

# **Memoirs of a Witness**

A discussion with missionaries

Copyright 2008

*Memoirs of a Witness*  
By Vincent Poldrugovac

Comments and questions may be sent to [memoirs-of-a-witness@hotmail.com](mailto:memoirs-of-a-witness@hotmail.com) or to the person whom you received this from.

Reproduction is prohibited except for portions intended for personal and noncommercial purposes.

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the New World Translation (1984).

Printed in Canada

ISBN 978-0-9811467-1-3

## Table of Contents

	Preface.....	4
	Introduction.....	5
1.	The Bible.....	6
2.	Baptism.....	7
3.	The Condition of the Dead.....	8
4.	Returning to Immersion.....	10
5.	Preaching the Gospel.....	11
6.	Ruling the Earth.....	15
7.	The Holy Spirit.....	18
8.	What Happened in 1914?.....	19
9.	Who is Jesus?.....	22
	Conclusion.....	27
	References.....	28

## **Preface**

In this text I plan to describe my experiences and discussions between several Jehovah's Witnesses' missionaries that happened one spring morning and continued for several weeks.

What started out as an occasional "hi" and talk about faith soon developed into some casual meetings and an honest seeking for the knowledge about God and his truth.

## Introduction

I originally met two female missionaries who were going door to door in my area. They invited me to their yearly celebration of the Lord's Supper but unfortunately I was not able to attend.

One left me with her phone number and several weeks later she invited me to visit her Kingdom Hall just a little north of my neighbourhood. While I was there they handed me a book called "*Draw Close To Jehovah*" and a New World Translation of the Holy Bible. I was currently using the King James version.

As I started reading their booklet "*Draw Close To Jehovah*," I began to have questions on some of the material therein. Then I moved to a new location farther away from her area and she was kind enough to put me into contact with local Jehovah's Witnesses' missionaries.

The new missionaries visited me on a Saturday morning and gave me another booklet called "*What Does The Bible Really Teach?*" From there began several Bible studies. They were nice gentlemen and punctual too.

I am not sure who is reading this account – whether a Jehovah's Witness or someone from another religion but I wanted to share some of my conversation on the topics discussed.

This is almost like a diary so I hope I can keep things organized as I try to place my thoughts and words in a coherent manner for you to understand. Maybe you have had the same thoughts or met Jehovah's Witnesses too. The topics we discussed are not necessarily in the exact order described herein. We never did finish a complete discussion of all the topics but these memoirs are a reflection of everything that I had wanted to talk about.

May the Holy Spirit guide you to the truth of God's Word.

## 1. The Bible

The Jehovah's Witnesses' missionaries that I met had great reverence for the Bible as God's Word. Despite the fact that I primarily used the King James version in my Evangelical church, they said this was okay because they also used the King James version before they adopted the New World Translation.

I had been a Roman Catholic for about 15 years and then I began attending an Evangelical church. I also enjoyed reading the scriptures so I felt a common bond with these Jehovah's Witnesses.

In addition to their booklet "*What Does The Bible Really Teach?*" they handed me a magazine called "*The Watchtower*." They indicated this was also used as a teaching guide to all the Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. This was done in their own language and in roughly the same time. For example, what they were teaching to members of a Kingdom Hall in Canada they were also teaching from the same magazine to members of a Kingdom Hall in Japan in the same week. Talk about a uniformity of teaching.

It was comforting to know that "*Indeed, the Bible can help you to Draw Close To Jehovah*" (*What Does The Bible Really Teach?*, p. 19).

Another part that gave me further comfort was knowing "*God's servants base their teachings on the Bible*" (*What Does The Bible Really Teach?*, p. 146). This was very important to me because there are many people who try to interpret the scriptures their own way and for their own purposes.

God's Word needs to be the final authority in doctrines and teachings. The Bible interprets itself and it shows when someone is not teaching correctly.

I felt this was needed as the foundation for any meaningful Bible study so I decided to continue our meetings.

## 2. Baptism

Chapter 18 of *What Does The Bible Really Teach?* deals with “Baptism and Your Relationship With God.”

Point 3 on page 175 asked the question, “*How can you show that you want to serve God?*” I learned what it meant to become one of God’s servants. It continued, “*Jesus told his followers: Go ... and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them.*”

*“Baptism publicly indicates your desire to serve God” (p. 175).*

I was a little confused when the booklet began speaking about some definite steps to take before one qualifies for baptism. I could understand the step of taking in knowledge of God but I was a little unclear how the booklet could state, “*Christians want to be filled with the accurate knowledge of God’s will*” (p. 176). For instance, the Ethiopian eunuch had a partial knowledge of God’s will when baptized by Philip. He just had simple faith. The eunuch gradually grew in the knowledge of God’s will after baptism.

