



Reachout Subject Guide

The Watchtower Memorial Meal

Every year the Jehovah's Witnesses celebrate Jesus' death with what they term, the Memorial Meal, what other churches call Communion, the Lord's Table, the Eucharist.

The Watchtower of 15 March 2004 (pp.4-7) carries an article designed to prepare people for this evening. It explains what happens and shows the correct procedures to be carried out.

Is the teaching of the Watchtower Society on this subject compatible with evangelical Christianity? Do Jehovah's Witnesses understand and interpret Scripture in context and correctly? In this article I want to check some of the teaching about this very important event and maybe give some ideas as to what to talk about with the next Jehovah's Witness you meet.

A Perfect Human

"Jesus died as the foremost upholder of Jehovah's sovereignty. He thus proved Satan to be a liar for charging, that humans serve God only with selfish motives. (Job 2:1-5; Proverbs 27:11) By means of his death as a perfect human, Jesus also 'gave his soul a ransom in exchange for many.' (Matthew 20:28)" - p.4.

'Foremost,' suggest there are others that do a similar job besides this one, Jesus is just better at it. What can the Watchtower be referring to here? There is no other reference or explanation in the article but it is a question that should be asked of every Jehovah's Witness.

The Society states that Jesus' death proves Satan a liar because he charged that 'humans serve God only for selfish motives.' (see Job 1:9-11) The Watchtower is calling Jesus just a human, like you and me! It is obvious that Job was just a human and thus Jesus, according to the Society, is just human.

That means, of course, that he cannot be the Son of God, even according to the Watchtower definition. For Jesus to be the Son of God, as Jehovah's Witnesses understand it, he must be a unique, special creation - not just like any other human. We should also point out that, when the unique, special creation would come to earth, he would not just be like any other human because of the life he has lived in heaven so far. How can God's claimed mouthpiece to this earth, the Watchtower Society, equate Jesus Christ to just being a human?

This is further complicated by the next sentence when they talk of Jesus being a 'perfect human.' The failure to think through the theology here is evident. When did Jesus become the perfect human, that is, one that did not sin at all? Was it at the end of his life when he made it through 33 years without sinning? Or was it, the only other possible time, when he was born?

Whichever way you look at it there are problems. The Scriptures say that, "ALL have sinned" (Romans 3:23). Indeed, at the end of this paragraph from which we are quoting the writers quote the 'companion' verse, Romans 6:23, which says that, "the wages of this sin is death."

Now Paul says quite clearly in Scripture that ALL have sinned, every human being that ever walked this earth has sinned. Not one has ever managed not to! Yet we have just been told that Jesus is a perfect human! There is no such thing. If Jesus is perfect he is not just human and if Jesus is just human he sinned! As we agree with the Society that Jesus did not sin then we have to see that Jesus was not just human, there was a quality in Him, different to every human - that was the only quality that is not tainted by sin - God!

The Society want to conclude that, just as Adam, through his disobedience, "forfeited perfect human life", Jesus restored perfect human life. But if that was all then He could only do it for Himself. One man can lose and one man can gain. However, what Jesus did was for all men that they could have everlasting life and know sins forgiven. That goes beyond one 'perfect human being' because the achievement of this one cannot lose its power over time. We are talking about something that God does, not what just a perfect man did.

We also must consider when do we have this eternal life? If I do not have life that goes beyond the grave - eternal life - before I die; if I do not know my sins forgiven, before I die - then, surely, it is too late. Without my sin forgiven and without eternal life, before I go into the grave, I can never come out, because I would be under the jurisdiction of death.

It is also interesting, from the viewpoint of the Watchtower's theology, that they quote John 3:16, which clearly shows the promise of this quality of eternal life is for 'everyone exercising faith in him' (NWT, 2013). Not a selected few but everyone. How relevant in the context of those who take the bread and the wine and those who just let the emblems pass them by. If I know I have this eternal life I will take the emblems; if I don't take the emblems I am saying that I do not have life beyond the grave.

New Covenant

"...so Jesus' blood poured out in death made the new covenant valid... To identify who properly partakes of the Memorial emblems, we need to understand what the new covenant is about and who are party to it. The Bible states: "Look! There are days coming," is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I will conclude with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant ... I will put my law within them, in their heart I shall write it. And I will become their God, and they themselves will become my people.... I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more.' "—Jeremiah 31:31-34. The new covenant makes possible a special kind of relationship with Jehovah God. By means of this covenant, a certain group of individuals become his people and he becomes their God." - p.5.



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We are told here in the article that to understand those who are allowed to partake of the emblems, we need to understand the new covenant. Those who are in the new covenant can take the emblems and those who are not, must allow them to pass by.

Later we are told,

“On his last night with his disciples, Jesus himself also made a different covenant with them. “I make a covenant with you,” he told them, “just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom.” (Luke 22:29) This is the Kingdom covenant. The number of imperfect humans taken into the Kingdom covenant is 144,000.” - p.6.

If you are not part of the 144,000 you cannot take the emblems. If you are not part of the 144,000 you are not in the new Kingdom covenant. Whereas the leaders of the Watchtower Society probably see this doctrine as a way to keep the majority of its members dependent on a relationship with the organisation, and away from a direct relationship with Jesus, they are in fact keeping their members away from any hope of eternal life.

To see what really is happening in Biblical terms we need to understand what the Bible teaches about covenant.

The Greek word for covenant is *diatheke*. Greek scholar, W.E. Vine tells us this is:

“a disposition of property by will or otherwise... it is the rendering of the Hebrew word meaning... agreement... it does not in itself contain the idea of joint obligation, it mostly signifies an obligation undertaken by a single person.” - Vines Dictionary of New Testament Words, p.251.

