

# “And I shall certainly sanctify my great name...”

–Ezekiel 36:23 (NWT)

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**When Jehovah God** took out a people for his name, he not only gave them the instructions pertaining to how he would be worshipped, but he also gave them a law code which addressed every aspect of their social life as well. Criminal law, health codes, familial relationships, priesthood qualifications and responsibilities, raising of flocks and tending of crops, and much more. All Jehovah God asked in return from this privileged people was that they *abide* by those standards and he would raise them above all other nations.

But not long after bringing them out of enslavement to Egypt, after ten awe-inspiring plagues upon their oppressors... after he parted the waters so that they might escape the pursuing army of Egypt to recapture them... after seeing that army swallowed up by the rushing waters and destroyed... they forgot all that they had seen and experienced first-hand, and turned to worshiping that which they could see by the work of their own hands. Grumbling over the niceties they had left behind quickly replaced the gratitude they had felt at no longer being oppressed.

It was only by the intercession of Moses on the part of the apostate Israelites that Jehovah held back his anger, but when Moses himself saw the grievous error that had swept up the nation of Israel, he himself became enraged at such thanklessness towards Jehovah’s undeserved kindness toward them, and he cast down the stone tablets that had been etched with the nation’s Law under Jehovah by the very “finger” of Jehovah God, and the tablets crumbled into pieces.

Aaron, as the appointed head over the nation during the while that Moses sought Jehovah upon the mountain, begged off from responsibility for the wicked act of the people, trying to shift the blame to the nation. And the people themselves were cut to their heart at what they had allowed to happen, except for those who continued to justify the idolatry and were done away with by death.

Jehovah God is not one to tolerate idolatry in any form. The Bible refers to him as a “jealous God” who tolerates no rivalry whatsoever. He demands exclusive devotion from those who desire to be approved by him. (Exodus 34:14)

And yet, although the nation of Israel, out of their own mouths, uttered their vow to abide by Jehovah’s Law and to become a people for his name, the Bible reveals that time and again they reneged on that vow, putting Jehovah to the test, getting punished for their error, repenting of the nation’s sins, getting forgiven, and then repeating it all over again.

And again. And again.

There is little question that the nation of Israel apostasized so many times that one can actually lose count when perusing the Bible.

But it wasn’t just that the nation of Israel became apostate. Indeed, because Jehovah had taken out a people for his name, their actions were actually bringing reproach on Jehovah’s name and reputation. The nations around Israel saw what was

taking place in God's nation, heard the tales of idolatry, wicked kings, acts of injustice and so much more.

By Ezekiel's day, the spiteful course of Israel had brought serious reproach upon Jehovah's name and reputation. He caused Ezekiel to write these condemnatory words regarding Israel and its dealings:

"Son of man, the house of Israel [were] dwelling upon their soil, and they kept making it unclean with their way and with their dealings. Like the uncleanness of menstruation their way has become before me."<sup>18</sup> And I proceeded to pour out my rage upon them on account of the blood that they had poured out upon the land, which [land] they had made unclean with their dungy idols.<sup>19</sup> And I proceeded to scatter them among the nations, so that they were dispersed among the lands. According to their way and according to their dealings I judged them.<sup>20</sup> So they came in to the nations where they came in, and people proceeded to profane my holy name in saying with reference to them, 'These are the people of Jehovah, and from his land they have gone out.'—Ezekiel 36:17-20 (NWT)

Jehovah did not mince words concerning how he viewed Israel's waywardness, and he wanted to make it clear that they had brought themselves into judgment before him. The far-reaching consequences of their actions had heaped reproach upon his very name, causing it to become an object of profanation by the surrounding peoples, who pointed at Israel, and critically referred to Israel as "the people of Jehovah" so that when one spoke of an Israelite, one was speaking of a worshiper of this "Jehovah." It was a time of mockery and jeering.

Yet Jehovah would not allow his name to be trampled to no end. He purposed to set matters straight and regain the respect for his name that it truly deserves.