*“Attending the congregation meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses is a big help in this regard” (p. 176).* This kind of made sense to me but I have always believed that reading the Bible and being guided by the Holy Spirit allows one to take in knowledge of God without necessarily going to meetings.

*“Before you can be baptized, however, you need to know and accept the basic Bible teachings. Such teachings include the truth about the condition of the dead and the importance of God’s name and his Kingdom” (p. 176).*

I found this a little odd since no one in the Bible ever asked the question, “Do you know the true condition of the dead?” before baptizing anyone. Saving faith in Christ’s atoning work has been the only requirement for baptism that I have ever known.

### 3. The Condition of the Dead

I read that *“the dead have no conscious existence anywhere”* (*What Does The Bible Really Teach?*, p. 156). I also learned from the missionaries that *“When a person dies, he ceases to exist”* (p. 58). *“As we have seen, the dead do not suffer pain or heartache”* (p. 64). *“The dead do not see or hear or think – Ecclesiastes 9:5”* (p. 65). *“Does your religion agree with what the Bible teaches about the dead? Most do not. Why? Because their teachings have been influenced by Satan”* (p. 64).

I have always been taught what the Bible teaches – that the dead can suffer pain, see, hear, and think. What comes to mind is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16.

Let’s examine the passage from the New World Translation.

22 – “Now in course of time the beggar died and he was carried off by the angels to the bosom [position] of Abraham. “Also, the rich man died and was buried. 23 - And in Ha’des he lifted up his eyes, he existing in torments, and he saw Abraham afar off and Laz’a-rus in the bosom [position] with him. 24 - So he called and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Laz’a-rus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in anguish in this blazing fire.’”

25 – “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you received in full your good things in your lifetime, but Laz’a-rus correspondingly the injurious things. Now, however, he is having comfort here but you are in anguish. 26 - And besides all these things, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you people, so that those wanting to go over from here to you people cannot, neither may people cross over from there to us.’”

27 – “Then he said, ‘In that event I ask you, father, to send him to the house of my father, 28 - for I have five brothers, in order that he may give them a thorough witness, that they also should not get into this place of torment.’ 29 - But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to these.’ 30 – Then he said, ‘No, indeed, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them they will repent.’ 31 - But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

As we can see from the above passages, the dead rich man could hear, talk and feel pain. He was aware that he had five brothers and he had concern for their future well-being. Even Abraham was talking and he was aware of his environment.

This did not agree with what the Watchtower literature was teaching. I decided to look anyways at the Ecclesiastes 9:5 scripture supplied by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

“For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten” (New World Translation).

What people fail to realize is that Ecclesiastes is the dramatic autobiography of Solomon's life when he was away from God. As Dr. Vernon McGee said, “This [Ecclesiastes] is human philosophy apart from God, which must always reach the conclusions that this book reaches. We need to understand this about Ecclesiastes, because there are many statements which contradict certain other statements of Scripture. Solomon tried every field of endeavor and pleasure that was known to man and his conclusion was that all is vanity.”

“In Proverbs we saw the wisdom of Solomon; in Ecclesiastes we see the foolishness of Solomon.”

In time Solomon came back to God.

Some people do not understand the context of this passage and therefore have applied it incorrectly, thus creating errors in their teaching.

## 4. Returning to Immersion

Things got confusing when I read further. *“They [the elders] will let you know that you qualify to share in the public ministry as an unbaptized publisher of the good news” (What Does The Bible Really Teach?, p. 177).*

I have never heard about an unbaptized publisher before. I know that Jesus told a person to follow him and preach the kingdom of God ... apparently before that person had been baptized (Luke 9:59-60). So it appears that Jesus approves of anyone preaching the gospel provided that it is the true gospel, even before they are baptized.

*“Hence, before you ask about becoming an unbaptized publisher, you need to be free of serious sins” (p. 178).*

Ask who? Ask the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ elders? Why not ask God if you are free from serious sins?

## 5. Preaching the Gospel

From what I have always been taught by the Bible, Jesus told his followers to go and preach the gospel and to baptize believers. When I read the *Watchtower* magazine it seemed to say that only one hundred and forty-four thousand were qualified to preach the gospel. This is considerably less than the ones Jesus had in mind.

*“By means of his spirit, Jehovah resides among the anointed and walks among them. He continually guides his faithful slave (Matthew 24:45-47). The other sheep cherish their privilege of being associated with the temple class – John 10:16; Matthew 25:37-40” (The Watchtower, November 1 2006, p. 24).*

I do not see a sheep class and a temple class when reading the Bible. Jesus continually guides all who follow him.

