mediator for all.

1 Timothy 2: 5,6: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all—this is what is to be witnessed to in its own due time.” This passage states that Christ’s ransom was for *all* and that Christ is mediator, not for a select group, but between God and men.

The ‘great crowd’ of Revelation 5, 7, and 19 are kings and priests. They serve God in his temple sanctuary and are also described as ruling on the earth.

Revelation 7:9-12:

‘After this I saw, and look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. 10 And they keep shouting with a loud voice, saying: “Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.” 11 All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying: “Amen! Let the praise and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”’

This group is different from the 144,000 mentioned in the preceding verses which are sealed from the tribes of Israel; this group is from all nations, tribes, and tongues. This group shouts with a loud voice. They are described as being in the setting of the vision of Revelation chapter 4 and 5—before the throne, the Lamb, the elders, the four living creatures, and the angels. This is in heaven, before God’s throne and the glassy sea. Verse 15 adds a few details: “15 That is why they are before the throne of God, and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them.”

A number of translations render ‘temple’ as ‘sanctuary’, as the Greek word used is not ‘hieron’, which refers to the entire temple complex, but ‘naos’, which refers to the innermost part of the temple. Not only does this great crowd worship God in a heavenly setting, they worship in the innermost part of the temple—the sanctuary. Revelation 5: 9,10 adds details as to this great crowd, clarifying in which capacity they will serve, and where: “9 And they sing a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slaughtered and with your blood you bought people for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.”

This group cannot be the 144,000, as the 144,000 are explicitly sealed from the tribes of Israel. This passage refers to the great crowd bought with Christ’s blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. They are a kingdom and are priests. Interestingly, the New World Translation is the only one which renders ‘epi’ as ‘over’ in this verse. Every other translation translates it as ‘on the earth’ or ‘upon the earth’. Is this a contradiction? They seem to be described as serving God in heaven, in the sanctuary, but are also described as ruling on the earth. Compare

Revelation 21:2-5 “I also saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them. 4 And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.” 5 And the One seated on the throne said: “Look! I am making all things new.” Can faithful spirit beings rule upon the earth and reside on the earth and be with mankind and still be described as serving God in his temple? Revelation 21 seems to imply just that. Personally, I don’t wish to be dogmatic. I also feel it would be inappropriate to restrict our understanding of this topic to a black/white strict binary either/or interpretation, as the scriptures seem to allow for both conditions to be true. Perhaps we shall see in the fullness of time. We know Christ took a physical form and interacted with his disciples on earth following his resurrection as an immortal spirit creature who dwells in unapproachable light. We also know that faithful angels were at times dispatched to take physical forms and interact with humans on earth. It will be interesting to see, God willing. Back to Revelation 7 for a moment. Verse 14 adds this regarding the great crowd: “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation...”. It is interesting that John did not request clarification; he seemed to understand that expression. Was he understanding this to refer to the ‘great tribulation such has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again’ of Matthew 24:21, which befell Jerusalem in 70 CE? Contextually, that hardly makes sense. Christ referred to that in the context of Judea (v 16) and the sabbath day (v 20) and specifically defined it as a one-time event; moreover, the great crowd is not Jewish. We can use a concordance and look up ‘tribulation’. Time and again when tribulation is mentioned in the Greek scriptures, it refers to the lifelong trials of worshippers of God and followers of Christ, so that is one possibility. Revelation 19 (I recommend reading the entire chapter for context) describes another explanation, although the term ‘great tribulation’ is not applied to this event. Verses 1,2: ‘After this I heard what seemed to be a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven. They said: “Praise Jah! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, 2 because his judgments are true and righteous. For he has executed judgment on the great prostitute who

corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his slaves that is on her hands.” As was earlier mentioned, the great crowd in Revelation 7 are in heaven and shout with a loud voice. Is this what John hears in Revelation 19:1? It would seem so, but I don’t wish to be dogmatic. At any rate, this group reports that judgment has been executed upon the great prostitute of Revelation 17. Is this event the ‘great tribulation’ which the great crowd of Revelation 7 ‘come out’ of? The bible provides clues and, I believe, an answer, but it is beyond the scope of this letter. Suffice to say that according to Revelation, the great crowd is shown as serving God in heaven in his temple sanctuary, as being a kingdom of priests, and of ruling as kings upon the earth and interacting with mankind.

The word ‘Christian’ means ‘anointed one’. There is no such thing as a non-anointed Christian.

According to Acts 11:26, ‘it was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians’. Surely if there was another class of disciples who were not part of the new covenant and who had a different hope we would find evidence of this with this group’s name and designation being stated. Instead we read that there is one hope, one baptism, all had the hope of eventually being resurrected as spirit creatures and being with Christ, and all were known by one name or designation.

All baptized followers of Christ in clean spiritual standing are commanded to partake of the Lord’s evening meal.

John 6:53, 54: “So Jesus said to them: “Most truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I will resurrect him on the last day.”

Luke 22:19-20: “Also, he took a loaf, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying: “This means my body, which is to be given in your behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” 20 Also, he did the same with the cup after they had the evening meal, saying: “This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in your behalf.”

We read in 1 Timothy 2:5,6 that Christ is the mediator between God and men—a corresponding ransom for all. It should be noted that Christ’s words at John 6 and his command to his apostles at Luke 22 were both given before he had offered up his life as a ransom. So *even before his followers*

had received their anointing by holy spirit, they were commanded to partake of the Lord's evening meal. Those who are not baptized or who do not understand Christ's ransom should not partake until they understand and are baptized. At 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, Paul instructs all Christians to examine themselves so as to avoid partaking in an unworthy manner. Other than these few exceptions, all followers of Christ are commanded to partake of the bread and the wine when commemorating the Lord's evening meal.

The Bible does not teach that God kills every last non-worshipper at Armageddon.

Revelation 19:17-19 describes a great military host fighting against Christ in his role as a Warrior-King: "I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven: "Come here, be gathered together to the great evening meal of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of military commanders and the flesh of strong men and the flesh of horses and of those seated on them, and the flesh of all, of freemen as well as of slaves and of small ones and great." 19 And I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the one seated on the horse and against his army."

