

A simple review of the history of the Watchtower Society demonstrates where they must be placed in relation to God's true prophets and those who steal Jehovah's word and apply them to their own schemes. Their own publications clearly document many such prophetic failures. There's no need to embellish the record. (Deut. 18: 20-22) As regards the promise of everlasting life as stated by Jesus at John 11: 25,26 it

must be accepted in the context in which it is found. It is the only safe and sure application that can be made of it. Attaching that promise to manmade time feature calculations which lead to changing the historical gospel and presenting it in a new gospel can only lead to disappointment and leave people unprepared for the real thing. □

On Being Declared Righteous: Part I

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Being put right with God is what the Christian religion is all about. God, by means of the Bible, tells us that through Adam all humans have come into the state of sin and death. (Rom. 5: 12) Even honest-hearted, well-motivated people fall into this category because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom.3:23) No amount of meritorious good works alters this sad condition. It was God's love for the family of man that prompted him to act on their behalf in such a way as to do for them what they could not do for themselves. (John 3: 16) In this he has acted in balance with his other attributes of holiness, perfection and justice. For him to act otherwise would be to deny himself, which he can never do. (2 Tim.2: 13) We might think of the universal scene as that of an immense courtroom over which the Supreme One presides. Before him stands the whole human race which has been charged with sin-the penalty or "wages" of which is death. (Rom.6:23) Jehovah God stands bound by his own standard of righteousness to impose the sentence of death on sinners. There is no room for plea-bargaining in this court nor can any amount of money be paid over to the Judge to pervert the scales of justice. (Psalm 49:7-9)

Man, for his part, does not share the same comprehension of matters regarding sin as does the Holy One. To elevate our awareness in this matter, God gave the Israelite nation a holy law containing hundreds of do's and don'ts which, if kept perfectly, would warrant God's justification for life. Such a person could thereby prove to the Court that he or she was innocent of the charge of sin and its penalty death. "And you must keep my statutes and my judicial decisions, which if a man will do, he must also live by means of them. I am Jehovah." (Lev. 18:5 NW) The apostle Paul explains that this law was holy, righteous and good. (Rom.7: 12) However, the Israelite nation to whom this law was given was not holy, righteous and good. The end result, then, was that the law which promised life merely magnified their collective

deficiency in this regard. So that which promised life if one could measure up to its requirements became, rather, a curse because it intensified the proof that the Israelite nation was made up of sinners deserving death. By means of this small nation God demonstrated to the world that no man or nation can gain his approbation by means of law. Only those under this law were judged by it but it demonstrated to the world the universality of sin:

"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. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." -Romans 3: 19,20 *NIV*. Imperfect people cannot keep a perfect law consistently. By using this small genetic pool God demonstrated that acquittal from divine wrath could not be obtained in this manner. The priesthood with its many sacrifices offered under the terms of the law to appease an offended God were only of token value and like the law of which it was a feature, merely underscored the sinfulness of the nation. (Heb.7:11;10:3) The deficiency rested, not in the law, but in man. The apostle Paul divides the human family into two camps; Jews and Gentiles and shows that all share the common denominator-sin-the great equalizer. "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by law." -Romans 2: 12 *NIV*

The apostle develops this thesis to lay the groundwork for Almighty God's great act of justification through Jesus Christ. His audience was made up of both Jew and Gentile believers who were struggling with conflicting attitudes regarding how one is put right with God. He eloquently demonstrated that they shared a common need. In his letter to Christians in the territory of Galatia he says: "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified

by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." (Gal3:24, 25 NIV) The Greek word *paidagogos* translated "was put in charge," in verse 24 "refers to the personal slave-attendant who accompanied a freeborn boy wherever he went and exercised a certain amount of discipline over him. His function was more like that of a baby-sitter than a teacher. (compare 1 Cor.4: 15, 'guardians')" -*New International Version Study Bible*, footnote on Galatians 3 :24. The Greek verb *dikaioo* translated "justified" in the above verse is a forensic or legal term meaning; "to make right or declare right, .., according to *Young's Analytical Concordance*. This verb appears 39 times in the NT and is used 29 times in Paul's writings. A corresponding noun *dikaiosis* is found at Romans 4:25 and 5: 18 about which W. E. Vine says the following: "DIKAIOSIS denotes .the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal; its precise meaning is determined by that of the verb *dikaioo*, to justify; it is used twice in the Ep. to the Romans, and there alone in the N. T., signifying the establishment of a person as just by acquittal from guilt. ..,