*“Anointed Christians have been qualified by Jehovah to be ministers of a new covenant. As such, they are commissioned to preach this good news of the kingdom and to make disciples of people of all nations – Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20” (ibid, p. 25).*

Are they qualified by Jehovah’s Witnesses’ elders or by Jehovah himself?

I did some investigation and discovered that the one hundred and forty-four thousand are currently considered the faithful and discreet slave in Jehovah’s Witnesses’ theology (*The Watchtower, October 1 1991, p. 20*).

*“Millions of sheeplike people are responding, symbolically saying to the anointed: We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people – Zechariah 8:23” (The Watchtower, November 1 2006, p. 25).*

I do not know why this scripture verse was used to support the idea of one hundred and forty-four thousand Jehovah’s Witnesses because the context of this verse and those around it pertain to the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Zechariah 8:19).

In the context of this chapter it is evident that many more than just one hundred and forty-four thousand are mentioned. It should also be noted that all these people are literal Jews and not Jehovah’s Witnesses in America or Europe.

The context is one of judgment upon the nation of Israel and its city of Jerusalem. The Jews had undergone severe judgment at the hands of Jehovah and now he is reminding them that they would be restored with exultation and good festal seasons (v. 19).

*“Jehovah also speaks to us by means of the faithful and discreet slave. As Jesus foretold, a class of anointed Christians has been appointed to provide spiritual food at the proper time during these troublesome last days (Matthew 24:45-47). When we attend Christian meetings and conversations, we are being fed spiritually by that slave class. Because it is Christ’s slave, we wisely apply Jesus’ words.” (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 312).*

The slave class is synonymous with the “annointed” ones.

*“Not only must we regularly read the Bible and the Bible-based publications provided by the faithful and discreet slave but we must also endeavor to apply what we learn” (ibid, p. 228).*

*“We listen attentively because we recognize the slave class as one of Jehovah’s means of communicating with us” (ibid, p. 313).*

In my opinion, Jesus did not restrict this number to only one hundred and forty-four thousand people for the purpose of communicating with God. Luke 12:31-37 teaches you will see that Jesus called the “little flock” his “slaves.” His message to the disciples applies to all (vv. 41-53). It is very important to study the context.

The Bible teaches all believers are servants of God. I suppose they become servants (slaves) when they choose to serve him.

An individual will be classified as either a faithful servant or an unfaithful one. Let’s examine Matthew 24:45-47.

45 – “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 - Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. 47 - Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings.”

The faithful slave is contrasted with the unfaithful one in the following verses.

48 – “But if ever that evil slave should say in his heart, ‘My master is delaying,’ 49 - and should start to beat his fellow slaves and should eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards, 50 - the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect and in an hour that he does not know.”

From this I see that the faithful slave is appointed over his domestics (fellow slaves) and treats them well whereas the evil slave treats the slaves appointed under him poorly.

If the faithful and discreet slave is representative of one hundred and forty-four thousand people like the Watchtower teaches, then these one hundred and forty-four thousand people have other slaves – therefore the total number of slaves is much more than one hundred and forty-four thousand. And if the one hundred and forty-four thousand represent the anointed class who is feeding the domestics, then these domestics (or slaves) are representative of the other people who are being fed.

Slaves feeding fellow slaves. So you have many more slaves than what the Watchtower teaches.

If the domestics are representative of the “other sheep,” then the “other sheep” are the “fellow slaves” of verse 49. You thus have more than one hundred and forty-four thousand slaves. By the way, how many total slaves are there in Jehovah’s Witnesses’ theology?

In Matthew 24:37-51 Jesus was merely encouraging each one of his followers to be watchful regarding his Second Coming. Each believer needs to be watchful and not be careless. There is no exact number specified in this parable.

The parable of the ten virgins and the kingdom of the heavens is applicable to all those who claim to believe in Christ, not just ten individuals.

“Then the kingdom of the heavens will become like ten virgins that took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were discreet. For the foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them (Matthew 25:1-3).

Are the ten virgins symbolic of the one hundred and forty-four thousand? I don’t think so. If they are, then seventy-two thousand slaves are foolish while the other seventy-two thousand are wise. Or are there actually one hundred and forty-four thousand wise slaves and one hundred and forty-four thousand foolish slaves?

To me it is pretty evident from the Bible that the one hundred and forty-four thousand is not the context here.

Likewise, the parable of the talents is also applicable to all those who claim to have faith in Jesus and not just to only one hundred and forty-four thousand people. Let’s examine the passage.

“For it [the kingdom of the heavens] is just as when a man, about to travel abroad, summoned slaves of his and committed to them his belongings. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to still another one, to each one according to his own ability, and he went abroad ... After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them ... [The first slave] Master, you committed five talents to me; see, I gained five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave! ... [The second slave] Master, you committed to me two talents; see, I gained two talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave!”