<sup>21</sup> And I shall have compassion on my holy name, which the house of Israel have profaned among the nations where they have come in.—Ezekiel 36:21 (NWT)

Jehovah assigned blame where it needed to be, squarely on the shoulders of the people he had taken out for his name, the house of Israel. It was *Israel* that had caused his name to be profaned among the nations, by their wayward, apostate course. And if Israel had any delusions about the fact that Jehovah was going to rescue them once again as part of God restoring the sanctification of his name, the very next words by the prophet Ezekiel ended that line of thinking immediately:

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: "Not for YOUR sakes am I doing [it], O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which YOU have profaned among the nations where YOU have come in."—Ezekiel 36:22 (NWT)

Without a doubt, Jehovah wasn't doing it for Israel's sake, but for the sake of his own good name. Once again, he blamed Israel for it having come to this, due to their utter disregard for their privileged position among the nations. But he would do this because

Jehovah *is* Sovereign Lord and Grand Creator, a righteous God who tolerates no rivalry. He would see to it that his name is once again sanctified, not through any doings of Israel—which had clearly failed to do so time and again—but by his own Purpose, forcing the nations round to know that he *is* Jehovah. The ensuing verses of the passage explain that he will do this through Israel, but not through anything that they themselves have done or could do. It will all be due to Jehovah’s power and undeserved kindness and purposing it to be so.

And YOU will be bound to remember YOUR bad ways and YOUR dealings that were not good, and YOU will be bound to feel a loathing at YOUR own person on account of YOUR errors and on account of YOUR detestable things. <sup>32</sup> Not for YOUR sakes am I doing [this],’ is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘let it be known to YOU. Be ashamed and feel humiliation because of YOUR ways, O house of Israel.’—Ezekiel 36:31-32 (NWT)

No, Israel *itself* would have *no* reason to boast or be proud, even over Jehovah’s continuing to use them in his purpose, because they had failed miserably to live up to their vow to serve him and to bear his name righteously. Yes, unlike *them*, Jehovah would uphold *his* end of the covenant.

But Jehovah would also fulfill that covenant and do away with the system of worship that he instituted under the Law he gave to Israel, replacing it with a Law that everything about the old Law had foreshadowed, that of Christ.

## **The Pharisees and the Sanhedrin: Defenders and Enforcers of God’s Law**

By the time that Jesus, the promised Messiah, made himself known in Israel during the days of its domination by the Roman Empire, the Law of Moses was turned into a caricature of what it was meant to be, and taught by the Pharisees and enforced by the Sanhedrin.

The Bible doesn’t tell us *how* the Pharisees came to be the ones who “sat” in the “seat of Moses,” which apparently gave them authority to teach the people of Israel. (Matthew 23:1-2) However, secular sources of history suggest that they appeared in Israel in the 2nd century B.C. They were resisters of “all Greek and other foreign influences that threatened to undermine the sacred religion of their fathers, and they took their stand most emphatically upon Divine Law.” (*Encarta*, 2003) Furthermore, they “wished the state and all public and political affairs to be directed and measured by the standard of Divine Law,” (*Encarta*, 2003) even going so far as to disallow *favoritism* for those who had played a role in championing Israel.

With the Pharisees being so loyal to Jehovah's Law, why do many today, like Jesus during his days upon the earth, view these defenders of theocracy in a negative light?

It was because as time *went on*, they began to “teach as *doctrines commands* of men.” (Mark 7:7) It was because the established way of doing things, the *traditions*, were expected to be adhered to, as well. If someone *broke* from the *status quo*, they were viewed as rebellious, disregarding authority. (Matthew 15:2) In fact, they spent much time upholding their authority as part of God's own arrangement. If anyone challenged their teachings, they denounced the individual as rebellious. Jesus, on one occasion, said to them, they were making “the word of God invalid because of (their) tradition.” (Matthew 15:6) On another occasion, when asked by them who gave him authority to do and teach (since they themselves were the authority on such matters), Jesus asked them a simple question in return—and when they wouldn't answer it, he refused to accede to their demand of him as to by what authority he was acting. (Matthew 21:23-27)

In their zeal to expel and reject foreign influences into Israel's system of worship, they began to resort to *legalism*, issuing what Isaiah referred to as “command upon command, command upon command, measuring line upon measuring line, measuring line upon measuring line, here a little, there a little.” (Isaiah 28:10) Jesus confirmed this to the crowds and his disciples:

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying: <sup>2</sup> “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses. <sup>3</sup> Therefore all the things they tell YOU, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but do not perform. <sup>4</sup> They bind up heavy loads and put them upon the shoulders of men, but they themselves are not willing to budge them with their finger. <sup>5</sup> All the works they do they do to be viewed by men; for they broaden the [scripture-containing] cases that they wear as safeguards, and enlarge the fringes [of their garments].—Matthew 23:1-5 (NWT)

By seating themselves “in the seat of Moses,” they had accepted the station of teaching and determining how God's Law would be taught, in effect, acting as Jehovah's mouthpiece. What clearly started off as a commendable call by the Pharisees in Israel for the restoration of true worship, became corrupted by their own zeal and desire to appear “separate” from others.

