

# WITNESSING TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

by C. John Miller

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*Footnotes with verse texts added by William H. Gross – all quotes are taken from the NIV*

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Our first concern here is with bringing the gospel to the followers of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" movement. But it is also my hope that what is said will have broader application to cultists of all types and to unbelievers in general.

## THE PROBLEM

Most Christians run into a serious difficulty when they consider witnessing to the "Witnesses." It should be kept clear that a primary aim in evangelism is to bring the gospel NEAR to the sinners. In love, you are boldly to confront the man with his guilt and with the good news of Christ's redemption. The idea is, wherever possible, to get past his preconceptions so that he HEARS the gospel as God has given it in Scripture. This means that you must work hard not to provoke his prejudices unnecessarily and that you must take care to present Christ in a winsome manner.

Regrettably, Christians often forget all about this when they meet a "Jehovah's Witness." They seem to have concluded that the WATCHTOWER publicist is somehow subhuman and beyond salvation, a dangerous expert in seduction. It is also assumed that he knows the Bible better than most Christians, too. His zeal and willingness to sacrifice make orthodox believers feel inferior. Consequently, they avoid him or roughly rebuke him as though the cultist were not a man made in the image of God.

To be sure, there are "Jehovah's Witnesses" who are hardened men, beings whose hearts are directed by guile. From such, turn away. These will not "cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:10). But many cultists are acting simply out of zealous ignorance. They are not willfully perverting the gospel. Rather they have been brainwashed into accepting a legalistic system of salvation, but in some measure they are still willing to listen to Scripture.

Hence it won't do at all to treat them rudely. This is the age of the Spirit, and as a child of God you have that Spirit. With the Spirit go the fruits of that Spirit. You are not called to slam the door in any man's face. Instead, your calling is to demonstrate "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22). Through these things you prove that the Triune God is alive and that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal "active force."

## MYTHS ABOUT "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES"

You can be helped in witnessing to WATCHTOWER people by seeing a few myths for what they are.

**FIRST:** It is pure myth that "Jehovah's Witnesses" never give up their religion. Former "Witnesses" have become sound believers in Christ as the God-man, having rejected the heresy that would reduce the Son of God to a created being. William J. Schnell (*Thirty Years A Watchtower Slave*) estimates that a minimum 12,206 persons were freed from the WATCHTOWER system over a period of nine years (cited by Edmond Gruss in *Apostles Of Denial*, p.36)

**SECOND:** It is not true that these cultists know the Bible well. They often know the WATCHTOWER system well. But that is not the same as knowing the Bible. Get the "Jehovah's Witness" away from his system of doctrine and usually he is lost. They are supposed to read the Bible on a regular basis, but even those who do this faithfully often read mechanically. And without the anointing of the Holy One, they can hardly be expected to have any meaningful grasp of Scripture.

**THIRD:** It is also a myth that WATCHTOWER people will not listen to the gospel. Now there is some truth in this. But it's not the whole story, especially at present. In the past, this movement has had great appeal to the disillusioned and embittered members of society. Add to this the fact that this religious system is highly negative, with its adherents taught to glory in persecution. Naturally this has resulted in an aggressive "I-can-talk-you-down" approach to non-"Witnesses". Today, however, the leaders of this cult are concerned to upgrade the image of their cause, to make their Bible study appear less shoddy, and the house-to-house campaigns less truculent. This new "friendliness" makes it much easier to talk to a "Jehovah's Witness" about Christ. You can now expect that some of them will listen.

**FOURTH:** It is not true that the "Jehovah's Witness" speaks from a position of biblical authority. Instead, the impression of authority that he conveys is based upon frequent repetition of the same concepts over a long period of time. In other words, he has undergone a process of brainwashing that leaves him vulnerable to an approach that is clearly derived from and based on the Bible's own authority.

### I. CONFRONTATION

What follows can be applied to most situations, but it is especially helpful in confronting the "Jehovah's Witness" who is going from door to door. [For these insights, I am in considerable measure indebted to Theodore Van Schoich, a former "Jehovah's Witness," and to Mr. Robert Morey, a student at Westminster Seminary with perceptive insights into strategies for witnessing to WATCHTOWER cultists.] Begin by inviting your visitor into your home and treat him with all Christian courtesy. Quickly offer him coffee or tea after he is seated before he can launch into his prepared speech. To do this is highly effective for two reasons: (1) You have at the outset stopped him from giving his prepared speech, or at least slowed him down; and (2) by your kindness you have refuted "Witness" doctrine that only "Jehovah's Witnesses" love people.