“[The third slave] Master, I knew you to be an exacting man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not winnow. So I grew afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours. In reply his master said to him, Wicked and sluggish slave, you knew, did you, that I reaped where I did not sow and gathered where I did not winnow?”

“Well, then, you ought to have deposited my silver monies with the bankers, and on my arrival I would be receiving what is mine with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him and give it to him that has the ten talents. For to everyone that has, more will be given and he will have abundance; but as for him that does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And throw the good-for-nothing slave out into the darkness outside. There is where [his] weeping and the gnashing of [his] teeth will be” (Matthew 25:14-30).

If taken literally, then there are only three slaves. How many faithful and discreet slaves are there in this parable? Where does the third slave go to weep and gnash his teeth?

Both of these parables do not limit the number to only one hundred and forty-four thousand people. The number is considerably larger. It is not clear why the Jehovah’s Witnesses do not include this in the *Watchtower* magazine.

John 14:1-3 states, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Exercise faith in God, exercise faith also in me. In the house of my Father there are many abodes. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, if I go my way and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be.”

There are many more than one hundred and forty-four thousand abodes in God’s heaven. Near the end of Christ’s mortal ministry, he did not call his disciples slaves. “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 15:15). All believers in Christ can be considered his friends. This number is not restricted to one hundred and forty-four thousand.

## 6. Ruling the Earth

I learned from the Watchtower literature and the New World Translation that the one hundred and forty-four thousand annointed ones (the temple class) would rule the earth from heaven.

Who are the one hundred and forty-four thousand?

“And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: Out of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed; out of the tribe of Reu’ben twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Ash’er twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand sealed” (Revelation 7:4-8).

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe these represent the twelve spiritual tribes of Israel and not the physical ones. The Watchtower organization gives a literal interpretation to the one hundred and forty-four thousand but a spiritual interpretation to the twelve tribes.

How does one account for the mismatching of the context? And why are the tribes of Dan and Ephraim missing?

I believe these two literal tribes are not sealed because they were notable in their practice of idolatry (Judges 18:30; Hosea 4:17).

The view that there are one hundred and forty-four thousand spiritual Jews did not make sense to me because there would be no point in differentiating between the groups of twelve thousand by using tribe names. After all, what is the difference between twelve thousand Jews in the spiritual tribe of Benjamin and those in the spiritual tribe of Zebulun? It makes more sense if this is a reference to literal Jews of a literal tribe.

I was also taught by the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ missionaries that both men and women are included in the one hundred and forty-four thousand. This did not make sense to me either. “These are the ones that did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins.”

If men and women were included in this group, then the verse would have to be reworded as: “These are the ones that did not defile themselves with men or women; in fact, they are virgins.” Did you notice this? They are virgins.

Do Jehovah’s Witnesses who believe they are in this group qualify?

“These are the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes ... no falsehood was found in their mouths; they are without blemish.”

Who among the Jehovah’s Witnesses can claim to be without blemish?

*“The New Covenant was to produce a kingdom of priests – 1 Peter 2:9. However, this covenant would establish, not a fleshly nation, but a spiritual one, the Israel of God, made up exclusively of Christ’s faithful annointed followers” (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 196).*

But the spiritual nation of annointed followers is not limited to one hundred and forty-four thousand people.

*“Paul also explains that this reconciliation involves two distinct groups of individuals, namely, ‘the things in the heavens’ and ‘the things upon the earth’. That first group consists of 144,000 Christians who are given the hope of serving as heavenly priests and ruling as kings over the earth with Christ Jesus (Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:4, 14:1-3)” (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 146).*

Shouldn’t this also say priestesses and queens if there are women in the group?

*“‘The things upon the earth’ are those individuals in line to enjoy perfect life in Paradise on earth. Revelation 7:9-17 describes them as a great crowd” (ibid, p. 146).*

The King James version, used by Jehovah’s Witnesses before the New World Translation, states that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be ruling on earth. Other English translations of the Bible also have them ruling on the earth.

The Kingdom Interlinear Bible, used by the Watchtower Bible Society, says in the English translation of the Greek for Revelation 5:10 that these people will be ruling on the earth too. For some reason the New World Translation has not been translated correctly using the Greek text.

Some other Greek translations have it rendered “ruling over the earth” in the English. Which is correct? May I suggest that both are correct.

Suppose you have a king on earth. He is ruling in his kingdom, on his kingdom, and over his kingdom. The principle is the same no matter where the king is. The one thousand year reign takes place on earth.

Where are the one hundred and forty-four thousand and the great crowd of people?

They are both before the throne of God in heaven.