In *their* eyes, Jehovah's Law became insufficient on its own. Additional standards and policies needed to be enacted to clarify those matters that weren't quite clear in the Law, or too ambiguous—to prevent possible infractions on the part of the people. Jesus called their efforts a *broadening* of “the (scripture-containing) cases.” Since Jesus said they were *broadening* things, it meant that they were adding to what was *already* there, what *should* have been sufficient on its own, especially since it had come directly from Jehovah God.

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish version of the U.S. Supreme Court. They were the “supreme national tribunal of the Jews, established at the time of the Maccabees.” (*Encarta*, 2003) They themselves were “governed as a democracy of scholars *according to Pharisaic ideology*,” whose power went so far as to be able to wield “the supreme decision over life and death” concerning violators of the Pharisee's understanding of

God's Law. That they were scholars indicates that they themselves were familiar with Jehovah's Law, and upheld it, inclusive of any additional clarifications and understandings that the Pharisees established.

The system worked in harmony and unison, presenting a united Jewish system of worship to the nations, with a centralized, standardized means of adherence to Jehovah's Law as determined by the zealous Pharisees.

## **Challenging “God’s Arrangement”: The Ministry of Jesus**

In spite of the coherence and specificity of the Jewish system of worship when Jesus presented himself as the Messiah of Israel, Jesus blamed the system itself for the problems he saw around him as he went about his ministry. He referred to the people of Israel that did their best to adhere to the high moral and judicial standards established by the loyal Pharisees as “sheep” that had been “skinned and thrown about.” (Matthew 9:36) He actually felt pity for them because of their condition. The system of worship which should have become a protection and a blessing for Israel had been turned into a legalistic, weighty thing, causing Israel to feel too imperfect to live up to it, and thus without any reason for hope or faith—even though they did continue to hope towards the promised Messiah that would lift the yoke of Rome off their shoulders.

Still, when Jesus spoke, he spoke with such freshness, such simplicity, that people took to it immediately, sensing its rightness, in contrast to the complicating array of the Pharisees interpretation and application of the Law. In fact, where the Pharisees were busy broadening or adding to Jehovah's Law in order to make it supposedly more clear, and subsequently “harder” to violate, Jesus narrowed the entire Law down into two basic principles:

<sup>34</sup> After the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they came together in one group. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, versed in the Law, asked, testing him: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> He said to him: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second, like it, is this, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments the whole Law hangs, and the Prophets.”—Matthew 22:34-40 (NWT)

Throughout his ministry, Jesus explained that while the Law was good and perfect, it was *meant* to serve as a teacher of God's people, to root out sin at its *source*, one's own heart, their seat of motivation. For example, he said that although a man may not commit adultery by engaging in the actual act with a woman, if the man even *longs* after the woman in desire, he's violated the *spirit* of the law. In God's eyes, they were one and the

same. Adding any number of “doctrines” or “commands of men” would do nothing to better the people when the problem was in one’s own heart, not in the Law itself.

One cannot legislate *thoughts* or *motivations* no matter how inclusive a law can be made.

Yet because of the radical departure that Jesus’ ministry took from the *organizational arrangement*, and his persistent reprimands of the Pharisees in light of their resistance to his message—*because* they viewed it as a direct challenge to their authority and station of dispensation of understanding—the Pharisees sought Jesus’ death, first by trickery and sly questions and then by subverting one of Jesus’ own disciples into becoming a betrayer.

