

Is Your Hope Bible-Based?

**Questions and reflections for
Jehovah's Witnesses**

Foreword - for the Jehovah's Witness Reader

The apostle Peter told the Christians in his day:

"But sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

The reason this brochure has been written is to humbly challenge you to consider whether your hope is really based on the Bible. The defense you give of the "reason for the hope in you" - is it really Scriptural? We ask you to follow this advice of the best-selling Watchtower publication, *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* (page 13):

"We need to examine, not only what we personally believe, but also what is taught by any religious organization with which we may be associated. Are its teachings in full harmony with God's Word, or are they based on the traditions of men? *If we are lovers of the truth, there is nothing to fear from such an examination.* It should be the sincere desire of every one of us to learn what God's will is for us, and then to do it.-John 8:32."-(1981 revised edition; emphasis ours)

Foreword - for the non-Witness Reader

Those who are unfamiliar with the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding their hope of salvation may need a little explanation about what they believe. The Witnesses believe only 144,000 will receive the call to be with Christ in heaven. The rest of faithful mankind have a different hope, everlasting life here on earth. Only those who claim to be of the 144,000 (now estimated to be around 10,000 of the over 7,124,000 Witnesses world-wide) believe they have been born-again or are now God's sons. Over 99% of the Witnesses believe they will live on a paradise earth. They never hope to be with Christ or go to heaven. Verses that speak of a "great crowd" or "other sheep" are applied by them to this group with an earthly hope (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16). Since the year 1935, almost all those becoming Jehovah's Witnesses profess this earthly hope. Jehovah's Witnesses also believe that all of God's people who died before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost have only the earthly hope. This means that all those who served God in Old Testament times will live on earth and never go to heaven.

The Witnesses believe that those with the heavenly hope are now justified and made God's children. They also believe that those with the earthly hope only receive a partial justification for now and will only become God's sons after a future Millennium. While they practice baptism by immersion there is no spiritual re-birth for those with the early hope. They also are not entitled to partake of the bread and wine at the Witnesses' annual Memorial (Communion). The 2008 Memorial attendance was 17,790,631. Only 9,986 partook of the bread and wine. Most congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses had no partakers.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture citations are from the 1984 edition of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

One Hope or Two?

Ephesians 4:4-6: "One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all persons, who is over all and through all and in all."

What Bible verse *specifically* states there are 2 hopes for Christians?

Everyone?

1 John 5:1: "Everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God."

Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ)?

Do You Want to Enter God's Kingdom?

John 3:5,7: "Jesus answered: 'Most truly I say to you, Unless anyone is born from water and spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Do not marvel because I told you, You people must be born again.'"

Do You Have Faith in Christ?

Galatians 3:26-27: "You are all, in fact, sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Have you been born from water and the Spirit as one of God's children? Have you been baptized into and put on Christ?

Are You In Harmony With the Flesh or the Spirit?

Romans 8:5-8: "For those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those in accord with the spirit on the things of the spirit. For the minding of the flesh means death, but the minding of the spirit means life and peace; because the minding of the flesh means enmity with God, for it is not under subjection to the law of God, nor, in fact, can it be. So those who are in harmony with the flesh cannot please God."

Read on:

Romans 8:12,13: "So, then, brothers, we are under obligation, not to the flesh to live in accord with the flesh; for if you live in accord with the flesh you are sure to die; but if you put the practices of the body to death by the spirit, you will live."

Read on:

Are You a Son or a Slave?

Romans 8:14-17: "For all who are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: 'Abba, Father!' The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together."

Are you in harmony with the Spirit? Are you led by God's Spirit? If so, are you one of God's sons? Or, are you still a slave to sin? If a son, then you are also a joint heir with Christ! Compare: Galatians 4:6,7: "Now because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts and it cries out: 'Abba, Father!' So, then, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God."

Have You Accepted Christ?

John 1:12,13: "However, *as many as did receive him, to them he gave authority to become God's children*, because they were exercising faith in his name; and they were born, not from blood or from a fleshly will or from man's will, but from God."