Assuming the coalition associated with Gog of Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 refers to the same event, note that again the targets of divine wrath are those who arm themselves and fight against the heavenly hosts, those who actively associate themselves with this army. Ezekiel 39: 3,4: "I will knock your bow out of your left hand and make your arrows fall from your right hand. On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the peoples who will be with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of birds of prey and the wild beasts of the field.""

Christ and his army vanquishes this military force. Those who actively fight against the King of Kings and stand with the armies of Gog are killed.

Interestingly, when Satan is abyssed for 1,000 years in Revelation 20, verse 3 tells us why this is done: "so that he would not mislead the nations anymore until the 1,000 years were ended." The scriptures do not paint a nearly indiscriminate bloodbath with a kill rate of well over 99% of all humans, but rather speak of all *political powers* being crushed into oblivion and of the *armies fighting against Christ* as being slain. Think too of how Christ was moved with compassion and performed lifesaving miracles for Gentiles who knew little or nothing of the good news which he taught, but

who displayed a receptive heart. Think of his promise of paradise to the criminal hanging next to him at the time of his execution. The man had berated him just moments before and evidently had little knowledge of the holy writings or Christ's teaching. We see the mercy and compassion which reflected God's dealings with ancient Nineveh, who were shown patience and mercy because they had acted in ignorance—just as Saul of Tarsus once did. Think of the billions—yes, billions—living in nations which forbid the preaching of the gospel. Those born there and living there currently have no legitimate opportunity to hear the good news. Abraham pleaded with Yahweh at Genesis 18 regarding just a few righteous ones possibly being swept away with the wicked. I feel it is a gross misrepresentation of the scriptures and of the personality of Christ to teach people that God will kill (nearly) everyone who is not a JW at Armageddon and that they are consigned to eternal destruction. Instead, the scriptures at least leave the possibility that many individuals will live through that time period and continue to dwell on the earth and that they will benefit from the kingdom and from interaction with the kings ruling upon the earth—the spirit anointed brothers and sisters of Christ, the 144,000 and the great crowd. If we are unsure of what will happen in that great battle, it is best to simply show people the relevant passages and admit that we will have to wait and see. Certainly that seems a more prudent and discreet alternative to emphatically declaring that Christ will simply summarily execute all non-worshippers at that time, with no hope of a resurrection.

Matthew 24:14 has already been fulfilled and is not dependent on the actions of JWs.

Matthew 24:14 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (NIV) What is this message, this gospel? What was Christ speaking of here? Recall that the gospel of Christ was so straightforward that its essence was communicated within a matter of hours to former non-believers on multiple occasions. At Acts 16:30-34, we read of an episode whereupon Paul and Silas ‘spoke the word of Jehovah to him together with all those in his house’ and ‘he and his entire household were baptized without delay’. At Acts 8, the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized after a single conversation with Philip. At Acts 2, we read of 3,000 people accepting Peter's words and being

baptized (these were Jews, already familiar with the Law of Moses). The core message of the gospel is simple and powerful. It is not complicated and no single religion can lay claim to it; only Christ can do that. Regarding the extent of the preaching of the good news, at Colossians 1:23, we read Paul describe the extent of the spread of the gospel at that time: "...not being shifted away from the hope of that good news that you heard and that was preached in all creation under heaven." In more modern times, between global efforts to translate and print Bibles and using various mass media and outreach programs to spread the message, the core message of the gospel of Christ has effectively been made available to at least ~75% of the global population (the remaining ~25% live in nations which forbid the gospel from being freely proclaimed). Any efforts which JW's make to continue to translate (accurately) and proclaim the gospel are definitely praiseworthy and excellent, but it is not accurate to assert that JW's are the only ones fulfilling Matthew 24:14.

JW's preach 'something beyond the good news'.

Galatians 1:8,9: "However, even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to you as good news something beyond the good news we declared to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, I now say again, Whoever is declaring to you as good news something beyond what you accepted, let him be accursed."

When Paul was inspired to write these strong words, the good news which was being declared was that Christ was reigning as king, that Christ's ransom was our salvation and that we can gain forgiveness of our sins and be adopted as spirit-begotten children of God. Christians need to worship God, to love one another, to treat others as we wish to be treated, and need to love our enemies. There were evidently questions regarding the future and their hope, but they knew they would be with Christ upon their resurrection, serving under him as kings and priests.

JW's preach that Christ just recently started ruling, that he uses a small group of men to interpret the meaning of the Bible and oversee and govern all aspects of Christians' spiritual lives. They assert that there are 2 classes of Christians, that there are different hopes for Christians, and that the new covenant is only for a small number of Christians—everyone else can try to be God's friends. The New Testament was written almost entirely for the

144,000 Christians and there have been less than 144,000 true Christians from the first century until ~1935. Their message relies heavily on creating a sense of urgency based on two main factors—Armageddon is close (again) and Armageddon will result in a kill rate of well over 99%. If we compare the original good news with the good news which JW's proclaim, how can we draw any other conclusion other than to say that they preach 'something beyond'? The first century disciples never once mentioned anything about 1914, never proclaimed two hopes for Christians, and did not have a pope, cardinals, or a governing body.

A Christian can live up to Christ's command to 'make disciples' without ever going door-to-door.

House-to-house preaching was not a mainstay activity of first century Christians according to the Bible. Let us be clear; Christ definitely commanded his followers to make disciples. But the way in which this is interpreted by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses to mean 'predominantly cold canvassing from door to door' is not in harmony with scripture. There are over 30 references to preaching in the temple, marketplaces, and synagogues. Only 3 to "houses". Let us look closer at how many translations translate that phrase and what it actually means. A few Bibles render Paul's words at Acts 20:20 and Acts 5:42 as saying that he taught 'from house to house'. But that is actually a mistranslation. The Greek words were actually '*kat oikous*', literally, 'according to house'. There is actually no mention in the Greek source text of moving between houses. This is why many Bibles translate this as 'at home', 'in every home', 'in various homes', and so forth. (I recommend [Biblehub](#) for a synoptic comparison.) In light of the above, dogmatic authoritative statements such as "door to door was the main preaching method used by the first century disciples" are patently false, according to the Bible. It hardly seems appropriate to rate someone's "spirituality" or "faith" based on their participation in an activity which was not a mainstay of first century Christians. Worth noting: When comparing Luke 10 and Matthew 10, the disciples were given specific instructions to NOT go transferring from house to house, but were advised to stay in one home with one family until they left that village. It is also worth noting that not all Christians were known as evangelizers, according to Ephesians 4:11-12: "And he gave some