In the end, Jesus was rejected as the promised Messiah by the majority of God’s nation, and he uttered the final, fateful words recorded in Matthew and Luke’s accounts:

<sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her—how often I wanted to gather your children together in the manner that a hen gathers her brood of chicks under her wings, but YOU people did not want [it]! <sup>35</sup> Look! YOUR house is abandoned to YOU. I tell YOU, YOU will by no means see me until YOU say, ‘Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name.’”—Luke 13:34-35 (NWT)

## **Loyalty to the Organization of Israel as “Jehovah’s Arrangement”: Idolatry Leads to Rejection**

There is little doubt that the Pharisees recognized Jesus taught the Truth. On at least one occasion, they admitted as much:

Then the Pharisees went their way and took counsel together in order to trap him in his speech. <sup>16</sup> So they dispatched to him their disciples, together with party followers of Herod, saying: “Teacher, we know you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and you do not care for anybody, for you do not look upon men’s outward appearance.”---Matthew 22:15-16 (NWT)

According to Luke’s account, they made reference to Jesus’ impartiality, but regardless, they openly acknowledged that what Jesus taught was, indeed, the Truth. Some might say that these men *said* that because they were on their way to attempt to trick Jesus into saying something which they might ensnare him with. But on another occasion, Nicodemus, described as a “man of the Pharisees” affirmed that the understanding among the religious leaders of Jesus’ day *knew* that Jesus taught Truth:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, Nic-o-de´mus was his name, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This one came to him in the night and said to him: “Rabbi, we know

that you as a teacher have come from God; for no one can perform these signs that you perform unless God is with him.”---John 3:1-2 (NWT)

With this being the case, then, why is it that the Pharisees opposed Jesus on every inch of his ministry?

It was because the *arrangement of God*, was not to be opposed, not even by those who *were* teaching the Truth. Anyone teaching or instructing the people *outside* of the arrangement was demonstrating themselves to be rebellious, and a threat to the order of things. As those in authority within that arrangement, the Pharisees alone could decide what should be taught and what should be accepted as truth, and *they* certainly hadn't authorized *Jesus* to teach the people. As mentioned earlier, they even made an issue over just who *had* authorized him to teach, and thus disregard the organization's system of appointing teachers.

As Jesus pressed ahead in his ministry, the Pharisees shadowed his every step, watching for an opening, a misspoken word, a flawed reasoning. They began to malign his character, his *motive* when he was found eating with so-called sinners and allowing his disciples to do things which had formerly been forbidden. Time and again, Jesus attempted to reason with them that while they were showing a zeal for the *letter* of the Law, they were ignoring the *spirit* of the Law.

Still, they continued to accuse Jesus and to seek his undoing, even though they themselves became afraid of what the people might do if they attempted this openly, and refrained from laying hands on him, although that most certainly is what they *wanted* to do. And even though they fully recognized that he *was*, after all, teaching God's Truth, and not his own.

In the end, they showed more loyalty to the *system of worship* than they did to the Truth itself. The Pharisees had spent perhaps two centuries establishing, defending, and expanding upon true worship within Israel, casting out elements of false worship that had crept into the organization during its time of captivity in Babylon, and under other world powers.

Paul would later speak of this sort of misplaced loyalty that is, in fact, *idolatry* at its most insidious—since it doesn't really *seem* like idolatry to those who have fallen to this line of reasoning, because they view it as being “loyal” to “Jehovah's arrangement” or “Jehovah's organization.” In his letter, recorded in the book of Romans, Paul states that the *reality* is that those placing the *system of worship*, the organization, on equal terms with or even above Jehovah God, are actually guilty of exchanging “the truth of God for the lie:”

For God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in an unrighteous way,<sup>19</sup> because what may be known about God is manifest among them, for God made it manifest to them.<sup>20</sup> For his invisible [qualities] are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable;<sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God nor did they thank him, but they became empty-headed in their reasonings and their unintelligent heart became darkened.<sup>22</sup> Although asserting they were wise, they became foolish

<sup>23</sup> and turned the glory of the incorruptible God into something like the image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed creatures and creeping things.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God, in keeping with the desires of their hearts, gave them up to uncleanness, that their bodies might be dishonored among them, <sup>25</sup> even those who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and venerated and rendered sacred service to the creation rather than the One who created, who is blessed forever. Amen.---Romans 1:18-25 (NWT)

Paul went on with these warning words, exacting *why* legalism and upholding the *system of worship* in idolatry is doomed to failure:

<sup>28</sup> And just as they did not approve of holding God in accurate knowledge, God gave them up to a disapproved mental state, to do the things not fitting, <sup>29</sup> filled as they were with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, badness, being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malicious disposition, being whisperers, <sup>30</sup> backbiters, haters of God, insolent, haughty, self-assuming, inventors of injurious things, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> without understanding, false to agreements, having no natural affection, merciless. <sup>32</sup> Although these know full well the righteous decree of God, that those practicing such things are deserving of death, they not only keep on doing them but also consent with those practicing them.