Then tell your guest that you will be happy to discuss Scripture with him, but that it will be necessary for you first to lead in prayer. He will object to this because he does not believe that you and he pray to the same God. He is right, of course. You do not worship the same God. But don't let this deter you. Kindly explain that you understand his problem but that you have a zeal for the knowledge of God, and that you do not wish to be guided by man's words but by God's. Therefore you must pray so that neither of you will exchange any words other than the words of God as found in Scripture.

Next, just go ahead and pray. Begin by addressing your prayer to Jehovah God. Make your words direct and earnest -- from a heart of faith. Ask specifically that your guest will be granted repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus. Plead with the Father to bring him to an understanding of free grace, the significance of Christ's shed blood, and the new birth as a work of the Spirit. However, as you pray remember that you are in the presence of God. Your awareness of the divine majesty, your sense of the awfulness of sin, and the inexpressible glory of Christ's person must suffuse your whole being. Let the "Jehovah's Witness" really stand in the presence of Jehovah God for the first time in his life.

## **THE NEW BIRTH**

After this, turn to John 3:3<sup>1</sup> and read it. This verse which deals with the new birth often proves to be very troublesome to "Jehovah's Witnesses." They believe that only the 144,000<sup>2</sup> are born again and are members of "the congregation of God." such verses, they are taught, do not apply to most WATCHTOWER followers, because these are only members of "the great crowd." (WATCHTOWER teachers divide their followers into two classes: There is the exclusive group, the 144,000 or "little flock," which has experienced the new birth and goes to heaven. The remaining great mass of "Witnesses" will enjoy endless life here on earth.)

For this reason it is a rare thing to meet a "Witness" who will maintain that he is born again. Passages used to support this strange view are John 10<sup>3</sup> and Revelation 7.<sup>4</sup> But John 3:3 clearly teaches that such unregenerate men cannot understand the kingdom of God. Therefore, how can your guest be sure he has the truth if he cannot SEE God's Kingdom?

By this time, the "Jehovah's Witness" will probably have interrupted you at least once. So graciously but firmly move the conversation right back to John 3:3. The visitor will maintain that it

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:3 "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (or *born from above*)

<sup>2</sup> Rev 14:1-5 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

<sup>3</sup> John 10:34-36 "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? 35 If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came-- and the Scripture cannot be broken-- 36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? [Hence Jesus is only a god and not *The God* – suggesting only some attain this special category] - WHG

<sup>4</sup> Rev 7:4, 9 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel... 9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count – [*suggesting two flocks or categories of believers*] - WHG.

is not necessary for him to be born again in order to know the truth. You must thereupon turn with him to John 18:36-37<sup>5</sup> where Jesus explains the nature of the kingdom mentioned in John 3:3. What you learn here is that the kingdom is integrally bound up with the truth. Especially note verse 37 which stresses Jesus as the King of the truth. The problem for the "Jehovah's Witness" becomes huge at this point: How can he be sure he is right if he does not know this King of truth through a heavenly rebirth?

Do not, of course, become personally offensive in making this challenge. But as he resists, simply move him along to John 17:3.<sup>6</sup> In this part of Jesus' high priestly prayer, our Lord says that "life eternal" is presently enjoyed by those who know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom that God has sent. Again, the "Jehovah's Witness" will seek to restrict this to the 144,000 and thus evade the force of our Lord's statement. But insist that you personally do know this God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Furthermore, show him from John 8:32-34<sup>7</sup> that to know the truth -- God and Jesus -- is to be free from sin, but not to know the truth is to be a slave to sin.

## THE DEITY OF CHRIST

So far, you have not given a formal defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, you are presupposing that the Triune God is the true and living God and that men who do not know him are lost as well as blinded by their sins.

But now turn to the doctrine of the Trinity, or more specifically, to the person and work of Christ. Already your guest will have broached the subject. He is eager to show you the "true" interpretation of John 1:1<sup>8</sup> and the supposed inferiority of the Son to the Father in John 14:28.<sup>9</sup> It is important for you to be able to answer him on these and other verses; but it is highly advisable to direct him to less familiar passages that teach the deity of Christ.