as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ,...". They were not disciplined, criticized, or berated for not being an evangelizer; Paul simply states it as a fact. All were to be appreciated for their individual contribution to the congregation. Recall that many members in the first-century congregations were slaves in Roman times, and as such worked 12 hours a day 7 days a week. What time would they have available for door-to-door 'field service'? Would their Roman masters approve of them canvassing neighborhoods? It is far more likely that the only opportunity they would have had to share the gospel was by informal conversation, which is *enough* and *praiseworthy* and heartily fulfills Christ's command in full. In 1 Timothy 3, when listing the qualifications for elders and ministerial servants, there is no mention of being a 'zealous preacher' or even 'evangelizer' as one of the inspired qualifications. Christians are of course welcome to preach from door-to-door if they feel moved to do so or if they feel it would be an effective way to contact others and it would be well-received. In view of all the aforementioned, however, it is unscriptural and inappropriate to make demands beyond what the scriptures state as to the manner and extent of other individual Christians' preaching activity.

Door-to-door preaching is not an effective use of limited time.

(This point does not use scriptures, just math and logic. Feel free to skip.)

Let us consider the field service report from the 2021 service year for JW's. The total number baptized was 171,393. The total hours spent in the field were 1,423,039,931. Assuming no children raised as JW's are being baptized (obviously not the case), it would take over 8,000 hours to produce one baptism. If the average publisher spends 15 hours per month (generous) it would take about 45 years to produce one baptism, assuming NO raised-in-the-organization-baptisms. I am bringing this up to emphasize that other methods of sharing the gospel would prove a far more effective (and better-enjoyed and better-received) use of time and resources (\$230 million on special non-bethelite non-LDC full time volunteers in 2021; estimates for volunteered personal vehicle operational expenses unknown.) It should be noted that if we factor in all the children and relatives of

Jehovah's Witnesses to the number of newly baptized people, then in reality it is likely more than 13,000 hours which are required per newly baptized convert. (That is one 'publisher' plugging away at 15 hours a month for 72 years.) In view of the foregoing, individual Christians should be able to personally decide which methods of spreading the gospel represent the best and wisest use of their limited time.

The judicial process which JW's use for addressing allegations of sin is in direct conflict with the scriptures, as is the mandate of strict silent treatment toward those who have been removed from the congregation.

Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover, if your brother commits a sin, go and reveal his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two more, so that on the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter may be established. 17 If he does not listen to them, speak to the congregation. If he does not listen even to the congregation, let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector."

Note the sequence of events. If a Christian realized that his fellow Christian had committed a sin, he was to approach the errant one and speak to him directly. We observe that whatever the sin was, it was serious enough that if he was unrepentant, the sinner may end up outside the congregation. Still, the Christian who came to know of the sin was not instructed by Christ to turn to a group of 3 elders, nor were elders instructed to form a "judicial committee" (not a Bible term) at any point during this intervention. The final step in this intervention involved, not a judicial committee in a secretive closed meeting, not the elders, but rather taking the matter before *the congregation*. How did Christ instruct the members of the congregation to treat such a one who had been removed from the congregation? He said, "Let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you." How can we determine what Jesus meant? Perhaps we should examine how Jesus interacted with tax collectors and unbelievers. Matthew 9: 10,11: "Later as he was dining in the house, look! many tax collectors and sinners came and began dining with Jesus and his disciples. 11 But on seeing this, the Pharisees said to his disciples: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Christ interacted with tax collectors, unbelievers, and sinners. He conversed with

them, appealed to them to reconcile themselves with God, and he ate with them, despite being publicly criticized for such actions. Let us compare this instruction with the accounts at 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2. Let's start with 1 Corinthians 5:4,5: "When you are gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus, and knowing that I am with you in spirit along with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you must hand such a man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." This member of the congregation was unrepentantly pursuing a sinful life and creating a public scandal. Paul wrote a letter addressed *to the entire congregation* which was read *to the entire congregation*, instructing them to meet together and remove the man from the congregation. How were they instructed to treat this one? For this, let us examine verses 11-13: "But now I am writing you to stop keeping company with anyone called a brother who is sexually immoral or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man. 12 For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Do you not judge those inside, 13 while God judges those outside? "Remove the wicked person from among yourselves." In addition to removing him from the congregation and considering him an outsider, Paul instructed the entire congregation to not even eat with him while he was still living a life of sin. Why the difference from the instruction given in Matthew 18? The context tells us why; this was a case of public scandal in the community. If members of the congregation publicly continued to associate and eat with him, the impression given to the community would be that they tolerated, even approved, of his actions. It should be noted that Paul did not instruct them to cease any/all communication with him. Did everyone comply with Paul's instructions to the congregation in Corinth? Let us examine his follow-up letter: 2 Corinthians 2:6-8: "This rebuke given by the majority is sufficient for such a man; 7 now you should instead kindly forgive and comfort him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sadness. 8 I therefore exhort you to confirm your love for him." Verse 6: "Most of you opposed him, and that was punishment enough." (NLT) The rebuke was given by *the majority*, not all, in the congregation. It would seem that some members of the congregation conscientiously chose to draw different lines of association with the sinner—and yet Paul did not threaten to kick them out of the congregation in retaliation. Perhaps their