**2** Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are, if you judge; for in the thing in which you judge another, you condemn yourself, inasmuch as you that judge practice the same things. <sup>2</sup> Now we know that the judgment of God is, in accord with truth, against those who practice such things.

<sup>3</sup> But do you have this idea, O man, while you judge those who practice such things and yet you do them, that you will escape the judgment of God? <sup>4</sup> Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, because you do not know that the kindly [quality] of God is trying to lead you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and of the revealing of God's righteous judgment. <sup>6</sup> And he will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> everlasting life to those who are seeking glory and honor and incorruptibleness by endurance in work that is good; <sup>8</sup> however, for those who are contentious and who disobey the truth but obey unrighteousness there will be wrath and anger, <sup>9</sup> tribulation and distress, upon the soul of every man who works what is injurious, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who works what is good, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For there is no partiality with God.---Romans 1:28 – 2:11 (NWT)

The Pharisees, in spite of admitting that they knew that Jesus was teaching the truth, did not themselves allow that Truth to change their erroneous ways. They were judging Jesus as a rebellious apostate of Jehovah's arrangement, and in their judgment, drank judgment to themselves—for they themselves were the ones that had apostasized, turning from rendering sacred service to Jehovah God to rendering sacred service to Jehovah's earthly organization. Thus Jesus aptly cast a final reproof on Israel as a whole, because of the

actions of the teachers of Israel, telling them that their house, their organization and its accompanying system of worship, would be abandoned to them. Jehovah would *not* hold back judgment on the basis that they were his namesake people, for Jehovah is *not* partial.

The decision was in: The Pharisees insisted on adhering to the Law, with all its embellishments they had managed to incorporate into it. They insisted that since the nation of Israel was Jehovah's only approved nation, a people for his name, and that Jehovah had provided a way of doing things for that nation, then that arrangement must be adhered to, regardless of any amount of Truth that might be presented apart from it. They insisted that since they had been the ones to loyally uphold, defend, and teach the Law in Israel, then Jehovah would enact changes, progressive understanding, through *them*, not from someone outside of the appointed men of the organization.

In less than the time that Israel was sentenced to wander in the wilderness for an earlier apostasy, the Pharisees would find out just what happens when one clings to an "arrangement" in an act of idolatry.

## **The End of One System of Worship and the Beginning of a New System of Worship**

After Jesus left the earthly scene, his apostles took up the ministry, searching out repentant ones and assigned the work of building a Christian congregation of people. Where before Jehovah had taken out a people for his name and built it through *lineage*, no longer would one's family of birth be the determining factor of one's approval before Jehovah God or being among his people. Instead, one would present themselves to Jehovah, and become a disciple of Jesus the Christ, following to the best of their ability the example that *Jesus* provided. They would still have to battle their own inclinations and sinful tendencies, but no longer would they be bound to a legalistic system of worship in order to identify everything; they would have to examine their own *heart*.

However, the already-established Jewish system of worship did not give up in their resistance to this new system of worship called Christianity. The Pharisees continued to derail the movement as *sectarianism*, accusing the disciples of drawing away followers after themselves and fighting against the arrangement of Jehovah that the Pharisees represented. Even Paul, after his conversion to Christianity, faced the accusations that he had, in effect, become an apostate:

<sup>5</sup> For we have found this man a pestilent fellow and stirring up seditions among all the Jews throughout the inhabited earth and a spearhead of the sect of the Naz-a-renes'--Acts 24:5 (NWT)

Paul, however, said in his own defense:

<sup>10</sup> And Paul, when the governor nodded to him to speak, answered:

“Knowing well that this nation has had you as judge for many years, I readily speak in my defense the things about myself, <sup>11</sup> as you are in a position to find out that for me it has not been more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem; <sup>12</sup> and they found me neither in the temple arguing with anyone nor causing a mob to rush together, either in the synagogues or throughout the city. <sup>13</sup> Nor can they prove to you the things of which they are accusing me right now. <sup>14</sup> But I do admit this to you, that, according to the way that they call a ‘sect,’ in this manner I am rendering sacred service to the God of my forefathers, as I believe all the things set forth in the Law and written in the Prophets; <sup>15</sup> and I have hope toward God, which hope these [men] themselves also entertain, that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>16</sup> In this respect, indeed, I am exercising myself continually to have a consciousness of committing no offense against God and men.—Acts 24:10-16 (NWT)