Have you exercised faith in Christ's name? Have you received or accepted Him? Have you been born from God and become one of His children? Physical life begins with birth. Spiritual life also begins with a birth.

Have You Died to Sin?

Romans 6:2-6: "Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin yet live in it? Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin." (New American Bible)

If you've died to sin you're no longer its slave. If you've died to sin by being baptized into Christ's death, won't you also share in Christ's resurrection? Where does the Bible say that the baptism of most Christians would be different?

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Heavenly Kingdom?

Matthew 8:11,12: "But I tell you that many from eastern Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens; whereas the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside."

Jesus is clearly speaking of something in the future. ("Many ... will come.") Should we view this as merely figurative? The March 15, 1962 *Watchtower*, pages 191 and 192, argues that Abraham stands for Jehovah God, Isaac stands for Jesus Christ, and Jacob stands for the 144,000. March 15, 1990 *Watchtower*, page 31, restates this interpretation: "But the little flock of spirit-begotten humans receiving that reward could be compared to Jacob reclining at a table in heaven with Jehovah (the Greater Abraham) and his Son (pictured by Isaac)." They say this is all that will be in the heavenly kingdom. However, such a view is inconsistent with Jesus' words. For "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" are not the only ones in the heavenly kingdom! "With" them will be "many from eastern parts and western parts"! That would be many more than just Jehovah, Jesus and 144,000 resurrected humans. The December 1, 1986 *Watchtower*, page 9, relates some of the context of Jesus' words:

"The sons of the kingdom . . . thrown into the darkness outside' are natural Jews who do not accept the opportunity offered first to them of being rulers with Christ. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob represent God's Kingdom arrangement. Thus Jesus is relating how Gentiles will be welcomed to recline at the heavenly table, as it were, 'in the kingdom of the heavens.'" (Emphasis ours; ellipsis in text. Compare chapter 36 of *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* which makes a similar statement.)

The context of Matthew 8:11,12 (when a Gentile army officer manifested his faith) makes it clear Jesus is referring to the fact that many Gentiles would come into the Kingdom. Considering that many Gentiles 'from the East and from the West' would recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' in the heavenly Kingdom makes the Watchtower Society's interpretation improbable. Besides, Jesus uses similar words in another sermon as recorded at Luke 13:28,29. There He speaks of "Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets" with people from the East, West, North and South also reclining at the table in the Kingdom. If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are figurative, who do "all the prophets" symbolize? Really, can't we just accept Jesus' words at face value?

Hebrews 11:16 (speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob): "But now they are reaching out for a better place, that is, one belonging to heaven. Hence God is not ashamed of them, to be called upon as their God, for he has made a city ready for them." (Compare Hebrews 12:22,23; 13:14).

12,000 & 144,000 - Literal or Symbolic?

Revelation 7:4-8 speaks of 144,000 sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel. 12,000 are to be sealed from each tribe. On pages 12 and 13 of *Commentary on the Letter of James* (published in 1979 by the Watchtower Society) we are told:

"Since natural Israel consisted of 12 tribes, it logically follows that spiritual Israel would be spoken of as having 12 tribes to show that it was a complete spiritual nation, with no part or tribe missing. There is no numerical imbalance within spiritual Israel, for the Bible book of Revelation symbolically reveals that an equal number-12,000-is sealed from every tribe. (Rev. 7:4-8)" (Emphasis ours)

If the number 12,000 from each tribe is symbolic, wouldn't the total be symbolic also? If the number 144,000 is literal, shouldn't there be 12 literal groups of 12,000 comprising the 144,000? To say the 12,000 is symbolic and the total 144,000 is literal is inconsistent. (Interestingly, most Jehovah's Witnesses would interpret the numbers 12,000 and 144 elsewhere in the book of Revelation to be symbolic, as at Revelation 21:16,17.) Consistency demands that the numbers should be considered both literal or both symbolic.

Where Does the Great Crowd Serve God?