reasons were practical rather than ideological; some may have been relatives, shared a residence, or been business partners. The scriptures do not say. In summary, when a member of the congregation sins, scripturally it may be handled via an intervention between two or three members. In the event that a member continues to pursue a sinful course or if it is a public issue, the matter is brought before the entire congregation. If a member is removed from the congregation, the other members are to not regard that one as a member of the congregation while that person is still pursuing a sinful course. Christians are not categorically instructed to terminate all contact with such an individual and according to 2 Corinthians 2, each individual Christian will decide for themselves to what extent they will stop associating with such a person, and to what extent they will keep admonishing him. Regarding those who were walking disorderly and proving disobedient to the apostle's word in his letter, Paul instructed people to "withdraw from every brother who is walking disorderly" (v.6) ("who leads an undisciplined life and does not live in accordance with the tradition and teaching that you have received from us", Amplified Bible) and to 'stop associating with that one so that he may become ashamed'. Note the next verse, 2 Thessalonians 3:15: "And yet do not consider him an enemy, but continue admonishing him as a brother." JW publications assert this is entirely different, this is 'marking' as opposed to 'disfellowshipping' (not a Bible term), but the reality is that in all these instances you have instruction to withdraw from a brother while he is actively pursuing a sinful course, *that individual members of the congregation use their consciences to determine the extent of their personal limitation of association with that one*, and that these principles apply whether one is formally removed from the congregation or not. Note the harmony between Christ's actions with tax collectors and sinners and the counsel at 2 Thessalonians 3:15: "But do not be willing to consider him as an enemy; instead, correct him as a brother." (Catholic Public Domain Version). How can the members of the congregation possibly 'admonish', 'correct', or 'warn' (NLT) an errant one without conversing with them? If Christians are to treat others as they wish to be treated and they should love even their enemies (and such ones are *not* to be treated as enemies), such admonition and correction would be the principled intent of the continued

interaction according to Christ's actions and Paul's counsel. This is quite different from rigorous and absolute silent treatment, avoiding even the simplest interactions with such ones, save for a curt greeting at the Kingdom Hall. What of the counsel given at 2 John 10 regarding those who are not members of the congregation but approach the congregation and teach that Christ did not come in the flesh? "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him" ("If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement." NLT) This counsel is very specific and does not refer to members of the congregation but strangers who approach the congregation. It would be completely out of context to take this counsel regarding interaction with antichrist outsiders and apply it to cases involving members of the congregation with whom association is being limited. Christians were never instructed to admonish antichrist outsiders as brothers because they were *not* brothers. When we examine the scriptures in context, we see a stark difference between the direction given in the Bible and the judicial procedure and strict shunning policies mandated by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. It is little wonder that JW legal representatives lie and deny this practice in courtroom settings or that the FAQ section of the official website contains misleading statements effectively denying the practice of disfellowshipping. The strict shunning mandate is not in harmony with scripture and cannot be defended from the Bible.

The 'faithful and discreet slave' is a character in a parable, not a prophetic 'type'. The 'slave', 'servant', or 'steward' mentioned at Luke 12:35-48 and Matthew 24:45-47 is, from context, clearly a parable or illustration (one of several) illustrating the attitude which should be displayed by every individual Christian caring for his peers and seeking to gain Christ's approval, not a pretext for a shifting literalistic interpretation applied to oneself or any elite group in order to justify becoming a master of others' faith. If one looks for a literal fulfillment of this verse, ought one not also seek literal fulfillments for the 10 virgins, the fig branches, the two men in the field, the two women at the hand mill, and the female servants? If we consider Luke's parable of the faithful steward, we find that there are four

stewards mentioned! If this is a prophecy, not a parable, and there is a specific antitypical fulfillment of the faithful steward, ought we not be looking for literal antitypes of the other stewards? Would it not be better to follow the approach outlined in the Questions From Readers w15 3/15 p. 18: "Humans cannot know which Bible accounts are shadows of things to come and which are not. The clearest course is this: Where the Scriptures teach that an individual, an event, or an object is typical of something else, we accept it as such. Otherwise, we ought to be reluctant to assign an antitypical application to a certain person or account if there is no specific Scriptural basis for doing so." Moreover, if anyone wishes to emulate the attitude and actions of the faithful and discreet slave at Luke 12, their scope of action is clearly limited to providing food to their fellow slaves in a timely manner. At any rate, feeding one's fellow slaves is very different from controlling what they eat, when they eat, how much, and with whom--and banishing them if they eat other food with other people or have any special requests. For a passage which helps us understand what this should look like according to the scriptures, we can compare John 21:15-17. Peter was exhorted multiple times to 'feed' Jesus' lambs. Did Peter begin organizing a centralized bureaucracy, publishing missives with speculative doctrines and dictating matters of conscience to his fellow disciples of Christ? No! He served in small local congregations which often met in believers' private homes--in Jerusalem/Judea, Samaria, and Babylon. That is what feeding Jesus' little sheep involves. For more insight into Peter's role, we can refer to 1 Peter 5:1-3: "1 Therefore, as a fellow elder, a witness of the sufferings of the Christ and a sharer of the glory that is to be revealed, I make this appeal to the elders among you: 2 Shepherd the flock of God under your care, serving as overseers, not under compulsion, but willingly before God; not for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; 3 not lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock." Peter was an apostle, which was as close to a 'governing body' as is recorded among Christians in the scriptures (but not the same). Yet note his tone here--he appealed kindly to his fellow elders, encouraged them to serve others with a willing, even eager attitude, and not to lord it over others. Peter was living up to his commission, his entreaty from his Lord. He was feeding Christ's lambs, and he expressly avoided lording it over his fellow worshippers. Peter's example is what anyone seeking to 'feed their

fellow slaves' in imitation of the 'faithful slave' of Luke 12 and Matthew 24 should humbly imitate.

There was no Christian 'governing body' in the first century, not even in 49 CE.

For context: The term 'governing body' never appears in the Bible. In its modern usage by JWs, the term is capitalized as a proper noun and it refers to a small group of men who are not inspired by holy spirit and who claim by their policies and actions that their interpretation of scripture supercedes the Bible (individuals cannot study the Bible and reach their own conclusions) and that they are the sole channel for communication and guidance and that Christians cannot have salvation or a relationship with God without obeying them explicitly. The GB oversees all aspects of congregation activity worldwide, controls all monetary resources, and regularly issues commands which dictate matters of individual conscience. If any JW objects to this definition, I recommend they re-read publications and review statements by the GB and helpers. I also recommend they verify what happens when a baptized JW studies the Bible and reaches conclusions which contradict GB teachings.

