

The Faithful and Discreet Slave & Jehovah's Witnesses

By Ronald E. Frye

To understand the Jehovah's Witness (JW) who calls on you it is necessary to know how he views the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS). The devotion and loyalty they have towards this legal corporation is based on the belief that the WBTS is God's channel of communication to men on earth—his visible, earthly organization. JWs believe that no one can be put right with God through Jesus Christ unless there is willing subjection to the WBTS. Those who refuse to accept their authority remain out of God's favor—regardless of their profession of faith—and cannot be saved.

The purpose of this treatise is to explain how the WBTS uses the Bible to establish this claim and how you might respond. A phrase commonly used by JWs to identify the WBTS is **"the faithful and discreet slave."** This is drawn from **Matthew 24:45-47** as it appears in the New World Translation.

"Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings."

Matthew 24:45-47 NWT

The WBTS teaches that this "slave" represents the Christian congregation from its beginning in A.D. 33 until now:

"Jehovah's Witnesses believe that this parable pertains to the one true congregation of Jesus Christ's anointed followers. Beginning with Pentecost, 33 C.E., and continuing through the 19 centuries since then, this slavelike congregation has been feeding its members spiritually, doing so faithfully and discreetly."

The Watchtower, March 1, 1981, p. 24

Note that the "one true congregation" is said to have continued, uninterrupted, "through the 19 centuries" since its inception. During these many centuries it has been "feeding its members...faithfully and discreetly." As to how this feeding program has worked through the centuries the WT Society says:

"From Pentecost, A.D. 33, up to this very present hour this has been lovingly and carefully performed. Yes, and these 'domestics' have been fed on progressive spiritual food that keeps them abreast of the 'bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.'"

The Watchtower, July 5, 1960, p. 435

Summarizing what has been presented so far, we note that the "slave," according to WT doctrine, is the Christian congregation which (1) came into being in A.D. 33, (2) has had a continuous, uninterrupted existence since then and (3) had continually been "feeding" itself on

“progressive spiritual food.” If true, this would mean that the well-nourished Christian congregation or “slave” was more than 1,800 years old by the time Charles T. Russell appeared on the scene in the mid 1870s. The next factor to consider is the teaching that Christ returned (invisibly) in October 1914 and 3½ years later in 1918; they say, Jesus made a temple judgment which resulted in the rejection of all religions except their own:

“When Jesus came to God’s spiritual temple in 1918 for the purpose of judging men, Christendom was rejected.”

The Watchtower, August 1, 1960, p. 462

According to their own judgment they, too, were spiritually unclean at this time:

“The scriptures describe them as having unclean garments because of their long association with Christian apostasy. They had many practices, characteristics and beliefs similar to the weedlike sects of Christendom.”

The Watchtower, July 15, 1960, p. 435, 6

WT tradition has it that their organization survived this period of judgement despite their unclean condition and in spring, 1919 they were put in charge of all Christ’s “belongings,” that is, all his earthly Kingdom interests. And what was the standard used by Jesus in reaching this judgment? According to WT testimony, it all rested on how faithfully they had been serving the proper spiritual food:

“The serving of food, *the right sort of food, at the proper time*, was the issue. It had to be according to this that a decision must be rendered by the returned master.”

God’s Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached, (1973), p. 350

As regards the quality of spiritual food being served by this little group under the direction of Pastor Russell, they admit to having been feeding themselves contaminated food tainted with “beliefs similar to the weedlike sects of Christendom.” But this is only the tip of the iceberg, as the record shows. In addition to this they had been teaching and preaching that the “Time of the End” began in 1799; that Christ returned (invisibly) in October, 1874; and that the world would be destroyed in 1914. JW’s of today regard all of these serious errors as minor in importance despite what the Bible says about such things (Deut. 18:20-22). Russell calculated the “Time of the End” as a period of 115 years (1799-1914):

“The careful student will have observed that the period designated ‘The Time of the End’ is very appropriately named, since not only does the Gospel age close in it, but in it, also, all prophesies relating to the close of this age terminate, reaching their fulfillments. The same class of readers will have noticed, too, the special importance of the last 40 of these 115 years (1874-1914), called ‘The End’ or ‘Harvest.’”

Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 3, p. 121

In 1894 *Zion’s Watch Tower* presented the question: “CAN IT BE DELAYED UNTIL 1914?” In answer they said, in part:

“Now, in view of present labor troubles and threatened anarchy, our readers are writing

to know if there may not be a mistake in the 1914 date. They say that they do not see how present conditions can hold out so long under the strain...They are, we believe, God's dates, not ours. But *bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but the end of the time of trouble.*"

Zion's Watch Tower, July 15, 1894, p.228 (reprint: p. 1677)

All of Russell's predictions failed. All these errors were preached in Jesus' name and were published in millions of pieces of literature as TRUTH. This was the "food" being served up by the WBTS. But this is not all. During the period 1914-1918 they added still more contaminated food to their spiritual diet. In 1917, following Russell's death, they published a new book, *The Finished Mystery*. This book predicted the destruction of all churches and church-members in 1918; the rapture of Christ's faithful followers in 1918; and the destruction of all governments in 1920:

"Also, in the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by millions, it shall be that any that escape shall come to the works of Pastor Russell to learn the meaning of the downfall of "Christianity."

The Finished Mystery, (1917) p.485

"Our proposition is that the glorification of the Little Flock in the Spring of 1918 A.D. will be halfway between the close of the Gentile Times and the close of the heavenly way, A.D. 1921."

The Finished Mystery, (1917) p.64

"Even the republics will disappear in the fall of 1920. Every kingdom of earth will pass away, be swallowed up in anarchy."

The Finished Mystery, (1917) p.258

In the spring of 1919, Joseph F. Rutherford, the new president of the WT Society, was preaching, "*Millions now living will never die.*" The following year, 1920, this was published in booklet form under the same title. This booklet predicted that 1925 would see the resurrection of the ancient "worthies" and the start of earthly reconstruction under their princely rule. On page 97 they summarized their prediction:

"Based on the argument heretofore set forth, then, that the old order of things, the old world, is ending and is therefore passing away, and that the new order is coming in, and that 1925 *shall mark the resurrection of the faithful worthies of old and the beginning of reconstruction*, it is reasonable to conclude that millions of people now on the earth will still be on the earth in 1925. Then, based upon the promises set forth in the divine Word, we must reach the positive and indisputable conclusion that millions now living will never die."

Millions Now Living Will Never Die, (1920) p.97

By what stretch of the imagination could one conclude that such "food" was "*the right sort of food*" served "*at the proper time?*" Additionally, in 1914 their organization was less than 40 years old. Russell had rejected all other groups and formed his own. Yet, regarding their so-called "appointment" in 1919 they say:

"Now that the long-expected Kingdom had become an established reality in heaven,

surely its growing interests would not be left in the hands of a novice organization of spiritual babes. And that proved to be true. It was the 1900-year-old 'faithful and discreet slave,' the old Christian congregation, that was entrusted with this precious Kingdom service."

The Watchtower, July 15, 1960, p. 436

Russell was said to have "revived the great truths taught by Jesus and the apostles." (See *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, p.17). Such would not have been necessary had there been on earth a 1900-year-old "faithful and discreet slave" as they teach. This is another contradiction. The WT organization was a novice religion. This, too, contradicts their premise.

You might ask the next JW that calls on you the following questions: (1) Who makes up the "faithful and discreet slave" of Matthew 24:45-47? (2) When did this "slave" come into being? (3) Has it had a continuous existence for the past 19 centuries? (4) Where was this "slave" when Russell got his start? (5) How could he come to a knowledge of truth apart from this "slave?" (6) If the quality of the food being served was the basis for Christ's approval, how would they describe the food being served by the WBTS from 1879 to 1919? (7) If there had been a 1900-year-old "slave" faithfully serving up progressive spiritual truths, why was it necessary for Russell to "revive" these truths?

These are all valid questions. Check the answers against the official WT statements found in this tract. It is not uncommon for JWs to be confused on this matter. There are serious contradictions in this doctrine that the WBTS uses to exercise religious control over the minds and lives of JWs. Their own publications, which are viewed as "truth," establish these contradictions. It may be that confronting them in a kindly manner you may be able to help them reason on the matter. As they challenge you to question your church and its teaching then they ought to be willing to do the same.