For example, pose for him this question: Do you believe it is possible for Jehovah God to take to himself a human form? He is almost certain to say "no", if he understands the question, because this is virtually to acknowledge the possibility of the Incarnation. Therefore take him to Genesis 18<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John 18:36-37 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." 37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

<sup>6</sup> John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

<sup>7</sup> John 8:32-34 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. [\[this is a corrected citation – original text had Jn 7:32-34\] - WHG](#)

<sup>8</sup> John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [\[JW's in the past have asserted in their New World Translation that this should read, "the Word was a god." They have been so embarrassed by scholarly correction that their translation has been altered. This is no longer used as their proof text.\] - WHG](#)

<sup>9</sup> John 14:28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

<sup>10</sup> Gen 18:1-3 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. 3 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Gen 18:17-19 Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." Gen 18:25 will not the Judge [\[or Ruler\]](#) of all the earth do right?"

where we are told that Jehovah appeared to Abraham (verse 1). Thus we learn that Jehovah HAS taken to himself a human form. His feet are capable of being washed and he eats with Abraham (verses 4-8). He converses with Abraham (verse 13), rebukes Sarah (verse 15), walks with Abraham (verses 16-17), and hears Abraham's intercessory plea for Sodom and Gomorrah (verses 22-33). (And Jehovah himself stays with Abraham while the two angels in human form visit Sodom to rescue Lot.)

Then take him to Isaiah 9:6<sup>11</sup> where the "mighty God" is said to be born as a child. When he replies that Christ is A mighty God, but that Jehovah is THE mighty God, gently but directly rebuke him for having two Gods. (Use Isaiah 43:10,<sup>12</sup> last sentence--but smile and read the whole verse.)

Your purpose in this (in Genesis 18) is to show that Jehovah-God can and does take to himself a human form. In the Old Testament this was done as a temporary fore- shadowing of Christ's coming; in the New Testament the Son of God permanently takes to himself human nature, a fact which is predicted in passages like Micah 5:2<sup>13</sup> as well as Isaiah 9:6 [*above*].

### **THE PERSONAL EMPHASIS**

However, fight with all your wit and will to keep the discussion personal. If you use the Genesis 18 passage, tie it in with John 17:3. Look at Genesis 18:19, where God says he "has known" Abraham, an act of personal loving election that results in his being called out of idolatry to serve the living God. Thus we know God (John 17:3) because he first knew us (Genesis 18:19). Hence, like Abraham, we who are known of God are called friends of God and God is our Friend (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23; John 15:14-16).<sup>14</sup>

Use this biblical emphasis on personal religion to confront the WATCHTOWER zealot with his own spiritual state. Cite passages like Jeremiah 17:9,<sup>15</sup> Genesis 6:5<sup>16</sup> and 8:21, Romans 3:10-23,<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Isa 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>12</sup> Isa 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

<sup>13</sup> Mic 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

<sup>14</sup> 2 Chron 20:7 O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? Isa 41:8 "But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, James 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. [*this is the transitional verse which shows that not only was Abraham called a friend of God, but also anyone whose faith is credited as righteousness. This is followed by the next verse which makes it even clearer*] John 15:14-16 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. [*But this only makes sense if Jesus is understood to be God, and not just a man – move to John 14:8-9 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*]

<sup>15</sup> Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

<sup>16</sup> Gen 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

<sup>17</sup> Rom 3:10-24 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." 13 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know." 18 "There is

which describe human nature in all its corruption and guilt. Let him feel the condemnation of the law of God as you yourself have felt it as stated in Galatians 3:10-13<sup>18</sup> and borne by Christ at Calvary (Matthew 27:46).<sup>19</sup> Tell him how your guilt drove you to repentance and saving faith in the Lord Jesus, the only begotten of the Father.

Show him, by way of climax, that Scripture does not divide the redeemed into two classes, the saints who are a literal 144,000 only and "the great crowd" who have little personal knowledge of God. Galatians 3:25-29,<sup>20</sup> for instance, says flatly that "all are sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (verse 26) and that "if ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed" (verse 29).

In this whole discussion matters will almost inevitably seesaw back and forth. But these foregoing points are to be kept closely in view. Return to them again and again, and remember that much depends upon your personal manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit as you deal in kindness and love. This is the age of the Spirit, the new age. And you are a new man. When you serve refreshments, when you pray, and when you are wounded over the zealot's indifference to the glory of Christ -- at every point show that you are a living proof of the existence of the Triune God. As a rule this means that you will avoid attacking the deceptions practised by such leaders as Russell and Rutherford. And do NOT call them *Russellites*; they resent this, and it moves the discussion away from Scripture.