Let us examine the records of the first century to see if there is any evidence of a Christian 'governing body'. We cannot say that the apostles were a 'governing body' because they spread out and acted on an individual basis and were empowered directly by the holy spirit to do so. They carried out weighty assignments and decisions *individually*, without convening as a group. Christians *personally* decided where to live and where to preach, often responding to the guidance of the holy spirit. Philip did this, moving to Samaria to avoid the wave of persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8:5). While there he began to preach the Christ to them. Paul was *never* summoned or dispatched by a central group in Jerusalem. Following his vision from Christ, Saul (Paul) did not immediately consult with any human or even go to Jerusalem or consult with any of the apostles (Galatians 1:16,17). Paul and Barnabas were dispatched by the holy spirit and sent off by the congregation in Antioch for their first missionary tour (Acts 13:2,3). They sent themselves and personally chose their traveling companions, disagreed at times with others' decisions, at times choosing their own preference rather than always yielding, and let holy spirit and people's response guide

their choice of routes and decision to remain in a given place and for how long (Acts 15:36-41,18:22,23). As for the events of 49 CE concerning Judaizers from Jerusalem promoting circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses, let us examine Paul's words at Galatians 2. Paul went to Jerusalem, not because he was in any way looking for guidance or because he was summoned, but rather because according to verse 2 he received a revelation—evidently Christ appeared to him and sent him to Jerusalem. What was the nature of his interaction with those in Jerusalem? Was a decision being issued from a centralized authority? Or was Paul delivering strong correction? Verses 5-9 provide the answers: “we did not yield in submission to them, no, not for a moment, so that the truth of the good news might continue with you. 6 But regarding those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me, for God does not go by a man's outward appearance—those highly regarded men imparted nothing new to me. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the good news for those who are uncircumcised, just as Peter had been for those who are circumcised— 8 for the one who empowered Peter for an apostleship to those who are circumcised also empowered me for those who are of the nations— 9 and when they recognized the undeserved kindness that was given me, James and Ce'phas and John, the ones who seemed to be pillars, gave Bar'na·bas and me the right hand of fellowship, so that we should go to the nations but they to those who are circumcised.” Paul specifically says that he *did not yield in submission* to them, that they imparted *nothing new* to him, and that they merely '*seemed to be important*' but that whatever they were made no difference to him. Does that sound like Paul submitting to a centralized group of men issuing commands or does it sound like Paul delivering strong correction to Christians who were out of line? Please examine the statement issued by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and ask yourself if this is an edict containing new commands or if it is an apologetic clarification of their stance; essentially a retraction. Acts 15:23-29: “The apostles and the elders, your brothers, to those brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Ci-li'cia who are from the nations: Greetings! 24 Since we have heard that some went out from among us and caused you trouble with what they have said, trying to subvert you, although we did not give them any instructions, 25 we have come to a unanimous decision to choose men to send to you together with our beloved Bar'na·bas and Paul, 26 men who have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We are therefore sending Judas and Silas, so that they also may report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For the holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you except these necessary things: 29 to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you carefully keep yourselves from these things, you will prosper. Good health to you!” The apostles and elders in Jerusalem addressed the letter to Gentile Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. They clarified that they had not sent the Judaizers. To specifically address the issues of circumcision and the Mosaic Law, they said they favored ‘adding no further burden’ except necessary things, “not to place on you any greater burden than these essentials” (Amplified Bible). The four things mentioned next were *not new information in any way*. The brothers in Jerusalem were effectively saying, ‘we didn’t send those other men and didn’t tell them to say what they did. We are not adding any new commands regarding circumcision or the law of Moses. Just stick to the essentials which you already know. Good health to you!’ They then sent two of their own, Judas and Silas, to convey the same message in person and encourage the brothers. The events of 49 CE offer no proof of a Christian ‘governing body’, but rather refute it forcefully, inasmuch as the brothers in Jerusalem received correction and then assured Gentile Christians that they were not adding any new commands (“keep abstaining”, verse 29). The whole notion of having a centralized governing body in Jerusalem presents several logistic impossibilities. Communication involved travel which was expensive, dangerous, and time-consuming. Getting a message from Jerusalem to Rome and back may have taken over a year. There were waves of persecution in Jerusalem which would have forced a central group to disband and scatter, not to mention the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Surely if there was a centralized ‘governing body’ we would read of its relocation in the scriptures due to its importance. When we examine the paths of communication which were employed in the first century, we find they were direct and distributed, not indirect and centralized. Christ himself, using his angel as a messenger and John as his secretary, wrote *directly* to the congregations in Revelation 1: 1, 4 and chapters 2 and 3. Christ said he was with them. Christ said he knew their deeds, their love, their sins, their tribulation, their endurance. There is no mention of middle

men or intervening human committees, including a 'governing body'. The members of the congregations in Asia were not accountable to a committee of men, but rather to Christ directly. When Paul and Peter wrote letters to their fellow Christians, they did not submit them to a centralized bureaucracy for approval; they sent them *directly to individuals or the entire congregation*. When elders were appointed, it was by holy spirit or by apostles or disciples dispatched by apostles—not by a centralized authority (Titus 1:5, compare Acts 20:28). In summary, we find no proof of a Christian governing body, but we do find evidence contradicting the existence of such a centralized authority. Interestingly, although the scriptures contain no mention of a *Christian* governing body, there *was* a governing body mentioned in the scriptures. It was composed of men not inspired by holy spirit, held closed judicial meetings, taught commands of men as doctrines, enforced obedience to man and organizational hierarchy, and threatened any who defied them with expulsion from the synagogue. This group, of course, was the Jewish governing body—the scribes and Pharisees. This group claimed to represent God and considered itself God's one approved authority on earth. I urge the reader to consider if they find any parallels in modern times.

Individual Christians are commanded to test and scrutinize all teachings and are commended for doing so. They are to reject any false prophets.