Paul knew that the Pharisees viewed Christianity as an apostate sect, and yet he showed that he believed the same as they did on certain things, and that it wasn’t his goal or purpose to argue or cause disruption. Not only was this group calling itself “Christian” allegedly “apostate,” but it was widely viewed as also being a sect, as recorded later in the book of Acts, when Paul was told by those to whom he had made contact with, “But we think it proper to hear from you what your thoughts are, for truly as regards this sect it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.” (Acts 28:22) In spite of their willingness to hear Paul out, some were convinced and others were not (Acts 28:25) and parted ways.

The resistance of the Pharisees and their loyal followers was only one obstacle that early Christianity faced. There were also those who became convinced of Jesus being the promised Messiah who adjoined themselves to Christians but brought with them the leaning toward legalism that should have been left behind. Divisions arose early on as additional rules and standards began to be taught by some, including the historical argument over whether non-Jews had to be circumcised in order to be Christian. It was a debate that worked its way all the way back to Jerusalem and called for a final decision to be arrived at by the apostles and their closest companions.

The matter was finally settled: circumcision was not a *requirement* to be Christian. And to avoid any future additions of so-called “requirements” that would lead to the very problem created under the Jewish system of worship, a letter was sent forth to all the congregations stating:

For the holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to YOU, except these necessary things, <sup>29</sup> to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. If YOU carefully keep yourselves from these things, YOU will prosper. Good health to YOU!”—Acts 15:28-29 (NWT)

This simple resultant decision on the part of those spearheading the Christian movement was *meant* to head off anyone who might try to “broaden” the requirements to stand approved before Jehovah God, just as the Pharisees had been doing for perhaps two centuries. But as time pressed on, the apostles came to realize that it was inevitable that

legalism would find its way back into the fledgling movement of Christianity, and that it was only their presence on the world scene which was acting as a “restraint” against such backwards thinking from finding its prominence once more. (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7)

Paul recognized that one last apostasy would occur, this time in the system of worship known as Christianity. What he and the other apostles purposed to do, knowing that it had to occur in spite of their best efforts to prevent it, was prepare the faithful ones for the inevitable apostasy of Christianity.

With the time for the Jewish system of worship soon to come to its end, there was little time left to sow the necessary seeds of faith, not to mention the watering and attending of those seeds. They also needed to write their letters, knowing that they would each meet with death. The hard work of the apostles paid off with blessings from Jehovah, who saw to it that their letters of encouragement reached the Christians throughout the separate realms roundabout Israel.

And in 70 C.E., the walls of Jerusalem came down, with multitudes of Israelites who clung to the former ways and disregarded the possibility that Jehovah would ever allow his namesake city to be destroyed, all killed or enslaved by the Roman armies, whose notoriety for mercilessness became a long-lasting reputation.

Thus was the former system of worship known as Judaism brought to an end. The sins of the nation had reached clear to heaven, and Jehovah would no longer allow his name to be profaned by them, although he did purpose a provision, even in his judicial decision, concerning Israel to restore them after a lengthy period of being cast from his presence, owing to the promises he had made to their forefathers like Abraham.

Those who survived that disastrous time were the ones which *heeded* Jesus’ words of warning, his followers. They fled Jerusalem and any sort of tie to the doomed system, adjoining themselves fully to Christianity and the brothers and sisters in Christ. But any sense of safety felt by them would be short-lived as the persecutions began against the followers of the Christ. The apostles themselves would be martyred, and the work of holding to the simple Law of the Christ would have to be carried on by others, many whom would not be so inclined to Christlike love as the apostles had proven to be. Harsh teachers rose up, perhaps embittered at the heavy hand of Rome, perhaps out of a zeal similar to that of the Pharisees during their day. The Bible is silent on this matter.

One thing *is* certain, however: Jehovah’s name would once again become profaned before the nations on account of a people bearing it. And equally certain was that Jehovah would once again sanctify it.

## **“You Are My Witnesses”: The Start of “Jehovah’s Witnesses”**

The face of Christianity changed in the centuries following 70CE, and finally split into numerous groups during the late 1700’s. *Sectarianism* was alive and thriving by the time the early 1900’s arrived in the stream of time. Some sects of Christianity became “mainstream,” widely accepted as systems of worshipping God, while others did not seem to break into that enviable position among the nations. Among those that did not

find public approval in comparison to other groups such as Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans and the like was a small, zealous group that referred to itself as simply “Bible Students.”