“After these things I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. And all the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they [the great crowd] fell upon their faces before the throne and worshipped God. That is why they are before the throne of God; and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them” (Rev. 7:9, 11, 15).

Where is the Lamb and throne of God? In heaven. Where are they standing? In heaven. Where is the sanctuary or temple of God? In heaven.

“And the temple [sanctuary] of God that is in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen in his temple [sanctuary]” (Rev. 11:19). “And still another angel emerged from the temple [sanctuary] that is in heaven, he, too, having a sharp sickle” (Rev. 14:17).

Another important concept in the Book of Revelation is the phrase “look!”

“After these things I saw, and, look! a great crowd” (Rev. 7:9). “And I saw, and, look! the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion” (Rev. 14:1). Both the great crowd and the Lamb are visible, not invisible.

“Look! He [Jesus] is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him” (Rev. 1:7). “Look! I am coming quickly” (Rev. 22:12). The coming of Jesus Christ will be visible, not invisible.

“Look! I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:5). We will be able to see this.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses did not accept this concept of “look” because they think of it in another way – that someone in New Zealand could not see Jesus if he returned to Israel. But the verse does not necessarily imply that everyone will see him at the exact same time.

## 7. The Holy Spirit

The Jehovah's Witnesses indicated to me that the Holy Spirit is not God but some impersonal force. This force is often just called "holy spirit."

When I looked at the Bible it shows that the Holy Spirit has a name and a personality too. Since having a name makes the Father and Son persons, I didn't understand how the Jehovah's Witnesses didn't apply the same standard to the Holy Spirit.

Even the New World Translation reveals the Holy Spirit feels pain (Isaiah 63:10), says what he hears (John 16:13), bears witness (John 15:26) and speaks (Acts 13:2).

Romans 8:26-27 says, "In like manner the spirit also joins in with help for our weakness; for the [problem of] what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, but the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered. Yet he who searches the hearts knows what the meaning of the spirit is, because it is pleading in accord with God for holy ones."

The New World Translation describes the Holy Spirit as a person too. "However, when that one arrives, the spirit of the truth, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak of his own impulse, but what things he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things coming. That one will glorify me, because he will receive from what is mine and will declare it to you" (John 16:13-14).

Who is "he?" He is the person of the Holy Spirit.

## 8. What Happened in 1914?

It is taught by Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus returned invisibly to rule in 1914 and that he established pure worship in 1919.

*"Above all, pure worship would be re-established, and the temple would be rebuilt. Shortly after Jesus was enthroned in the heavenly Kingdom in 1914, he addressed the spiritual needs of God's faithful people on earth. From 1919 onward, pure worship has been restored to its proper place in the lives of genuine Christians. Ever since then, Jehovah's people have worshipped him in his spiritual temple" (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 79). "Since the restoration of pure worship in 1919, Jehovah has blessed his people with life-giving provisions" (ibid, p. 276).*

Jehovah's Witnesses believe pure worship could not exist between 1914 and 1919 because they are said to have been imprisoned. But I feel that one can worship God in truth while in jail. One needs to study the examples of Paul and Silas.

It is assumed that the spiritual or physical temple was rebuilt in 1919.

*"Decades in advance, Bible students proclaimed that there would be significant developments in 1914" (What Does The Bible Really Teach?, p. 215).*

*"Jerusalem had been the capital city of the Jewish nation – the seat of rulership of the line of kings from the house of David. However, these kings were unique among national leaders. They sat on Jehovah's throne as representatives of God himself. Jerusalem was thus a symbol of Jehovah's rulership" (ibid, p. 216).*

I want you to notice the key phrases "Jerusalem had been" and "Jerusalem was thus." The past tense is used. It does not appear to me that Jehovah's Witnesses believe the city of Jerusalem is the symbol of Jehovah's rulership currently. Why? Because there have been no Jewish kings for thousands of years.

*"Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations" (What Does The Bible Really Teach?, p. 216). "When would that grand event occur? Jesus showed that the Gentiles would rule for a fixed period of time. The account in Daniel chapter 4 holds the key to knowing how long that period would last" (ibid, p. 217).*

*“He saw an immense tree that was chopped down. Its stump could not grow because it was banded with iron and copper. An angel declared: Let seven times pass over it. In the Bible, trees are sometimes used to represent rulership – Ezekiel 17:22-24; 31:2-5” (ibid, p. 217).*

Let’s see if Daniel was speaking about a city or a person.

*“However, the vision served notice that this trampling of Jerusalem would be temporary – a period of seven times” (ibid, p. 217).* Jehovah’s Witnesses use the date of 607 B.C. and add 2,520 years (seven times is said to represent 2,520 days) and they get the date of 1914.

The Watchtower teaches the tree is Jerusalem and that the time frame is 2,520 years. But the Bible clearly shows the tree is Nebuchadnezzar and the time frame is considerably shorter.