1 John 4:1: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit [speaking through a self-proclaimed prophet]; instead test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets and teachers have gone out into the world." (Amplified Bible) Acts 17:11 "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Note that even the teachings of an outstanding apostle such as Paul were not exempted from being scrutinized and examined by each individual Christian. We might also note how the Bereans tested the 'spirits' to see whether they originated with God: They 'examined the Scriptures every day' to make that determination. This is vital for Christians, and the command to do so is part of the inspired canon. Christians were warned that there would come to be false prophets and false teachers among them (1 Peter

2:1), that the apostasy would occur and that there would be those who would exalt themselves and sit down in the temple of God, publicly showing themselves to be a god (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5). Jesus warned of false anointed ones and false prophets (Matthew 24:24). Anyone who added to or changed the original good news was to be accursed (Galatians 1:8,9; Revelation 22:18,19). How were individual Christians to protect themselves from false teachings, false anointed ones, and false prophets? They were to examine the scriptures and compare the holy writings to the teachings being presented to determine if they agree. A second principle is outlined in Deuteronomy 18:20-22: “If any prophet presumptuously speaks a word in my name that I did not command him to speak or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. 21 However, you may say in your heart: “How will we know that Jehovah has not spoken the word?” 22 When the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word is not fulfilled or does not come true, then Jehovah did not speak that word. The prophet spoke it presumptuously. You should not fear him.” In addition to comparing newly-encountered teachings with the scriptures, a worshipper of Jehovah is asked if any false predictions were made while the speaker was claiming to speak in the name of Jehovah. If a prophecy was made which failed, it is clearly not the word of God, it is presumptuous, and the false prophet should not be feared. (The false prophet actually would have been executed in ancient times.) I encourage the reader to research to ascertain whether any individuals titling themselves as the ‘faithful slave’ meet the definition of a false prophet or have any history of failed prophecies while claiming to be God’s sole channel of spiritual food for mankind.

The Bible does not forbid blood transfusions.

Let us begin by reviewing the history of commands given in the Bible regarding how worshippers of God were to treat blood. Consumption of blood was not explicitly forbidden in Noah’s time, but it seems to have been implied. Eating flesh *with* its blood was forbidden. Genesis 9:4: “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” (ESV) “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” (ASV) “But the flesh with its breath, its blood, ye shall not eat.” (Smith’s Literal Translation). It should be noted that some Bible commentators take this to mean that animals should be properly slaughtered before consuming

them—a prohibition against the cruelty of eating an animal still alive, still with its blood/breath in it. In the time of the Law of Moses, blood and fat were not to be eaten (Leviticus 7:26,27). Anyone deliberately doing so was to be ‘cut off’ from God’s nation—which most likely meant the death penalty, although some scholars argue it may have implied exile (severe, serious consequences in either case). According to Leviticus 17:13,14, blood was to be treated with respect and poured out on the ground. It was to be treated as sacred because an animal had died and the blood represented that life: “If one of the Israelites or some foreigner who is residing in your midst is hunting and catches a wild animal or a bird that may be eaten, he must pour its blood out and cover it with dust. 14 For the life of every sort of flesh is its blood, because the life is in it. Consequently, I said to the Israelites: “You must not eat the blood of any sort of flesh because the life of every sort of flesh is its blood. Anyone eating it will be cut off.” The principle was clear—blood was not to be eaten, because an animal had died and out of respect for the life which had been taken, blood was to be treated with respect. Were there any exceptions—say, for exceptional circumstances, such as survival scenarios? Leviticus 17:15 informs us that there were: “If anyone, whether a native or a foreigner, eats an animal found dead or one torn by a wild animal, he must then wash his garments and bathe in water and be unclean until the evening; then he will be clean.” Evidently under certain exceptional circumstances there was a provision for an individual to consume blood, but they would be considered unclean and would need to bathe to show their respect. We read of something similar occurring in 1 Samuel 14:31-34, where the warriors of Israel were famished and fell to eating meat along with the blood, evidently without adequately draining it. Saul and others acknowledged that doing so was sinning against Jehovah, and so he enacted a solution which ensured proper bleeding of the slaughtered animals. No executions or banishments of any Israelite warriors are mentioned in this account. In Acts 15:28,29, we read of the ‘necessary things’ or ‘essentials’ being reiterated to the non-Jewish Christians in Antioch. They were instructed to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols, blood, what is strangled, and from sexual immorality. Let us first begin by establishing the context. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem were addressing the Gentile Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, and were not introducing anything new, but rather urged

them to ‘keep abstaining’ from the four things listed above. The year was 49 CE. Did those in Jerusalem or Antioch understand this to refer to blood transfusions? It’s not a trick question, it’s a simple question. Please answer it directly and honestly to yourself. The answer is obviously no, as blood transfusions would not be used clinically for well over 1500 years. Did those in Jerusalem or Antioch understand this to refer to any clinical procedure where a small amount of blood was withdrawn from a donor? Again, obviously no. Why is that last question so relevant? We must again ask, why was blood to be treated as sacred and poured out on the ground according to Leviticus? Think for a moment. It was because the animal *had died* to drain its blood, and therefore the blood represented the life of that creature. But in a modern clinical setting where blood is donated, processed, or transfused, does the human donor die? Of course not. So can we say that the blood represents or contains the life of that donor? We cannot—the donor is walking around with her life very much intact. Can we call the donated blood her ‘lifeblood’? Hardly—again, she is alive and well. Because of this, a blood transfusion can be considered a tissue transplant and does not require the same treatment as blood for which a creature was killed. If someone were to object, ‘I see your point, but I feel safer just abstaining from blood anyway’, we may urge them to consider a dire scenario where accepting a blood transfusion is a matter of life-and-death. Now the difference is not academic; refusal means death, and accepting means life (this does clinically sometimes happen). So if one were to refuse a lifesaving medical intervention out of a misplaced respect for the *symbol* of life, does that really seem like the point of the principle in Leviticus? Does that truly reflect genuine respect for the sanctity of life? What of the principle of *pikuach nefesh*, of ‘safeguarding life’ or ‘life overrides law’—the principle that preserving and saving life inherently and implicitly takes precedence over lesser mundane laws and rituals? (Not *every* law, and obviously not murder, but only very few laws or principles are more important than preserving and saving life.) We see this principle reflected in a number of scriptures. Leviticus 19:6: “Do not stand idly by when your neighbor’s life is threatened. I am the LORD.” (NLT) This principle eclipsed the sabbath (Matthew 12:9-16) and even applied to animals, as Christ reasoned in verses 11 and 12: ‘He said to them: “If you have one sheep and that sheep falls