Revelation 7:9,10,15: "After these things 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. And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb. That is why they are before the throne of God; and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple [Greek: *naos*]; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them."

Compare this with:

Revelation 7:11: "And all the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell upon their faces before the throne and worshiped God."

In the same vision the angels, elders, and 4 living creatures are also said to be before the throne. Where are they? In heaven or on the earth?

Outer Courtyards Not Part of "Naos"

What does it mean when it says the "great crowd" worship God "in his temple"? Doesn't that indicate they will be in heaven? The Watchtower Society says the "great crowd" worship God in a particular location in God's temple. According to the August 15, 1980 *Watchtower*, page 15, the "great crowd" worship in the outer courtyards of God's temple - the Court of the Gentiles (the nations) - which they say represents earthly worshipers, not heavenly worshipers. Consider, please, how the rest of the book of Revelation shows us how the Greek word *naos* ("temple") is used:

Revelation 11:1,2: "And a reed like a rod was given me as he said: 'Get up and measure the temple sanctuary [Greek: *naos*] of God and the altar and those worshiping in it. But as for the courtyard that is outside the temple sanctuary [Greek: *naos*], cast it clear out and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.'"

In the *New World Translation* the same Greek word *naos* is translated as "temple" in Revelation 7 and as "temple [sanctuary]" in Revelation 11. (The Watchtower Society's *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* translates it both times as "divine habitation.") Why the difference? Evidently the Society does not want to admit that the "great crowd" worship in the heavenly sanctuary. Instead, they try to divide God's temple into 2 areas. The Society says the inner temple area (closest to the sanctuary) represents heaven. They say the outer courtyards represent earthly worshipers. That is why the Society teaches that the great crowd worship in the outer courtyards of the temple - the Court of the Gentiles, as in King Herod's temple. However, Revelation 11:1,2 argues persuasively against the idea that the outer courtyards would be included in the *naos*. It says the the courtyard given to the Gentiles (the nations) is "outside the *naos*," outside the temple. In fact, the Greek word *naos* always refers to God's heavenly temple in every other place it appears in the book of Revelation! (*Naos* occurs in the Greek text at Revelation 3:12; 7:15; 11:1,2,19*; 14:15,17; 15:5,6,8*; 16:1,17; 21:22*.) (* "*Naos*" occurs twice in these verses. The NWT translates some of these simply as "sanctuary.")

The Great Crowd in Heaven?

Revelation 19:1: "After these things I heard what was as a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven. They said: 'Praise Jah, you people! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God.'"

Compare Revelation 7:9,10. Notice the similarity in wording between Revelation 19:1 and Revelation 7:9,10 (quoted above). Some say the "great crowd" here are angels. However, why would angels ascribe salvation to God? The angels that sinned will not be saved (2 Peter 2:4). The faithful angels do not need salvation.

Some Objections Considered:

"What About the New Earth?"

Revelation 21:1,2: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Historic Christianity affirms there will be both a new heaven and a new earth. Revelation chapters 21 and 22 seem to indicate there will be some sort of uniting of heaven and earth, when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven. (We are not told exactly how this uniting

of heaven and earth will take place. Nor do we know what sort of physical changes may be required.) This is what some call "the final state."

Bible commentator George Eldon Ladd writes:

"The final state of the Kingdom of God is a new heaven and a new earth ([Revelation] 21:1ff.) This expresses a theology of creation that runs throughout the Bible. The Old Testament prophets picture the Kingdom of God in terms of a redeemed earth (Isa. 11:6-9; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-15). This is described in terms of a new heaven and new earth even in the Old Testament (Isa. 65:17; 66:22). . . However, a fundamental theology underlies these expectations, even though they must be clarified by progressive revelation: that man's ultimate destiny is an earthly one. . . The New Testament does not outstrip this theology, although it reveals more than the Old Testament does by showing that the newness of the eternal order is much more radical than God had disclosed to the prophets. Jesus spoke of the regeneration of the world (Mt. 19:28), and Paul spoke of the redemption of the created order (Rom. 8:20-21)." *A Theology of the New Testament*, by George Eldon Ladd. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974. Page 631. (Emphasis ours)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (sections 1042-1044) similarly states the traditional teaching:

“At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed:

Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, "new heavens and a new earth." [2 Peter 3:13; compare Revelation 21:1] It will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring under a single head "all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth." [Ephesians 1:10]

In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men. [Compare Revelation 21:5] "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." [Revelation 21:4]"

The early Christian writer Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D. 185) outlined some of this in his work *Against Heresies*:

“But in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ [to its pristine condition]...And in the Apocalypse [book of Revelation] John saw this new [Jerusalem] descending upon the new earth [Revelation 21:2]...

“But when this [present] fashion [of things] passes away, and man has been renewed, and flourishes in an incorruptible state, so as to preclude the possibility of becoming old, [then] there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, in which the new man shall remain [continually], always holding fresh converse with God. And...that these things shall ever continue without end, Isaiah declares, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I do make, continue in my sight, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain [Isaiah 66:22]...”

“John, therefore, did distinctly foresee the first "resurrection of the just," [Luke 14:14] and the inheritance in the kingdom of the earth; and what the prophets have prophesied concerning it harmonize [with his vision]. For the Lord also taught these things, when He promised that He would have the mixed cup new with His disciples in the kingdom [Matthew 26:29] The apostle, too, has confessed that the creation shall be free from the bondage of corruption, [so as to pass] into the liberty of the sons of God. [Romans 8:21] And in all these things, and by them all, the same God the Father is manifested, who fashioned man, and gave promise of the inheritance of the earth to the fathers, who brought it (the creature) forth [from bondage] at the resurrection of the just, and fulfils the promises for the kingdom of His Son...”

Revelation 5:10 explains: "You made them a kingdom and priests for our God, and they will reign on earth." (*New American Bible*) The *New World Translation* has "reign over" which is a possible translation, but not the most literal translation. However, the *Kingdom Interlinear* shows the basic meaning of the Greek word here is "upon." Initially, Christians will worship God in His temple in heaven (Revelation 7:9,15; 19:1). After that, in the final state, the saints (holy ones) will reign upon the union of the new heavens and new earth, when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven. That is described in detail in chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation.

"Who Will the Holy Ones Rule Over?"

- To which we respond with this question -

Will You Be Outside of the New Jerusalem?

Revelation 5:10 (quoted in the section above) says the holy ones (saints) will reign. Some claim this means the holy ones must have subjects. However, take time to read the description of the final state in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 and it becomes obvious that the New Jerusalem is the home of the redeemed. What of those outside the city? Carefully consider this passage:

Revelation 22:14,15: "'Happy are those who wash their robes [compare Rev. 7:14], that the authority to go to the trees of life may be theirs and that they may gain entrance into the city by its gates. Outside are the dogs and those who practice

spiritism and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone liking and carrying on a lie.'"

What is your hope? Do you hope 'to gain entrance into the city,' or will you be outside with those judged by God? Does the fact the holy ones (saints) reign mean they must have subjects? Compare this passage:

1 Peter 2:9,10: "But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now God's people; you were those who had not been shown mercy, but are now those who have been shown mercy."

The early Christians that Peter wrote to were already a "royal priesthood" at that time. Since they were called royalty, did that mean they ruled over others? Or, is the emphasis on the glories Christians share in because of their position in union with Christ? (Compare Ephesians 2:4-7 where Paul says that Christians in Ephesus had been 'raised up and seated together in the heavenly places in union with Christ.') Christians already share royal blessings. However, this doesn't indicate that they rule over others. Nor is that indicated at Revelation 5:10.

