

“Upon the Lampstand”

“After lighting a lamp there is not one person who conceals it with something or who puts it underneath a bed. Instead the person puts it upon a Lampstand so that those who come inside may see the light.”—*Jesus of Nazareth*, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke 8:16–17.

Question: *If you believe Jehovah’s Witnesses who are associated with the Watchtower Society promote certain false teachings, why do you associate yourself with them? (July 5, 2007)*

Answer: Because I, too, am one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I bear witness to the truth that Jehovah is the true God and that he is merciful, just, and allows his creatures to decide for themselves whether or not to obey or to disobey him. I also bear witness with Jehovah’s Witnesses associated with the Watchtower Society that “the Father has sent forth his Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14), that “there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell” (2 Peter 3:13), and other biblical teachings that collectively associate us together more than certain false teachings separate us apart. However, the false teachings are serious enough that critical ‘divisions exist among us’ (1 Corinthians 11:18).

Yet, the biblical model for the congregations of God shows that “there must also be sects among you, that the persons approved might also become manifest among you” (1 Corinthians 11:19). Thus, the divisions or “sects” brought about by those who “teach different doctrine” than what we find in the Bible (1 Timothy 1:3) will in the end make manifest those whom God approves. But since the majority of Jehovah’s Witnesses today are loyal to the teachings of the Watchtower Society, even if they may not be supported by Scripture, what is a Jehovah’s Witness who rejects the false teachings of other Witnesses to do in light of the shared beliefs mentioned above?

I believe that Jehovah’s Witnesses today are like the congregations of God described in Revelation Chapters 2–3. In these congregations there are some who “cannot bear bad men” and who “put to the test those who say they are apostles” or those who make equivalent claims (Revelation 2:2), there are some who are “holding fast the teaching of Balaam” (Revelation 2:14), some who are “holding fast the teaching of the sect of Nicolaus” (Revelation 2:15), and some who “tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess” (Revelation 2:20).

I believe these congregations are at a point now where critical decisions must be made, and made soon, or a new direction will have to be taken by those not responsible for what is published in the literature of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and other associated publishing agencies. If radical internal changes are not made that show themselves in the teachings, policies, and in the congregational affairs of Jehovah’s Witnesses earth-wide, then it may be necessary for those who are not interested in following the teachings of men apart from the words of God to completely separate from the Jehovah’s Witnesses of the Watchtower Society.

Such a radical separation may be necessary in order to help keep Jehovah’s name from continuing to be associated with teachings that are not supported by any good reasons found in the Bible, the written source of Jehovah’s teachings for mankind. But just as Jesus himself gave “that woman Jezebel” “time to repent” (Revelation 2:20, 21), so do those who “cannot bear bad men” give those who “say they are apostles” time to prove who they are, or time to “repent.”

To understand the present situation better, it is good to consider further the pattern of Jehovah’s worshippers preserved for us in the Bible, which contains other possible parallels between the people of God in ancient times and what we see happening today where Jehovah’s Witnesses are concerned. Probably the best account to explore in relation to your question is what we are told occurred with respect to God’s people of old, the Israelites, after Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the stone tablets written on by Jehovah God’s “finger”:

Exodus 31:18–32:1, 4–5, 9–14 (NWT)

Now as soon as [Jehovah God] he had finished speaking with [Moses] on Mount Si´nai he proceeded to give Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone written on by God’s finger. Meanwhile the people got to see that Moses was taking a long time about coming down from the mountain. So the people congregated themselves about Aaron and said to him: “Get up, make for us a god who will go ahead of us, because as regards this Moses, the man who led us up out of the land of Egypt, we certainly do not know what has happened to him.” ... Then he took [the gold] from their hands, and he formed it with a graving tool and proceeded to make it into a molten statue of a calf. And they began to say: “This is your God, O Israel, who led you up out of the land of Egypt.” When Aaron got to see this, he went to building an altar before it. Finally Aaron called out and said: “There is a festival to Jehovah tomorrow.” ... And Jehovah went on to say to Moses: “I have looked at this people and here it is a stiff-necked people. So now let me be, that my anger may blaze against them and I may exterminate them, and let me make you into a great nation.” And Moses proceeded to soften the face of Jehovah his God and to say: “Why, O Jehovah, should your anger blaze against your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent he

brought them out in order to kill them among the mountains and to exterminate them from the surface of the ground? Turn from your burning anger and feel regret over the evil against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel your servants, to whom you swore by yourself, in that you said to them, 'I shall multiply YOUR seed like the stars of the heavens, and all this land that I have designated I shall give to YOUR seed, that they may indeed take possession of it to time indefinite.'" And Jehovah began to feel regret over the evil that he had spoken of doing to his people. [Underline added.]