into a pit on the Sabbath, is there a man among you who will not grab hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do a fine thing on the Sabbath.” These words were spoken to a group of men who were pedantic and obsessive about keeping the letter of the law, and yet they used the principle of *pikuach nefesh* to allow themselves to protect the lives of their domestic animals, which they regarded as investments. Earlier in Matthew 12 Christ reasoned with the Pharisees, using examples of David eating the loaves of presentation and the actions of the priests on the Sabbath to prove that the whole purpose of the Sabbath was not legalistic literalism, but rather to provide a refreshing rest and opportunity to cultivate their spiritual appreciation, among other things. Christ defended his apostles’ plucking of handfuls of grain on the Sabbath and he performed healings on the Sabbath, much to the condemnation and ire of the Pharisees. Christ’s teachings harmonize with principles reiterated throughout the Bible. Theft was a crime, was condemned, and was punished. Yet we read in Proverbs 6:30: “People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry.” Preserving life, in this case by sating hunger, is more important than not taking something which does not belong to you. Consistently we see that if two principles seem to be at odds, the lesser yields to the greater. *The symbol of life is not greater than life itself.* As Christ said, “The Sabbath came into existence for the sake of man, and not man for the sake of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27,28) If any Christian were to deny a dying patient a lifesaving treatment out of misplaced regard for the symbol of life and the patient’s actual life were forfeited as a result, the Christian who denied the victim treatment would be bloodguilty before God. Any who command, pressure, or threaten patients to do likewise are also bloodguilty if it has resulted in the deaths of those patients.

JWs do accept blood transfusions, but they require it be processed in a particular way and have certain fractions which they won’t accept (but that might change at any time).

JW publications state that blood is composed of 4 ‘primary components’.(1) red cells; (2) white cells; (3) platelets; (4) plasma (serum). In reality, physiology textbooks don’t teach this, nor would any phlebotomist explain it this way. Blood does not separate naturally into these ‘4 primary components’. If you draw the blood into an EDTA-containing tube and

centrifuge it (in some cases one would deliberately let it clot slightly instead, if one only wanted plasma) then let it rest for several minutes you would have 2 main components: plasma (~55%) and red blood cells (~45%) separated by a thin layer called the buffy coat (less than 1%) which contains white blood cells and platelets and other things. What is the scriptural (or physiological) rationale for explaining why a fraction of less than half of 1% is any way considered a 'primary component'? Of course, the scriptures are silent on this. And as we saw earlier, the principle of the sanctity of blood does not apply where life has not been taken. Returning to the topic of 'fractions', a JW is allowed to accept albumin, immunoglobulins, clotting factors, hemoglobin, and hemin (all derived from the main two parts of blood, plasma and red blood cells). Any surgeon looking at this list will chuckle to themselves (internally, of course, keeping a professional demeanor) at its inconsistency. This basically allows you to take blood transfusions, it just requires extra processing, expense, and drama. It also condones the prodigious amount of blood needed to be donated and processed in order to yield the final component. To get 500g of purified human albumin, 27-30 liters of blood must be donated and processed. The WT policies regarding blood, vaccinations, organ transplants, and transfusions have flip-flopped back and forth and changed multiple times over the years, despite it not only being a matter of literal life and death but also being punishable by disfellowshipping and shunning. I ask, does this really reflect God's thinking on the matter? Can it in any way be defended or explained using scripture or even scriptural principles? If the answer is not an unequivocal 'yes', imposing any limitations on others or threatening others *risks bloodguilt* and must be avoided.

Christian meetings were small, were not Prussian classrooms, and they did not study publications

Most first century gatherings/meetings took place in the homes of one of the families in the congregation. 1 Corinthians 16:19 "The congregations of Asia send you their greetings. Aquila and Prisca together with the congregation that is in their house greet you heartily in the Lord." Philemon 1,2 "to Philemon our beloved fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the congregation that is in your house" Colossians 4:15 "Give my greetings to the brothers in Laodicea and to

Nympha and to the congregation at her house.” Evidently the congregation in Philippi used Lydia’s home, according to Acts 16:40: “But they came out of the prison and went to the home of Lydia; and when they saw the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.” According to the scriptures, in the first century the congregations gathered together in homes for worship. The group size was likely often limited to 15 to 20, perhaps a few families. It is worth noting that for all the new congregations which Paul and Barnabas were privileged to have helped bring into being, we never read about directions or advice being given to buy or build a building for meeting or worship. Christians were never commanded to meet only in homes, and it does not forbid meeting in other locations (such as Paul giving discourses daily in the school auditorium of Tyrannus). Incidentally, we don’t know how often Christians met, or on which day(s), although weak circumstantial evidence in Acts 20 suggests the congregation there may have met once a week. (It should be noted that some in the congregation were slaves and as such likely worked 12 hours a day 7 days a week most weeks, so the meetings were likely often in the evenings.) They discussed scripture, prayed together, read scriptures, exhorted each other (1 Timothy 4:13) encouraged one another, inciting each other to love and to doing good deeds. They also ate meals together, “love feasts”, and partaking of the Lord’s supper together and of full meals was evidently associated with their gatherings for worship. They were very communal, interactive, and egalitarian. There was no platform, pulpit, or podium. Occasionally they read letters which were circulated between congregations, a few of which would later become codified into the Bible canon. But they had no uniform program outlining exactly what to study and did not use any ‘publications’. The format of their meetings was entirely unlike modern JW meetings, which use the Prussian education format. Prussian education implementation uses standardized group instruction with heavily formatted structure. Strong focus is placed on strict obedience and rote memorization, but pupils may express themselves in their own words, as long as the concepts are tightly regulated by a supervisor or instructor. Participation and self-expression is also heavily supervised and regulated. The desired outcomes of the Prussian education system are: Production of obedient and disciplined citizens, social obedience through indoctrination, uniformity

and loyalty to the Crown, support for the state's objectives, and to impart functional literacy.

The Prussian education meeting format would seem to be working as desired for achieving its desired outcomes, although we need to replace 'state' and 'Crown' with 'Governing Body' and 'citizens' with 'publishers'. When we compare the small, intimate groups of first-century house-congregations where all interacted as a family and then we contrast it with the mechanistic control of JW meetings, the difference is night and day. One is refreshing; the other is not. At one, the Bible is read, studied and discussed. At the other, the publications of the GB are studied and discussed, with scriptures added as a garnish—cited or read without time allotted to examine the context. Christian meetings should be patterned closely after the first century Christians. These gatherings should be a cherished and anticipated part of our worship, not a strictly controlled indoctrination session where at most a member can squeeze in a 30 second comment.

Christians are instructed to wait on Jehovah, never to wait on false prophets or anyone misrepresenting Christ.