As such we can see that we need to know *personally* the one who is making the covenant. Benefits via a third party are just not sufficient. However, this personal relationship is not true of the ‘great crowd’, which is clearly evidenced by the fact that they are forbidden to take the emblems at the Memorial Meal.

The tragic result for each ‘great crowd’ member is that they have never known for themselves that Christ took away the guilt and power of their sin at Calvary and that in Christ they are new beings. (See 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and Colossians 2:8-15). If someone is not in the new covenant then none of the benefits of that covenant are theirs. There is no possibility of this being passed on second or third hand, because you have a relationship with an organisation that has some interest in this covenant. The Biblical conclusion is that the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses on this earth today have **no** eternal hope whatsoever because they are not in a covenant relationship themselves.

If the ‘great crowd’ or ‘other sheep’ are not in the new covenant which one are they in? They cannot be in the old because that has ended. So, where are they? In no relationship at all with Jehovah God and without hope in this world or the next.

Note clearly the Scripture:

“But you have come... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood ...”
(Hebrews 12:22- 24)

Without coming to Jesus there is no mediator and no new covenant.



How Often?

In wanting to show further differences between their teaching and that of evangelical Christianity the Society say on p.6.

“Should Jesus’ death be commemorated weekly or perhaps even daily? Well, Christ instituted the Lord’s Evening Meal and was unjustly put to death on Passover Day. Held only once a year, on Nisan 14, the Passover commemorated Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage. (Exodus 12:6, 14; Leviticus 23:5) So the death of “Christ our Passover” should be memorialized only once each year, not weekly or daily. (1 Corinthians 5:7)”

The verse that they quote here - 1 Cor.5:7 – has, in fact, nothing to do with how often we are to celebrate this meal, it simply says that Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed. However, there are other verses in the same letter to the Corinthians that are totally ignored. 1 Cor.10:25-26 for instance talks of, “as often” as you do it. Not in your annual celebration! It is clearly giving the Christians opportunity to take the meal on a more regular basis. This is further emphasized in 11:17-22, where Paul talks about eating the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis in the church meetings.

Is It Necessary?

“Is it necessary to partake of the Memorial emblems in order to be covered by Jesus’ sacrifice and receive everlasting life on earth? No. Nothing in the Bible suggests that after they are resurrected on earth, such God-fearing people as Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Joseph, Moses, and David will ever partake of these emblems.” - p.7.

This is rather putting the cart before the horse because, although we would agree that it is not necessary to take the emblems to ensure that you receive eternal life, nevertheless we take the emblems because we have that close relationship with Jesus and know that we have eternal life.

Also, of course, the emblems are only taken till He comes. Even if these ones were to be resurrected on the earth, it would be after Jesus comes, and so no one would take the emblems. However, unless I know the reality of what the emblems speak of, I will never have the chance to be involved in any future eternal life.

“Suppose a person is not absolutely sure that he is in the new covenant and the Kingdom covenant. What if he also lacks the Witness of God’s spirit that he is a joint heir with Christ? Then it would be wrong for him to partake of the Memorial emblems. Indeed, God would be displeased if a person knowingly represented himself as one called to be a heavenly king and priest when he did not really have such a calling.” – Romans 9:16; Revelation 22:5. - p.6.

If such a person is not sure then we would encourage them to see that they have no relationship with the One who died to save them. Instead of being encouraged just not to partake, I believe they should be encouraged to check out their spiritual life and hope. Instead of being told that God would be displeased if they partake, it seems to me that the Bible encourages them to test themselves – 2 Corinthians 13:5 – until they know they have such a relationship and then partake with joy and confidence.

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“The apostle John emphasized the importance of Jesus’ sacrifice when he said: “I am writing you [fellow anointed ones] these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world’s.” (1 John 2:1, 2) Anointed ones can say that Jesus’ sacrifice is a propitiatory cover for their sins. But it is also a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, making everlasting life possible for obedient mankind!” - p.7.

We would claim that the Watchtower Society has been non-Biblical throughout this article, but this paragraph near the end shows it even more clearly. Where does the Bible have the words, “fellow anointed ones”? The writer of this article has added words that are not in the Greek to seek to show that there are two classes of salvation.

There is nothing in the original to show this, John was writing to every Christian, not making a distinction between 2 classes. How tragic that the Society that claims to be God’s mouthpiece is putting words into His mouth that change the meaning of Scripture. More than that, it means that many will be kept in the dark as to what the Memorial meal really is all about.

Evidently, only anointed ones can say that Jesus’ sacrifice is a propitiatory cover for their sins. Is this not something that we all need to know? Indeed it is. This propitiation is likened to the ‘Mercy Seat’ in the Old Testament Tabernacle, it is the place where a sinner can come and receive mercy from God and know sins are forgiven.

It is not enough for the ‘great crowd’ simply to have head knowledge that it is “a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, making everlasting life possible for obedient mankind.” It is not to do with just being obedient to man or an idea of man. It is to do with entering, personally, before the New Testament Mercy Seat and knowing ones sins forgiven and thus entering into a true relationship directly with Jesus Christ.

Without such a relationship we have no hope and if we have such a relationship our spirits within will gladly, and with certainty, take of the emblems of bread and wine in remembrance of what Jesus did for me, and in glorious hope of my eternal future.

Keep in touch with us. Reachout is always ready to come and speak to groups and churches, ready to sit down with cult-members prepared at last to listen, ready to advise those who have finally taken that step away from error and don't know, perhaps, what comes next.



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