In a movement started by a young man named Charles Taze Russell, the strong yearning for the restoration of true worship once again was felt by those hungry for the word of God, and a desire to do away with anything which seemed to conflict with God’s Law. The beginnings seemed reminiscent of the fire in the hearts of the Pharisees, ages before them.

Indeed, many commonly accepted teachings were discovered by the “Bible Students” to be at variance with what God’s Word said, and the quest to establish religious truth became their goal. Russell, a prolific writer, spent much of his life disproving established doctrines such as the condition of the dead, challenging the established body of teachings shared by many of the “mainstream” religious groups, and trying to uncover Jehovah’s timetable.

It was this latter endeavor for which most people would remember him (excepting the “Bible Students”), because he spent a tremendous amount of time composing timetables and Bible chronology, even going so far as to include the findings of a pyramid in Egypt into his work, truly convinced that it was further proof that the time had arrived for Jehovah God to open and make known the “times and seasons” which had previously been reserved for him alone. (Acts 1:7)

One of his most well-known predictions revolved around the year of 1914. Russell believed that 1914 would prove to be the year which would end the “Gentile Times” and result in chaos as Armageddon began. When 1914 came and World War I burst onto the world’s scene, attention was more closely given to the possibility that Russell had been correct in his calculations. But as the year passed and then another, doubt and skepticism once again became the order of the day. Still convinced that the majority of his calculations were correct, Russell determined that it was merely his expectations which had been in error. Evidently, the “Gentile kings” had had their day, but more was to take place than they had anticipated.

However, when Russell died in 1916, two years after his expected year for the beginning of Armageddon, Armageddon *still* had not occurred. His efforts at trying to uncover Jehovah’s timetable had essentially failed, but in spite of that, Russell left behind a group of people who, it could be said, truly looked to the Bible as the final authority on what a Christian was to believe and what a Christian was to reject. Unfortunately, there were many who *also* looked to Charles Taze Russell as more than a man, and the days after his death would lead to a serious upheaval in this movement that so heartily worked towards the restoration of true worship.

The corporation that was left by Russell became the subject of an intense grab for organizational power, but with differing opinions and views as to what was to be accomplished now that “Pastor Russell” had passed from the earthly scene. At the end of the debate, one man stood at the helm of the corporation, and in control of the organization. That man was “Judge” Rutherford. Almost immediately afterwards, several prominent men who had formerly assisted Russell were dismissed from their positions and labeled dissidents by Rutherford. While claims on both sides of the issue vary, one fact is clear: this event resulted in a split of the “Bible Students.” Those who remained loyal to Rutherford remained in association with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the corporation that Russell had established for the promotion of God’s truth and that

Rutherford now fully controlled. Those who departed out of loyalty to Russell and or the so-called “dissidents” found themselves with nothing but “Pastor” Russell’s literature and their Bibles.

Rutherford, at first, picked up where Charles Taze Russell left off, continuing to publish the founder’s literature and findings. But as time went on, he revisited the chronology and made what he felt were necessary changes, and also proceeded to publish a plentiful collection of his own writings, gradually discontinuing Russell’s material.

Still, there seemed to be a need within Rutherford to differentiate between “Bible Students” who had remained loyal to the corporation and those who had left off. To the world, “Bible Students” were “Bible Students,” but Rutherford didn’t want the confusion to continue. Having a *name* for the organization seemed somehow appropriate to Rutherford, and on July 26, 1931, during a convention in Columbus, Ohio, he made an announcement, based on his reading of Isaiah 43:10, an announcement which would change the face of the corporation’s adherents:

Promptly at four, Brother Rutherford began by stating that he regarded what he was about to say as of vital importance to everyone who could hear his voice. His listeners were keenly interested. During his discourse he presented another resolution, this one entitled “A New Name,” which was climaxed by the declaration: “We desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, *Jehovah’s witnesses*.” The thrilled conventioners again jumped to their feet with the ringing shout “Aye!” They would henceforth be known as Jehovah’s Witnesses!—*Proclaimers*, page 82

In a multitude of religious systems of worship on the world of that time, all clamoring for the banner of “Christian,” a group formerly known only as “Bible Students” took upon themselves the name of the God they claimed to be worshiping.