Bible commentator Anthony Hoekema gives a possible additional meaning for the reign of the holy ones:

"One might wonder over whom these glorified saints will reign, since all human beings on the new earth will participate in this reigning. Perhaps the best answer to this question is that this will be a reigning over the new creation. Man will now be able to fulfill in a perfect way the mandate to have dominion over the earth which he could only fulfill imperfectly on the present earth. In the life to come, in other words, man will for the first time since the fall rule the earth properly." *The Bible and the Future*, by Anthony A. Hoekema. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979. Page 283. (Emphasis ours)

So it is not a question of who the holy ones rule over, but of what they rule over. In discussing the description of the New Jerusalem given in Revelation chapter 21, Hoekema adds these interesting points (on page 285 of the above-mentioned book):

"The fact that the names of the twelve tribes are inscribed on the twelve gates (v. 12) and that the names of the twelve apostles are written on the twelve foundations v. 14) suggests that the people of God on the new earth will include believers from both the Old Testament covenant community and from the church of the New Testament era."

"John the Baptist Won't Be In Heaven!"

Some interpret Jesus' words at Matthew 11:11 to mean John the Baptist will not be in the heavenly kingdom. Is this so?

Matthew 11:11: "Truly I say to you people, Among those born of women there has not been raised up a greater than John the Baptist; but a person that is a lesser one in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he is."

Some say this means that one who will be 'least' in the heavenly kingdom will be greater than John the Baptist. However, Jesus uses the present tense here: "is," not 'will be.' Jesus was not speaking of future destinies in this verse. He was speaking about current blessings. While at times the Kingdom is spoken of as future, it is also spoken of as present. (Compare Colossians 1:13 where it says God has "transferred" [past tense] Christians into the Kingdom. See also Matthew 12:28; Mark 10:15; Luke 17:20,21.) Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom. John the Baptist had no part in that, except to introduce Jesus. So those who would be following Jesus (and thus be in the Kingdom) would be greater (more privileged) than John, who did not get involved with Jesus' ministry. This verse says nothing about John's final position.

"Jesus Has 'Other Sheep,' Earthly Sheep!"

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

Traditional Christian belief has been that these other sheep are the Gentiles (starting in the first century) who would join Jewish believers and form one body of believers. Some say that Jesus was prophesying an earthly class to be formed nearly two thousand years later. Let's read something in the next chapter:

John 11:49-52: "But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them: 'You do not know anything at all, and you do not reason out that it is to your behalf for one man to die in behalf of the people and not for the whole nation to be destroyed.' This, though, he did not say of his own originality; but because he was high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was destined to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that the children of God who are scattered about he might gather together in one."

In the very next chapter John speaks of the Jewish nation and others 'not of that nation,' who would be gathered into one. Wouldn't it be more likely that these Gentiles would be the other sheep? (Compare Ephesians 2:11-22.)

"Only a 'Little Flock' Goes to Heaven"

Luke 12:32: "'Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom.'"

True, Jesus' words above indicate those inheriting the Kingdom would be few. Yet, that doesn't limit that "little flock" to a specific number, like 144,000. Compare:

Matthew 7:13,14: "'Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it.'"

God's people are still a minority in this world, even as in Jesus' day. (Please also see Luke 13:23-30.)

Some Further Thoughts:

Did the Passover Picture the Lord's Supper?

1 Corinthians 5:6-8: "Your cause for boasting is not fine. Do you not know that a little leaven ferments the whole lump? Clear away the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, according as you are free from ferment. For, indeed, Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Consequently, let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth."

To be sure, there are a few differences between the Passover and the Lord's Supper. (Such is usually the case between shadow and reality.) Yet, Paul ties together the old Passover festival with the Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper (Communion). After all, the Lord's Supper was instituted at the time of the last Passover Jesus had with his disciples (Luke 22:15).

Who Partook of the Passover?

Exodus 12:43-49 explains that all circumcised worshipers of Yahweh celebrated the Passover, not just the priestly Levite tribe. Even alien residents who had joined themselves to Israel were to celebrate it:

"And in case an alien resident resides as an alien with you and he will actually celebrate the passover to Jehovah, let there be a circumcising of every male of his. First then he may come near to celebrate it; and he must become like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised man may eat of it. One law is to exist for the native and for the alien resident who is residing as an alien in your midst." (Exodus 12:48,49; compare 2 Chronicles 30:25-27)

The Watchtower Society likes to compare their "two classes" of Christians (their 144,000 with a heavenly hope and their 'great crowd' with an earthly hope) to the natural circumcised Israelites (picturing the 144,000) and those aliens who converted to be worshipers of Jehovah (picturing their 'great crowd' class). This sort of typology is inconsistent. The Society teaches that the 'great crowd' class cannot partake of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper and yet even the alien residents in Israel partook of the Passover! (Isn't it more likely that the natural Jews and proselytes in ancient Israel picture that in the Church today both Jews and Gentiles would make up one body of worshipers to God?)