Paul openly resisted Peter face-to-face and reproved him openly when the circumstances required it. When needed, Paul refused to submit or yield even for a moment. Christ told the members of the Jewish Governing Body exactly how they misrepresented God and roundly condemned them for it—and did so publicly. Christ commended the Christians in Ephesus because they did not tolerate bad men, and they put to the test those who say they are apostles, but they were not, and they found them to be liars (Revelation 2:2). Individual Christians are exhorted and expected to examine the evidence themselves, to evaluate and act, and are empowered to speak out against any promoting false teachings or who 'say they are apostles but are not'.

Christians have a perfect King who is head of the congregation. There is no reason to submit to impostors or to wait for a correction to eventually occur.

The GB of Jehovah's Witnesses has placed themselves as head of the church, and their rationale is summarized as follows: *We are the sole channel of communication for God's people on earth. But we are wrong a*

lot. You must obey us nevertheless. If you see us promoting a wrong teaching, just be humble and wait for it to be corrected in God's time. The problem is that this stance is entirely out of harmony with scripture. Christians' situation is entirely unlike the situation of faithful Jews living under a corrupt Judean king in ancient times. Christians have a perfect king who is actively reigning and who sees all things and is head of the congregation. Individual Christians are commanded to scrutinize and test any people and teachings before accepting them. They are empowered to render judgment and reject those misrepresenting Christ. They are never encouraged to tolerate impostors, falsehood, or misrepresentation of Christ but are commanded to reprove and reject such ones, and are praised for doing so.

Part 3, How to Identify True Christians (Enjoy Life Forever, Lesson 18)

Assertion: Must be followers of Jesus Christ. Must "remain in my word" (John 8:31). Real Christians must obey Jesus' teachings. Real Christians base their beliefs on the Bible.

Reality: JWs are followers of the Governing Body. They are told it is not enough to be loyal to Christ and to be personally accountable to him as the head of the congregation; instead, JWs are told they cannot 'be spiritually healthy' (or even have salvation!) without 'feeding' on the 'spiritual food' which is provided by 'God's only channel for communication', which instead of being Christ (the actual channel) is self-proclaimed to be the GB. JWs do not remain in Christ's word, as the GB constantly goes beyond the things written, inventing classes/categories for Christians, proclaiming random dates as having special significance, issuing apocalyptic prophecies which the Bible specifically forbids, adding a body of prohibitive and restrictive written laws and judicial procedure which are nowhere to be found in the Christian scriptures. If a JW 'studies the Bible' with someone, or when JW meetings are held, ideas of the GB are studied. Scriptures are cited without examining context or cross-references, comments are restricted to 30 seconds or less, and actual study of the Bible is something which JWs must do on their personal time. If a JW finds any issues, major or minor, wherein the opinions of the GB contradict scripture, he is

instructed to suppress his Bible-trained conscience and submit to man rather than God. The teachings of the GB are subject to change from month-to-month and all are expected to immediately fully accept the new opinions as holy writ without question. This entire process is antithetical to remaining in the word of the Christ and obeying Christ's teachings.

Assertion: Real Christians do more than talk about love. They show by their words and actions that they love one another.

Reality: JWs definitely talk about love. And they refrain from overt acts of physical violence and war against their fellowman, including fellow JWs. It has been my experience that their inclusion transcends national, ethnic, linguistic, and racial barriers. But to really ascertain what John 13:34,35 (agape) looks like in practice, we can clarify by turning to other scriptures.

Matthew 5:44 "Continue to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens..." verses 46,47: "For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Are not also the tax collectors doing the same thing? 47 And if you greet your brothers only, what extraordinary thing are you doing? Are not also the people of the nations doing the same thing?"

Compare with 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 "Love is patient and kind. It does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests...6 but rejoices with the truth." Matthew 7:12 "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must do to them." If we wish to evaluate whether a group of people embodies this agape love in practice, we should not examine ideal conditions or even everyday situations, but rather ask, are there any conditions under which a given group renounces the love which Christ describes? JWs practice an extreme form of shunning toward any who for any reason are no longer considered part of the congregation—including those, like myself, who conscientiously choose to remain loyal to Christ rather than cooperate with teachings of man which oppose the Bible. This practice of shunning is not advocated by any of the inspired Christian scriptures (quite clear if one rereads the relevant passages) but rather mirrors the threats of the Jewish Governing Body of the first century, the Pharisees. They threatened disciples of Christ with expulsion from the synagogue, which Christ had foretold. Can anyone seriously claim to be showing brotherly affection as an identifying mark of the genuine disciples

of Christ if one entirely cuts off their brother or sister, giving them silent treatment for the rest of their life because they feel compelled to disagree as a matter of their Bible-trained conscience? Even if the shunned ones were their enemies (which they are not and members are specifically commanded not to consider them their enemies), are they not still commanded to continue to show agape love and to treat their fellowman as they would like to be treated? Can we really know how genuine the love or any other quality or action of a person is if they are operating under a constant threat or even operating under the premise of accountability to other humans?

Assertion: Real Christians today “are busy” preaching Bible truth. They gladly use their time and energy to share the Bible’s message of hope and comfort.

Reality: JW’s are definitely kept busy! But, like the LDS/Mormons, they have books and publications which they claim complement the Bible, but in reality supercede the Bible and which contain teachings which contradict both the scriptures and fundamental principles of Christianity. Guilting your adherents into a works-based hope of salvation and keeping them busy does not compensate for the fact that Bible truth is not actually what is being taught, but rather the opinions of a small group of men intent on protecting and promoting their private interpretation of scripture. It is absolutely true that Christ commanded his followers to go and make disciples, and Christians ought to gladly do so. But their accountability is to Christ for their individual actions, not to their fellow slaves.

Part 4, Conclusion

It is with great deliberation and prayer that I hereby disassociate myself from Jehovah’s Witnesses. I am at peace with my decision; indeed my conscience impels me to do so. Ultimately, my thoughts echo those of Peter before the Jewish Governing Body of the first century—I must obey God as ruler rather than man. I have found Christ’s words at Matthew 10:37 to be comforting: “Whoever has greater affection for father or mother than for me is not worthy of me; and whoever has greater affection for son or daughter than for me is not worthy of me.” Also Christ’s words to those in

Philadelphia: “I know that you have a little power, and you kept my word and did not prove false to my name.”