## II. HELPFUL THINGS TO REMEMBER

In having a "Jehovah's Witness" into your home, you should keep several things in mind. For one thing, the disciples of the WATCHTOWER divide into two kinds, those who will listen and those who will not. Don't waste too much time on those who clearly will not hear Scripture. You are not inviting them into your home to teach but to engage in a meaningful discussion with you based upon Scripture.

For another thing, prepare your own heart and mind for the encounter. Ordinarily, a discussion like this comes about because you have made an appointment at the time of the first visit. Usually the WATCHTOWER publicist will prefer to do it this way because he has a territory to cover, and on the first visit he only plans to spend ten or fifteen minutes with you at the most. In the meantime,

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no fear of God before their eyes." 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

<sup>18</sup> Gal 3:10-13 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,

<sup>19</sup> Matt 27:45-46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"-which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [This is a problematic verse in dealing with JW's because they hear it say that Jesus is not God. A better verse might be John 19:30 'When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.' Point out that the word for "finished" is a commerce term, meaning "Paid in Full." Our sins are completely paid for. There is no debt remaining which must be paid by our obedience. Rather, obedience is how we show that God is our Father] – WHG

<sup>20</sup> Gal 3:25-29 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. 26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

recruit friends to pray for you and your guest (or guests). Then get in and do your homework. Study the doctrine of the Trinity carefully. Use Charles Hodge, Loraine Boettner, or Louis Berkhof -- but above all concentrate on Scripture. Fill your mind with the knowledge of God so that when the "Witness" returns this knowledge will overflow.

It is also important for you ahead of time to go over the main doctrines of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" and a refutation of them in a work like Anthony Hoekema's *The Four Major Cults* or Edmond Gruss's *Apostles Of Denial*. When you do this, several things expounded above should be brought into sharp focus. You should see that the WATCHTOWER religion is a form of Unitarian legalism which has much in common with ancient Jewish Phariseeism. This is the heart of the matter. The kingdom of God is not the free gift of the gracious Father to unworthy helpless sinners, as the WATCHTOWER sees it, but rather a status to be earned by zealous obedience in the tradition of the Pharisees who were willing to compass land and sea to make one proselyte (Matthew 23:15). Under such a system personal knowledge of God can hardly exist; God becomes remote and impersonal. Thus the "Jehovah's Witnesses" reject not only the fact of Immanuel ("God with us" in the person of Christ), but they also reject the biblical teaching on the omnipresence of God. Quite consistently, they deny what is taught in Psalm 139<sup>21</sup> about the universal presence of God.

The reason for this is that the legalist is planning to work his way up to God and does not see any need for God to build any Jacob's ladder between heaven and earth. It is also safer not to have God too close. The point of tension in all this is that the ladder of legalism is man-made and leads downward rather than upward (Romans 3:19-20;<sup>22</sup> Galatians 3:10-12).<sup>23</sup>

Not only does legalism lead to everlasting hell in the life to come, but at present the life of the legalist is constantly under pressure. Nothing is ever finished. The burden of uncompleted obligation grows ever heavier. And the pound-for-pound attitude which goes with legalism makes for abrasive human relationships within the home of the WATCHTOWER family. Children especially find the large demands of this religious system overpowering as well as destructive of normal relationships with their parents.

### III. A VISIT TO A CIRCUIT ASSEMBLY HALL

In seeking to apply some of these principles, a small group of Christians went with me to visit the large circuit assembly hall in Buckingham Valley, Pennsylvania. We ended up at a conference table with three of the "Jehovah's Witnesses." Interestingly enough, the most articulate of the three was

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<sup>21</sup> Ps 139:7-8 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

<sup>22</sup> Rom 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

<sup>23</sup> Gal 3:10-14 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

the custodian-manager of the huge building. One of the others was the servant of the local assembly but he was much less vocal.

We approached these "Witnesses" on a Saturday morning in November (1971). We explained that our purpose was to listen to one of their lectures and to share the knowledge of God with anyone who was willing to hear us. "We have," I said, "a zeal for the knowledge of God and we are concerned to share what we have."