"Unless You Eat..."

John 6:53,54: "Accordingly 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. He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I shall resurrect him at the last day.'"

Surely Jesus had in mind the symbol of the Lord's Supper when He commanded Christians to eat and drink his flesh and blood. They could not understand His words until later (Compare John 6:60- 66). Like another of Jesus' statements, this one could not be fully understood until after what He was referring to occurred (Compare John 2:18-22). There can be no doubt Jesus knew He would institute the Lord's Supper as the fulfillment of the Passover and had that in mind when He said these words. So, the question remains: Where is the scriptural basis to say that most Christians today should not eat the bread or drink the wine at the Lord's Supper?

Do You Follow Jesus' Command?

1 Corinthians 11:23-25: "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (*New American Bible*)

Where does the Bible indicate that millions of people should refuse to partake of the Communion elements starting with the year 1935? Have Jesus' words been superseded? If so, on what Biblical command?

When Do We Proclaim Christ's Death?

1 Corinthians 11:26: "For as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives."

Do you proclaim His death at the Lord's Supper?

Old Covenant - New Covenant

The Society claims that only the 144,000 "anointed ones" are in the New Covenant (April 1, 1979 *Watchtower*, page 31). Since their 'great crowd' class are not in the New Covenant (they only benefit from the New Covenant by their association with these 144,000), they cannot partake of the elements of Communion. However, all of ancient Israel were in the old Covenant - both the natural circumcised Jews and the converted aliens. Both these groups had the same promises, the same responsibilities, the same blessings (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 19:33,34). So, where is the precedent to say not all Christians today are in the New Covenant?

Being in the New Covenant Means Forgiveness of Sins

Hebrews 10:15-17: "Moreover, the holy spirit also bears witness to us for after it has said: 'This is the covenant that I shall covenant toward them after those days,' says Jehovah. 'I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds I shall write them,' it says afterwards: 'And I shall by no means call their sins and their lawless deeds to mind anymore.'"

Are you yet in sin? Or, have your sins been forgiven?

Is Christ Your Mediator?

1 Timothy 2:5,6: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all - this is what is to be witnessed to at its own particular times."

To be consistent with their theology the Society has had to teach that Jesus Christ is the mediator for only the 144,000. They teach He is not the mediator for the 'great crowd' class (See April 1, 1979 *Watchtower*, page 31; compare also page 10 of the 1986 publication *Worldwide Security Under the "Prince of Peace"*.) After all, if the great crowd are not in the New Covenant they cannot have a mediator. However, didn't all Israel have Moses as the mediator of the Old Covenant, both the natural circumcised Israelites along with the foreigners who joined themselves to Israel? What Scriptures explicitly teach that most of God's people today would not have Christ as their mediator?

'Those in Christ Have No Condemnation'

Romans 8:1,2: "Therefore those in union with Christ Jesus have no condemnation. For the law of that spirit which gives life in union with Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." (The *New World Translation* expands "in Christ" to "in union with Christ.")

Those in union with Christ (or, in Christ) do not stand condemned before God. The next verses of Romans 8 (vs. 3-17) clearly show that those who are in union with Christ are those

who are God's sons. Do you feel condemned before God? Are your sins forgiven? Are you right with God? Are you in Christ?

John 5:24: "Most truly I say to you, He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life, and he does not come into judgment but has passed over from death to life."

Have you passed over from death to life, escaping judgment?