Daniel (named Belteshazzar by the king) begins the interpretation of the vision in chapter 4 verse 20.

“The tree that you beheld, that grew great and became strong and the height of which finally reached the heavens and which was visible to all the earth.”

22 – “It is you, O king, because you have grown great and become strong, and your grandeur has grown great and reached to the heavens, and your rulership to the extremity of the earth.”

The tree is Nebuchadnezzar, not the city of Jerusalem.

23 – “And because the king beheld a watcher, even a holy one, coming down from the heavens, who was also saying: Chop the tree down, and ruin it. However, leave its rootstock itself in the earth, but with a banding of iron and of copper.”

“Let it become wet, and with the beasts of the field let its portion be until seven times themselves pass over it.”

The judgment of the seven times is pronounced over King Nebuchadnezzar.

“This is the interpretation, O king, and the decree of the Most High is that which must befall my lord the king. And you they will be driving away from men, and with the beasts of the field your dwelling will come to be, and the vegetation is what they will give even to you to eat just like bulls; and with the dew of the heavens you yourself will be getting wet, and seven times themselves will pass over you, until you know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that to the one whom he wants to he gives it” (vv. 24-25).

26 – “And because they said to leave the rootstock of the tree, your kingdom will be sure to you after you know that the heavens are ruling.”

28 – “All this befell Nebuchadnezzar the king.”

The tree is King Nebuchadnezzar and not the city of Jerusalem according to the Bible.

Judgment befalls the king.

“While the word was yet in the king’s mouth, there was a voice that fell from the heavens: To you it is being said, O Nebuchadnezzar the king, The kingdom itself has gone away from you, and from mankind they are driving even you away, and with the beasts of the field your dwelling will be. Vegetation they will give even to you to eat just like bulls, and seven times themselves will pass over you, until you know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that to the one whom he wants to he gives it” (vv. 31-32).

Seven times pass over King Nebuchadnezzar.

33 – “At that moment the word itself was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and from mankind he was being driven away, and vegetation he began to eat just like bulls, and with the dew of the heavens his own body got to be wet, until his very hair grew long just like eagles’ [feathers] and his nails like birds’ [claws].”

After the seven times of judgment on the king is complete, he returns to his senses and receives his kingdom again just like verse 26 said.

34 – “And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up to the heavens my eyes, and my own understanding began to return to me; and I blessed the Most High himself, and the One living to time indefinite I praised and glorified, because his rulership is a rulership to time indefinite and his kingdom is for generation after generation.”

36 – “At the same time my understanding itself began to return to me, and for the dignity of my kingdom my majesty and my brightness themselves began to return to me; and for me even my high royal officers and my grandees began eagerly searching, and I was reestablished upon my own kingdom, and greatness extraordinary was added to me.”

*“Just as Jesus predicted, his presence as heavenly King has been marked by dramatic world developments – war, famine, earthquakes, pestilences” (What Does The Bible Really Teach?, p. 218).* Let’s be honest. That would be like saying the city of Jerusalem, as a symbol of Jehovah’s rulership in heaven, also marked a long time of war, famine, earthquakes, and pestilences.

Do the “seven times” cover 2,520 years which apply to the city of Jerusalem as the Watchtower teaches? The answer is “no” to an honest observer.

## 9. Who is Jesus?

From the Watchtower literature I learned Jehovah's Witnesses teach Jesus is Michael the archangel and the "master worker" of Proverbs chapter 8.

They do not believe God came down from heaven in the form of a man.

*"Of course, Jehovah's message did not mean that the Almighty would go down in person" (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 202).*

But I see that this is the message of Jehovah in the Bible.

*"The Almighty has no limitations except for those he imposes upon himself" (ibid, p. 201).*

But people have limited what the Almighty has revealed in his scriptures about him coming down to earth in the form of a man.

*"Imagine! Jehovah, the Sovereign Lord of the universe, was willing to bow down or come down to Jeremiah's level, in order to give that imperfect human favourable attention" (ibid, p. 199).*

Yes. Let's imagine that Jehovah came down to our level in the form of Jesus to give us imperfect humans his favourable attention – for the Bible teaches it.

The December 2006 issue of *The Watchtower* had a caption on the title page, "Who Was Jesus?" When I read the article inside there was no mention of Jesus Christ being Michael the archangel.

*"This Son found great pleasure in being the Master Worker, whom Jehovah used in creating all things – Proverbs 8:22-31" (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 88). "Jesus is the Master Worker, whom Jehovah used to create the earth and all life on it" (ibid, p. 95).*

*"As the archangel [Michael] – chief over all the angels, seraphs, and cherubs – Jesus is the mightiest of all of Jehovah's creations" (ibid, p. 41).*

Daniel 10:13 says, “But the prince of the royal realm of Persia was standing in opposition to me for twenty-one days, and, look! Michael, one of the foremost princes, came to help me; and I, for my part, remained there beside the kings of Persia.”