Jehovah was righteous in deciding to "exterminate" the people whom he had chosen and whom he had delivered from slavery through the Red Sea and concerning whom he had made promises through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They deserved his wrath because they had acted in a way that, in light of all that he had done and in view of all that they had received from his hand was not acceptable under any circumstance, unless Jehovah chose to accept it. But Jehovah could have, and would have made a new nation out of Moses (Exodus 32:10). Yet, Moses 'softened the face of Jehovah his God' and caused Jehovah to turn from his righteous anger. So, too, can Christians today act like Moses and think less of themselves and more about Jehovah and how the people of God, those who bear his name, affect his reputation by the things they do in that name. Even though they are committing gross sin by their false teachings, if God is willing they can be shown mercy and in the process God's name and reputation can be glorified by the actions of a few, on behalf of the many (compare John 15:9-13).

Again, Moses cared more about Jehovah's name and glory, even among the nations who did not worship him, than he did about his own glory or the honor that would come from being "the father of many nations" (compare Romans 4:18). He put Jehovah's reputation above his own and even suggested an alternative to the great offer that Jehovah extended to him. Jehovah accepted Moses' suggestion as a just alternative to destroying those who deserved it, and so he spared his people for the reasons Moses gave and at the same time he acted undeservingly merciful toward his people.

Today many Jehovah's Witnesses, in particular those loyal to the Watchtower Society over and above the teachings of the Bible, are like the Israelites who put the worship of the golden calf above their loyalty to the God who had delivered them from Egyptian bondage. Instead of waiting for Moses to return from the mountain, they began to congregate together around false beliefs that even led Aaron astray.

Today many Jehovah's Witnesses who require others to believe in uncertain if not highly suspect chronologies (such as those relating to 1914), who require that others accept certain applications of Bible prophecies (such as the date the heavenly resurrection began [1918]), or who maintain that we must accept that certain numbers are literal when they could be either literal or figurative in books like Revelation (such as 144,000 [Revelation 7:4; 14:1]) in order to be accepted as a Christian, are misleading the

congregations of God just like those in congregations of “the Lord’s day” were misleading others with “the teaching of Balaam,” who was involved in ‘putting a stumbling block before the sons of Israel’ (Revelation 2:14).

Today many Jehovah’s Witnesses go beyond what the Bible teaches about things like the use of blood, and they wrongly require that others refuse potentially life-saving treatment involving the use of blood as blood and not merely as food (which is the most that the Bible could be said to clearly teach against) in order to be considered one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. These Witnesses are like those “holding fast the teaching of the sect of Nicolaus” (Revelation 2:15), which sect was excessively rigid and went beyond what was required to please God and Christ (see my [“The Congregations of God During ‘the Lord’s Day,’” IN MEDIO, June 1, 2007](#), under the discussion of **Rev 2:6**).

Today, many Jehovah’s Witnesses, specifically those responsible for what is produced in literature that is published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and associated agencies “tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess” (Revelation 2:20) because they do not remove the source of the sickness that is ailing the congregations of God. Therefore, if “she is not willing to repent” then Jesus Christ will “throw her into a sickbed, and those committing fornication with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds” (Revelation 2:21–22).

In the meantime, those Jehovah’s Witnesses who “cannot bear bad men” must put Jehovah’s name and glory above our own reputation but without compromising our love of the truth by ‘tolerating’ false beliefs (Revelation 2:20). We can do that by being open and honest with those who call themselves by Jehovah’s name, but who ‘teach commands of men as the fear of Jehovah’ (Isaiah 29:13). We can do that by ‘not being afraid of the things we are about to suffer’ (Revelation 2:10). We can do that by listening to “what the spirit says to the congregations” through the pages of the Bible (Revelation 2:7; 3:4) over and above what it might say through the pages of some other book or writing of men. We can do that by ‘keeping the word of Jesus and not proving false to his name’ (Revelation 3:8).

Remember, I and the other Jehovah’s Witnesses who “put to the test those who say they are apostles” do so out of love, and not to cause division or to impede the work of God. We are anxious to preach “the good new of the kingdom ... in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations” (Matthew 24:14), and to “make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit” (Matthew 28:19). But we are at “war” (Revelation 12:17), and the last persons we want to fight are our own brothers and sisters in the faith, unless we are forced to do so out of love and loyalty to Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, above all.—Acts 15:24; John 18:37; Galatians 2:4–5; Titus 1:10–16; Jude 4.

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***This article was revised on the date indicated only in minor grammatical, stylistic, and formatting respects. No substantive changes were made to the content of the original article.**