The February 15, 1986 *Watchtower*, page 13, gave new understanding to the phrase "in union with Christ" (referring to John 17:20,21):

"So, today, both groups, the heavenly and the earthly, are "in union with the Father and the Son"-at full accord with them in accomplishing God's work. Jesus prayed, 'That they may all be [at unity], just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us.' This oneness is not limited in meaning to joint heirship, for obviously Jesus' disciples do not become any "body of Jehovah" or "joint heirs with Jehovah." They are 'in union' in that they show oneness of cooperation, being of one heart and mind with both Jehovah and Christ, as they witness to the world of mankind." (Brackets and emphasis theirs)

Before this time the expression "in union with Christ" was always used in reference to the 144,000. (See, for example, *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* [1966], pages 102, 109, 110, 143-146.) Now the Society applies it also to the 'great crowd' class. The Watchtower article quoted above cited John 17:21 and applied it to both those with the heavenly hope and those with the earthly hope. Yet, compare what Jesus prayed in the next few verses:

John 17:22-24: "Also, I have given them the glory that you have given me, in order that they may be one just as we are one. I in union with them and you in union with me, in order that they may be perfected into one...*Father, as to what you have given me, I wish that, where I am, they also may be with me, in order to behold my glory that you have given me.*"

Jesus prayed that those who would be in union with Him would be with Him in glory one day. Is that your hope?

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Consequently, if anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away, look! new things have come into existence."

Those in Christ are new creatures in Christ. Another way to put it is that they are new-born. Their old selves have died (along with their sin) and they have started the road anew. (Romans 6:2-11) Is that true of you? Have you died to sin? Are you now alive in union with Christ as a new creation, reborn as a child of God? If not, are you now condemned before God?

Partial Justification?

Romans 5:1,2: "Therefore, now that we have been declared righteous ["justified," Kingdom Interlinear] as a result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have gained our approach by faith into this undeserved kindness in which we now stand; and let us exult, based on hope of the glory of God."

The words "declare righteous" or "justify" occur many, many times in the New Testament, particularly in Paul's writings. Those who are made right with God are justified. In the December 1, 1985 *Watchtower*, pages 8-18, the Watchtower Society argues that most of God's servants receive only a partial justification for the present. (This includes Old Testament servants of God.) The 144,000 receive complete justification now. However, consider these verses:

Romans 4:2,3,6,7: "If, for instance, Abraham were declared righteous as a result of works, he would have ground for boasting; but not with God. For what does the Scripture say: 'Abraham exercised faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness.' . . . Just as David also speaks of the happiness of the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 'Happy are those whose lawless deeds have been pardoned and whose sins have been covered.'"

Galatians 3:8,9: "Now the Scripture, seeing in advance that God would declare people of the nations righteous due to faith, declared the good news beforehand to Abraham, namely: 'By means of you all the nations will be blessed.' Consequently those who adhere to faith are being blessed together with faithful Abraham."

True, the Old Testament servants of God lived and died before the coming of Christ. Yet, according to Revelation 13:8 Jesus was the 'Lamb that was slain from the founding of the world.' Paul at Romans 3:25 and 26 explains how God could forgive people even before Jesus gave His life for us. Where is the Bible verse that says their salvation is any different than ours? Where does the Bible speak of different types of justification? Where does it speak of partial justification? On the contrary, the early Christians at Galatia were told they were being blessed together with Abraham, not apart from him.

Are Your Sins Forgiven Now?

Surprisingly, the Society teaches that it is only the 144,000 who now experience complete forgiveness of sins. The rest of God's servants must wait until the Millennium. The January 1, 1987 *Watchtower*, page 30 says:

"While the small group selected to be taken to heaven have had their sins forgiven from Pentecost of 33 C.E. onward and thus already enjoy the Jubilee, the Scriptures show that the liberation for believing mankind will occur during Christ's Millennial Reign. That will be when he applies to mankind the benefits of his ransom sacrifice." (Emphasis theirs)

Where do "the Scriptures show" that most of God's servants will not have their sins completely forgiven until a future time? Where does the Bible say God only partially forgives?