Doubtless they were surprised by our coming, but they seemed to find the idea of zeal for the knowledge of God quite understandable. And after some preliminary questions-and-answers about the structure and discipline of the organization, we said we wished to discuss the Scriptures with them. But before we could begin it would be necessary for us to pray. "We do not," it was explained, "want to speak the words of man but only the words of God as found in the Scriptures. Therefore we must pray before we speak."

The leader of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" was taken back by this request. He said firmly that they would not be able to join us in this prayer. When I persisted, he added that they could not bow their heads or close their eyes.

In reply, I said with all kindness, "That is all right. If you wish to, you may join in, though. We shall be praying to Jehovah God."

During the prayer the Holy Spirit appeared to be leading because throughout the lengthy discussion that followed there was a kind of holy calm with which these cultists were willing to listen to the Scriptures. After prayer we went immediately to John 17:3 and our personal knowledge of God. They wanted to discuss the Trinity, but we delayed this until we had testified to the power of the Word of God to give us a personal knowledge of the Father and Jesus his Son. From this we took them to Genesis 18 and showed them how Jehovah could take a human form. We supported this by the use of Zechariah 11,12; Jehovah was the shepherd sold for thirty pieces of silver (11:12) and he was the one pierced through by guilty Israel (12:10).<sup>24</sup>

After this, we explained with great joy the significance of the name "Son of Man." The first Adam was called to image God by subduing the earth and by ruling over it. But because of the Fall, man became guilty and corrupted in the depths of his heart, an apostate image living under the curse of God. As a consequence of this curse, death came upon all men. Man created to rule over the earth found the creation order reversed. In the end, every human grave shows that the dust is king, not man. But praise God! Immanuel is also a true man, one who is absolutely righteous before Jehovah God. Every other servant of Jehovah from Adam to the disciples proved to be faithless when tested; but Jesus obeyed the Father to the uttermost and provided a substitute righteousness for all who believe.

They objected, however, when they heard that Jesus' bodily resurrection was a vindication of Jehovah and a triumph over the dust of the earth. That is, they resisted the doctrine of a bodily

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<sup>24</sup> Zech 12:10-11 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

resurrection and cited 1 Peter 3:18<sup>25</sup> as proof. We listened patiently to them and then asked them to consider 1 Peter 3:18 in the light of 1\_Corinthians 15,<sup>26</sup> Philippians 3:20-21<sup>27</sup> and the account of the resurrection in John 20:27.<sup>28</sup>

From there we moved to John 3:3 and presented the necessity of the new birth. They sought to counter this by the distinction between the 144,000 and "the great crowd." As members of "the great crowd," they did not need to have a new birth. But it was then brought out that Jesus demands in John 6 that men must actually eat of his flesh and drink of his blood if they are to have salvation. They again fell back upon the distinction between the 144,000 and the earthly multitude. But then we turned to Galatians 5:22 and insisted that these fruits of the Spirit belonged to anyone who believed. The whole argument of Galatians is to the effect that faith virtually equals the Spirit and the Spirit virtually equals the bearing of fruit.

At this juncture, the remarkable testimony of one of the new converts in our group was cited as proof of this kind of working. This girl whose life has been wonderfully changed by the Holy Spirit was sitting at the table with us. They seemed to be impressed by the way fruit had appeared in her life, but they said the same things happened in their movement.

"But," we said, "you are missing the point. According to your teaching on the 144,000 only they are born again, and only they have the Spirit and this kind of fruit. How then does Barbara fit into this scheme? You see, if you are consistent you have real trouble explaining what has happened in her life or in any renewed life at all -- because these things should only happen to the 144,000."

When it was all over, several things stood out in our minds. We were able to witness to them with great joy and quiet power. Why? Principally because there were many Christians praying for us. And one of the seminary students sitting in the group at the conference table had been praying during the whole discussion. From this came a biblical authority to speak that was clear-cut but not oppressive. Scripture after Scripture after Scripture came to our minds at just the right time. When precise explanations of difficult questions were needed, they were there. At moments when it was tempting to be unkind or to adopt a winner's stance, the Spirit helped us to act in love and to keep the presentation from becoming a debater's exchange. Our hope is that God will in his grace be pleased to snatch some of these from the fire.

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Peter 3:18-19 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Cor 15:3-8 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also,

<sup>27</sup> Phil 3:20-21 we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. [A more obvious passage is Luke 24:39-43 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.] - WHG

<sup>28</sup> John 20:27-28 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"