The *New World Translation* renders *dikaiosis* as "declaring us righteous" (Romans 4: 25) and "declaring of them righteous" (Romans 5: 18) while the *NW Interlinear* reads "justification" under the Greek text. In the matter of being put right with God we note that a "justified" person or one "declared righteous" by God identifies a person acquitted from their sin. So in the court scene alluded to earlier we have God rendering a verdict of acquittal which frees the one charged of any liability due to sin. In this way the accused is exonerated and put right with God. This is all the loving and merciful work of God and appropriated by man through faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is not the ground or basis upon which God acts, however. If this were so then justification would be the product of the "work of faith," which it is not. (John 6:28,29) The ground or basis upon which this favorable verdict from God rests is the sacrificial merit-the atoning merit-represented in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's atoning sacrifice counterbalanced the deadly effect of Adam's transgression on the human family. Paul explains how this balancing the scales of God's justice works in Romans chapter 5 and where he sums up the matter as follows: "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the

disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ." -Romans 5: 18-21 *MV*

By providing his only begotten Son as a sinless "lamb of God," the Father satisfied his own holy standard of righteousness. (John 1: 36) This "one act of righteousness" on God's part is his justification for acquitting humans of their liability of sin's guilt. To obtain this verdict from God we need only put faith in the one through whom he offers it-Jesus Christ. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles." -1 Timothy 2:5-7 *NIV*.

We cannot help but take note of the all-inclusiveness of the two preceding scriptures quoted above. In Romans the apostle contrasts the effects of Adam's sin on all men with the effects of Christ's righteous act on all men. In 1 Timothy Christ is presented as the mediator for *all men*. This doctrine of justification through faith in Jesus Christ is the heart and soul of the good news of how we are put right with God. Tampering with this fundamental article of faith can lead to ruinous consequences. It is this foundation of Christian belief that the apostle Paul so fiercely defended. In Paul's day there were those who sought to tamper with the good news by making certain other conditions binding for salvation. Another way this good news or gospel can be perverted is by limiting it to a select few, such as a 144,000, and then setting forth another good news or gospel as to how others are saved. We need to bear in mind that there is but one gospel explained in the Bible and any other gospel falls into the category created for it by the apostle Paul: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a

gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned." -Galatians 1: 6-9 *MV*

The matter could hardly be put more emphatically or concretely than it is by the apostle or demonstrated more seriously than he does. Of course, those who insist that there is more to the matter than Paul explains will follow up the hearing of the above scriptures with; "Yes, that is true, but ... " Whatever follows the *but* is the introduction to a different gospel. There were those in Paul's day presumptuous enough to add their own ideas about how people are put right with God and it should not surprise us that there are those today presumptuous enough to do the same.

Paul explained how Abraham was the first one of

Bible mention to be declared righteous (justified) due to faith: "Although beyond hope, yet based on hope he had faith, that he might become the father of many nations in accord with what had been said: 'So your seed will be.' And, although he did not grow weak in faith, he considered his own body, now already deadened, as he was about one hundred years old, also the deadness of the womb of Sarah. But because of the promise of God he did not waver in a lack of faith, but became powerful by his faith, giving God glory and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to do. Hence 'it was counted to him as righteousness.' That 'it was counted to him' was written, however, not for his sake only, but also for the sake of us to whom it is destined to be counted, because we believe on him who raised Jesus our Lord up from the dead. He was delivered up for the sake of our trespasses and was raised up for the sake of declaring us righteous." -Romans <t: 18-25 *NW*

The expression, "it was counted to him as righteousness," is taken from Genesis 15:6. This encounter between God and Abraham took place many years before he received circumcision as a seal or confirmation of the righteousness he had in his uncircumcised state. (*Rom: 11*) Paul further explains to his mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles that in this unique way Abraham became the "father" of both the circumcised (Jews) and the uncircumcised (Gentiles). Abraham became the "heir of the world ... through the righteousness by faith." (*Rom.4: 11-13*) The inheritance of the world acquired by Abraham came by way of justification through faith. His "seed" are those justified through faith as he was. In this way he becomes "the father of us all, " who make up the many

nations of which he was to be the father. (*Rom.4:13-17*)

Taken in context and without forcing; it appears

clear that an unlimited number accounting for "many nations" benefit as did Abraham. The notion that only a small, elite group of 144,000 or some such number benefit, does not fit the description presented by the apostle as to how broadly and inclusively justification works. Furthermore, it is the only good news there is. There is nothing to suggest that Abraham's righteousness due to faith is any less or any different from the righteousness received by the Christians to whom Paul is writing. Why else would Paul write:

"That 'it was counted to him,' was written, however, not for his sake only, but also for the sake of us to whom it was destined to be counted?" (*Rom.4:23,24*) If Abraham's being "declared righteous" was different than those "to whom it was destined to be counted," how could Abraham be called "the father of all" in this matter? Are we to think that when God acquitted Abraham of sin that it really wasn't so? Are we to conclude that there was still a charge of sin resting on Abraham-one that he would have to 'go to court' over sometime in the future? Nothing like this is even hinted at or suggested in what Paul writes: Paul is writing as plainly as he can and we can only conclude that he meant what he said. "We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." -Romans 4:9-12 *NIV*

By being acquitted from sin Abraham had removed from himself that which alienates man from God. In this way a reconciliation is made possible. Thus reconciled Abraham became God's intimate-God's friend. (*James 2:23*) Something very much like this friendship existed between Jesus and his disciples. On one occasion he said to them: "No one has love greater

than this, that someone should surrender his soul in behalf of his friends. You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all the things I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." -John 15: 13 ... 15 NW. That Abraham lived and died centuries before the offering of Jesus Christ in sacrifice alters nothing. God knew what he would do to make reconciliation possible. So certain was this divine work of accomplishment that it was as though it had already taken place. In Revelation 13:8 it speaks of the "Lamb who was slaughtered, from the founding of the world." The Greek word *katabole* appears 10 times in the NT and means "a casting or laying down." It is used to reach back in time to God's completed work of creation. (compare Luke 11 :50; Heb.4:3, 9:26) Until the time actually arrived for God to offer his Son in sacrifice he exercised forbearance as regards his execution of justice.

"God set him forth as an offering for propitiation through faith in his blood. This was in order to exhibit his own righteousness because *he was forgiving the sins that occurred in the past* while God was exercising forbearance; so as to exhibit his own righteousness in this present season, that he might be righteous even when declaring righteous the man that has faith in Jesus." Romans 3:25~26 NW. From the standpoint of Scripture the sureness of Abraham's inheritance of "a world" is unequivocal.(Rom.4:13) There is nothing 'iffy' about it. It will surely not be conditioned by some future test of Abraham's loyalty or obedience before it becomes a reality. Jesus spoke of the sureness of Abraham's being an "heir of a world" when he said: "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.8: 11 NIY)

The promises given to Abraham are the foundation of Christian hope. To share in the fulfillment of these promises one must be of Abraham's "seed," that is, progeny, in order to be a legal heir. The apostle Paul develops this theme thoroughly in Galatians chapter 3. For this reason it is of special concern when attempts are made to alter or confuse the matter of justification because it hits at the heart of the Christian good news or gospel. In a current issue of *The Watchtower* (December 1, 1985) there is set forth such an alteration with attempts to explain-away the direct testimony of Scripture. Attempts are made in this issue to convince the overwhelming majority of its readers

that God is not addressing them in what Paul has to say about justification in his letter to Romans. The profound effect this has on their relationship with God through Jesus Christ will be demonstrated. It makes it necessary for millions of Jehovah's Witnesses to accept an entirely different hope of salvation than the one outlined by Paul and the other Bible writers. It makes these millions of people totally dependent on the Watchtower Society and the handful of men who direct its affairs for a favorable standing with God. It is little wonder that Jehovah's Witnesses have willingly surrendered their loyalty and devotion to this religious corporation because they equate their association with it to association with Jehovah God. Without the organization of the Watchtower Society there would be no hope for them. At least that is what they are led to believe and the current issue of the magazine reinforces this dependency.

The Watchtower raises the important question "Are You Right With God?" Several articles that follow address themselves to answering this vital question. The final two articles are study material that will be reviewed by all Jehovah's Witnesses in their Kingdom Halls, January 5 & 12, 1986. The first study article, "Declared Righteous for Life," (pages 8-12) is slanted as applying to only 144,000. Only these few are declared righteous "for life" according to what Paul has to say at Romans 5: 18, the theme text for the discussion. This means that throughout the gospel age of more than 19 centuries only this number will have benefited from the promise of being declared righteous (justified) due to faith in Jesus Christ. Of this number about 9,000 Jehovah's Witnesses profess to be a "remnant" of the total number. All the rest of the millions of Witnesses are excluded from this promise. The introduction to this study article is really contained in the last two paragraphs of the article that precedes it wherein the concept of *two hopes* for Christians is introduced:

"The apostle Paul showed that Christ's ransom sacrifice opens up *two hopes*, one 'upon the earth' and the other 'in the heavens.' He wrote: 'God saw good for all fullness to dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens.'" -Colossians 1: 19,20 To share in either of these *two hopes*, it is necessary to have a righteous standing before God, and this involves much more than merely 'believing in Jesus.' Just what is involved for Christians who have the

heavenly hope and for those whose hope is to live forever in a paradise on earth will be considered in the following two articles. Please read on, and do not hesitate to ask the witness of Jehovah who supplied you with this magazine to discuss these articles with you, Bible in hand." *The Watchtower*, 12/1/85, p.7 (Italics added)

The interpolation of Paul's remarks to mean that he was teaching "two hopes" at Colossians 1: 19,20 is far-fetched. Contextually, Paul speaks of visible and invisible "things" having been created by the one who God uses to reconcile himself to all things, "whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities." Whatever things that were effected by rebellion resulting in alienation from God is reconciled by Christ. This reconciliation involves much more than just mankind. The subject of hope is not being discussed by the apostle in the above verses. Why would he use such a cryptogramrnic method of introducing *two hopes* in an ordinary letter of counsel and instruction to new covenant Christians ? More importantly, why would he argue that there is but one hope if he knew that there really were two hopes for Christians? "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." ~Ephesians 4:4 *NW*

The introducing of two hopes brings to their discussion a prejudice that colors all that is said in the inspired Christian Writings on the matter of justification. By continually inserting the limited number of 144,000, even though that number is not used in the scriptures they appeal to for support, they force a conclusion that would otherwise not suggest itself. That the Watchtower Society resorts to this tactic illustrates the poverty of their position. It forces them to continually modify all that the Bible has to say on the matter of righteousness due to faith. In the end it ruins the plain teaching of salvation through Jesus Christ. For them to say that this justification "involves much more than merely 'believing in Jesus'" is to ridicule Paul's inspired testimony that "if you publicly declare that 'word in your own mouth,' that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation." -Rom. 10:9,10 *NW* In their attempt to show that the righteousness of the 144,000 is different and greater than that of Abraham they draw attention to certain

descriptive words used by Paul. "Still, for what impelling reason do Christians who are 'called to be holy ones' need to be declared righteous? This is where the second aspect of justification comes into account, namely, God's declaring a person worthy of life as His perfect human son. Due to the role they are called upon to play in the righteous 'new heavens,' the 144,000 must renounce and sacrifice forever any hope of life everlasting on earth. (Psalm 37:29; 115:16) In this sense they die a sacrificial death. They 'submit themselves to a death like Christ's ', -Philippians 3: 8-11.

"Now, in line with the principle set forth in the Mosaic Law, any sacrifice presented to Jehovah must be without defect. (Leviticus 22 :21; Deuteronomy 15:21) The 144,000 'holy ones' are spoken of as 'righteous ones who have been made perfect.' " - Hebrews 12:23. -*The Watchtower*, December 1,1985, pages 10,11 par.12,13

Again, the concepts presented above are not supported by the scriptures they quote or cite. The Bible is merely being manipulated to appear to support such things. Christians are not called upon to die sacrificially as did the Christ. Such an idea borders on sacrilege. The "sacrifices" that Christians are called upon to make toward God are offered while they are alive. (Rom.12:1; Heb.13:16; 1 Pet.2:5) Nor are the "holy ones" made "perfect in this life." The context to Hebrews 12:23 shows that it is a heavenly vision depicting "heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God." (verse 22) The insertion of the number 144,000 repeatedly in this article is without warrant but by superimposing it over all that Paul has to say they succeed in "proving" their point-at least in the eyes of Jehovah's Witnesses who study such material uncritically.

The expression "holy ones" does not make those whom Paul is addressing in anyway unique. The Greek word *hagios* translated "holy," "fundamentally signifies separated ... and hence, in Scripture its moral and spiritual significance, separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God, sacred. " - *W. E. Vine*. The ancient servants of God were called "holy ones" and "holy" in the Bible. (Matt. 27:52; Mark 6:20; Luke 1 :70) So there is no scriptural justification for limiting *hagios* to just 144,000. For the record, the term is not used in Revelation chapter 7 & 14 where that number is found. All those who are declared righteous by God are "separated from sin" and thereby viewed as holy. Unfortunately, none of these ideas will be challenged

when this material is studied by Jehovah's Witnesses. To do so would be viewed as having a bad attitude. The last article in this series is titled: "Declared Righteous as a Friend of God." It is designed to show that millions of Jehovah's Witnesses along with

Abraham of old do not possess the "righteousness" enjoyed by the 144,000. The next issue of the *Christian Respondent* will discuss this article as part two of the matter of justification as taught by the Watchtower Society. □