On Whose Merit Will You Stand Before God?

Isaiah 64:6: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." (*New International Version*)

Yet, the Watchtower Society teaches that most of mankind will be declared righteous at the end of a future Millennium, as a result of their own merit. We are told on page 400 of *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* (1966):

"Jehovah God will justify, declare righteous, on the basis of their own merit all perfected humans who have withstood that final, decisive test of mankind."
(Emphasis ours)

The only way anyone will stand before God is through the blood of the Lamb! Not by one's own merit (Revelation 7:14; Ephesians 2:8,9).

A Few Personal Questions...

Do You Have Everlasting Life, Now?

John 3:36: "He that exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him."

John 3:18: "He that exercises faith in him is not to be judged. He that does not exercise faith has been judged already, because he has not exercised faith in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

John 5:24: "Most truly I say to you, He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life, and he does not come into judgment but has passed over from death to life."

1 John 5:13: "I write you these things that you may know that you have life everlasting, you who put your faith in the name of the Son of God."

Do You Have the Son?

1 John 5:11,12: "And this is the witness given, that God gave us everlasting life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has this life; he that does not have the Son of God does not have this life."

Does Christ Dwell in You?

Ephesians 3:17: "to have the Christ dwell through your faith in your hearts with love; that you may be rooted and established on the foundation."

Galatians 4:6,7: "Now because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts and it cries out: 'Abba, Father!' So then, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God."

John 14:23: "In answer Jesus said to him: 'If anyone loves me, he will observe my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our abode with him.'"

Romans 8:9-13: "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live." (*Revised Standard Version*)

Does Christ dwell in your heart? Have you died to sin and risen to new life in Christ? Are you a son or a slave? Has the Father and the Son made their abode in you? Do you have the Spirit of Christ in you? Do you have the Son? Do you have everlasting life? Or, are you still in slavery to sin?

Will You Accept His Invitation?

Revelation 3:20: "Look! I am standing at the door and knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his house and take the evening meal with him and he with me."

Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you."

John 14:14: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (*New International Version*. Compare the literal Greek word for word portion of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*: "If ever anything you should ask me in the name of me this I shall do.")

Conclusion

A Christian is someone personally united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All Christians share the "one hope" spoken of at Ephesians 4:4. This hope is to someday be with Christ where He is (John 17:20,24). In fact, Christ Himself is "our hope." (1 Timothy 1:1) Paul's message to the Gentiles was 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' (Colossians 1:27,28)

This relationship with Christ is described in various ways. When we come into God's family we are said to be re-born as His sons and daughters (John 3:3,5). Previously we were slaves to sin. Now we have been adopted as His children (Rom. 8:14-17). This happens when we believe in and accept Christ (John 1:12; Gal. 4:4-7). At our baptism we are "born from water and the Spirit" and "put on Christ" (John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27).

No longer are we dead in sin (Rom. 6:2); we have been "baptized into Christ's death" and we are alive in Christ! (Rom. 6:3-6; Eph. 2:1,5-7) Christ's Spirit dwells in us helping us to change our lives so that we no longer walk in the flesh (Eph. 3:17; Rom. 8:9-13).

Our walk with Christ should be a daily walk. Christ calls us to receive Him in Communion to give us strength for our journey (1 Cor. 11:23-25). How glad we are to proclaim His death at the Lord's Supper, for His loving sacrifice of Himself means that we might have life (1 Cor. 11:26; John 6:53,54).

Knowing that Christ has paid the full price for our sin, we do not try to add to that perfect price. Rather, we gladly 'live no longer for ourselves, but for Him who died for us and was raised again.' (2 Cor. 5:14; compare Ephesians 2:8-10) Knowing God loves His children reassures us when we fall or are uncertain. "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

Dear reader, if you do not have this "peace of God that excels all thought" please accept Jesus' invitation to give you this rest when you do as He said: "Come to me!" (Matthew 11:28,29; Philippians 4:7) Take Him at His word. Men may fail you, but He will never disappoint you! (Romans 3:4; 9:33)