It says Michael is one of the foremost, not the foremost. If Michael is Jesus Christ then Michael is not the mightiest of all these princes. The Bible leaves open the possibility of there being other archangels.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice and with God’s trumpet.” If descending with an archangel’s voice makes Christ an archangel, then doesn’t descending “with God’s trumpet” make Jesus God?

*“But God did not send just any angel [Michael] to rescue mankind ... when he [Jehovah] transferred the life of his only-begotten Son to the womb of the Jewish virgin Mary” (Draw Close To Jehovah, p. 71). “Miraculously, Jehovah transferred the life and the personality pattern of his firstborn heavenly Son to the womb of a Jewish virgin named Mary” (ibid, p. 144).*

It should be noted that firstborn does not necessarily mean first-created. Israel (Jacob) and Ephraim are the “firstborn” (Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9) but they were not the first sons of their parents.

Substituting a literal Jesus in Proverbs 8:22-31 did not make sense to me either. When I read the Bible the woman is actually a symbolic personification of wisdom. It cannot even be used to refer to a literal woman.

How do we know this?

Chapters 1 through 9 of Proverbs present a major discourse between Solomon and his son.

The key topics are wisdom, instruction, and understanding (Prov. 1:2). To provide this discourse, Solomon uses the personification of wisdom as a “woman” and several other “women” (Prov. 1:20-21). Wisdom [the woman] has called out to those around her (Prov. 1:24). There are benefits for those who listen to wisdom (Prov. 1:33).

Solomon advises his son to incline his ear to several women, personified by wisdom and understanding (Prov. 2:2). Solomon advises his son to seek her (Prov. 2:4-5). Solomon now gives a description and warning of another “woman” (Prov. 2:16). A strange woman is described (Prov. 2:17). The strange woman has a house and her paths lead to death (Prov. 2:18). Following this “strange” woman has consequences (Prov. 2:19).

There are benefits of finding wisdom and getting understanding (Prov. 3:13). Wisdom and understanding are personified as women (Prov. 3:15). The benefits of following the “women” of wisdom and understanding are repeated (Prov. 3:16-18). The paths of

wisdom and understanding are contrasted with the paths of death of the “strange” woman (Prov. 2:18).

Solomon advises his son to seek this woman of wisdom/understanding (Prov. 4:5-6). Solomon warns his son of the subtlety of the “strange” woman (Prov. 5:3). The consequences of paying heed to this “strange” woman are shown (Prov. 5:4-5). Solomon warns his son not to go near the door of the strange woman’s house (Prov. 5:8).

The ant is personified as a woman too (Prov. 6:6-8). Solomon advises his son to beware of the evil/strange woman (Prov. 6:24). Actions of the evil woman are revealed (Prov. 6:25).

Wisdom and understanding are again personified as women (Prov. 7:4). Solomon advises his son to follow these women (wisdom and understanding) so that they will keep him away from the evil/strange woman (Prov. 7:5). Solomon now describes a scenario where a young man passes near the house of the strange woman unaware of the danger (Prov. 7:8). Proverbs 7:10-27 describes the calling, actions, and enticement of the evil/strange woman.

Solomon mentions the call and actions of the other woman of wisdom (Prov. 8:1-3). Both the women (strange/evil and wisdom) call out to those around them to listen to them. They both call from various locations. The words of the woman of wisdom are contrasted with the words of the strange woman (Prov. 8:1-3).

Wisdom is precious (Prov. 8:11). This was already shown in Proverbs 3:15. “She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.” The woman of wisdom is again contrasted with the strange woman (Prov. 8:34).

Notice that the woman of wisdom and the strange woman are symbolized as calling from various locations. The woman of wisdom also has a house like the strange woman (Prov. 9:1).

The actions of the woman of wisdom are given – “She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled” (Prov. 9:2-5).

Notice from the above verses that the woman of wisdom also has her own maidens. Also notice that the woman of wisdom is calling.

The benefits of listening to the woman of wisdom are contrasted with the negative effects of listening to the strange woman – “For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased” (Prov. 9:11).

Another woman is introduced now. This could be the personification of the strange/evil woman: “A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell” (Prov. 9:13-18).

Notice the similarities and differences between the actions and locations of this foolish woman and the woman of wisdom.

a) The foolish woman knows nothing. b) She also has a house. c) She is in the high places of the city. d) She calls passerbys to listen to her. e) The passerbys do not know the danger that lurks closeby. f) Listening to her leads to death and hell.

This is the symbolism of the women in Proverbs chapters 1-9.

When we compare some versions of the Bible, the King James version says of one passage – “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” On the other hand, the New World Translation says, “Then I came to be beside him as a master worker, and I came to be the one he was specially fond of day by day, I being glad before him all the time” (Prov. 8:30).

If we keep in line with the context of the scriptures, the “I” in the King James version or the “master worker” of the New World Translation cannot be equated to the literal person of Jesus Christ, Moses, or even Elijah for that matter. Even substituting a specific literal woman in this instance will not keep in line with the symbolic context of the scriptures. Calling a woman a mailman makes her no more a man who delivers the mail than calling that woman in the verse Jesus Christ make her into a man. Jesus also personified wisdom as a woman in Luke 7:35.

What do you believe about the resurrection of Jesus?

Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are taught to believe that he was resurrected only as a spirit being. But Jesus said he would have a bodily resurrection. One needs to understand John 2:18-22. “But he [Jesus] was talking about the temple of his body. When, though, he was raised up from the dead, his disciples called to mind that he used to say this; and they believed the Scripture and the saying that Jesus said.” Unfortunately I found out that the Jehovah’s Witnesses did not believe the saying of Jesus in verse 19.

Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus?

When I read the scriptures it seems clear they wanted to kill him for blasphemy. The Jews would not accuse Jesus of blasphemy if he was only claiming to be a prophet. He

claimed much more (Matthew 26:63-65; Mark 2:5-7; Luke 5:21; John 5:18; 10:30-33; 19:7). Jesus is also called the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:5).

Should we worship Jesus?

I noticed that the New World Translation used by Jehovah's Witnesses changed the word "worship" into "made obeisance" when it pertained to Jesus and left "worship" intact when it pertained to Heavenly Father. But one can see that the same Greek word *proskuneo* used in Revelation 22:8-9 is the same *proskuneo* (worship or obeisance) that the Father commands to be given to the Son in Hebrews 1:6.

You will see a similar thing if you examine the Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures that the Watchtower Bible Society uses. If one were to compare the Greek words for worship or obeisance in the New Testament, it is plain to see that Jesus was worshipped. Besides, Exodus 34:14 is a commandment condemning anyone making obeisance to a false god. The only way Jesus could accept *proskuneo* is because he is God.

Do Jehovah's Witnesses view Jesus as a false god or the true God? John 17:3 says there is only one true God and yet Jesus is God according to Isaiah 9:6.

Jesus is also taught by the Bible to be the only God and Savior (Isaiah 43:3,11, 45:15; Titus 1:3; 3:4; Jude 25).

With so much focus on non-inspired literature, it is no wonder how some people have also failed to see the biblical teaching of Jesus being the Almighty God who is coming again. He is also known as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who is and who was (Rev. 1:7-8, 17-18; 11:17; 16:5; 21:6-7; 22:12-20). He is also called the loyal One, who is and who was (Rev. 16:5). Some have even changed Jesus (the mighty God – Isaiah 9:6) into Jehovah (Habakkuk 1:12).

Jesus is called the righteous "One" (Acts 7:52) as God is called the righteous "One" (Rev. 16:5). God again is called the "One" who is and who was and who is coming. Jesus (God) is coming (Rev. 1:7-8). The phrase "who is and who was" refers to Christ's death and resurrection.

There is a good resource on the Internet which speaks about Jesus in the New World Translation – <http://www.jude3.net/JWDOC.HTM>. Christ's deity is taught even in this Bible translation.

Both the booklets *What Does The Bible Really Teach?* and *Draw Close To Jehovah* teach Jesus is pure, holy, sinless, God, and a perfect reflection of the Father. I wonder when they will remove the part about him being a created angel.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for taking the time to go on a spiritual journey in the form of Memoirs of a Witness.

Meeting with the Jehovah's Witnesses began with a promise to find out what the Bible really teaches. As I read their literature and then compared it to the Bible, I saw that several parts did not agree.

If only we could allow the Bible to speak for itself instead of having humans give us incorrect interpretations.

I leave you with one admonition that was mentioned at the beginning of the memoir: "God's servants base their teachings on the Bible." May you grow in the grace of God's truth. It will keep you from being deceived.

Allow the Holy Spirit to teach you.

Please place your faith in the Jesus who has always been the Eternal, Everlasting, and Almighty God. There is salvation in no other name.

## References

The Holy Bible

- <http://www.blueletterbible.org>

The New World Translation

Draw Close to Jehovah

What Does The Bible Really Teach?

- <http://www.watchtower.org/>

The Deity of Christ and the New World Translation

- <http://www.jude3.net/JWDOC.HTM> (uppercase may be required)