Presumptuous or not, Jehovah would be watching to see if this group, like Israel before them, would cause his name to be profaned before the nations, or cause it to be praised.

## **“I Did Not Speak to Them, Yet They Themselves Prophesied”: Failed Expectations**

For a group of Christians to feel so confident as to take Jehovah’s name upon themselves and assume the responsibility of representing true worship, “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are to be commended for such an act of dedication. However, with an entire historical record firmly etched in the pages of the Bible concerning Israel’s miserable failure to live up to such a responsibility, either foresight had failed Rutherford and his followers, or the members of the movement truly believed that they were worthy to bear the holy name of Jehovah to the exclusion of all other religious systems of worship known generally by the title “Christian.”

As previously mentioned, Rutherford continued where Russell left off on establishing an understanding of Bible chronology that would be promoted throughout the organization. One of the first tasks before him was to explain why 1914 passed

without Armageddon actually coming to pass, but “Judge” Rutherford would not stop there as he produced a new date to look forward to which, according to his understanding, was even *more* reliable than their understanding of 1914 had been. 1925 was pointed to as when humankind would see the resurrection of the Bible’s patriarchs, he said, using the resources of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society to promote his views. Credit was given to Jehovah’s Word for making known to “Jehovah’s Witnesses” these insights into God’s Purpose, lending weightiness to Rutherford’s proclamations.

For these two years [possibly from the spring of 1918 to the winter of 1919 or spring of 1920] hath the famine [for the truth] been in the land [among professing Christians]; and yet there are five years [to the spring of 1925, to the resurrection of the ancient worthies] in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest”—no general religious work for the world can be done.—Genesis 45:6.—*Watchtower*, August 1, 1918

Accentuating this new expectation, Rutherford proceeded to deliver a stirring speech at the various conventions, titled “Millions Now Living Will Never Die.” A house was made available in California to provide housing for the resurrected patriarchs, so certain was Rutherford, so confident were his followers.

The certainty was so profound, so unquestionable for Rutherford and the movement, that as 1925 drew closer, the Watchtower’s flagship publication said:

Let no one now be deceived by calculations as to just when the Lord will cease his work with the Church on earth. The year 1925 is a date definitely and clearly marked in the Scriptures, even more clearly than that of 1914.—*Watch Tower*, July 15, 1924, page 211

But when 1925, like 1914, came and went without the fulfillment of those expectations, the significance of their error in profaning Jehovah’s name before the nations went ignored by “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Instead, focus was on correcting the expectations and promoting the new understandings, and harmonizing it all with already-established explanations. More dates would be established by Rutherford and accepted by the general body of “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” defended as though given directly by Jehovah himself through the pages of the Bible—and not to be questioned or criticized. Anyone challenging Rutherford’s views was removed from the organization and viewed as an apostate.

While time and again, it was made evident that Jehovah himself was *not* giving Rutherford these proclamations to speak nor imparting these understandings to either Rutherford or to the Watchtower corporation, this didn’t seem to slow Rutherford’s prolific writings and claims to that effect. Nor did it cause any waning on the tireless efforts that Rutherford’s followers expended in repeating this errant proclamations to the world at large as “the truth.” Even the taking of Jehovah’s name upon themselves did not sober the movement to their senses. Not only were the expectations attributed to Jehovah God and declared “definitely and clearly marked in the scriptures,” but when the expectations failed, adjustments likewise were attributed to Jehovah God, leaving the listeners of these “Jehovah’s Witnesses” wondering how such an almighty God could have gotten such things wrong in the first place, and whether Jehovah was himself figuring it out as he went along.

And with every failed proclamation, the nations roundabout “Jehovah’s Witnesses” jeered and criticized the God of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” as an incompetent

God, who couldn't even get his own "chosen" people to get things straight, much less the message that they so fervently preached.

But there was still much to be done on the part of "Jehovah's Witnesses" to further profane Jehovah's name on the world scene.

## **“They Keep Profaning My Holy Places”: The Return of Pharisaic *Legalism* for the Sake of Appearing Holy and Separate**

In an effort to further differentiate "Jehovah's Witnesses" from any and all other "so-called Christian religions," Rutherford spearheaded efforts to make the teachings of the organization unique from other religions of his time, notwithstanding his boldly declaring dates and years to be watched. Every effort was made to remove what were referred to as influences by "Babylon the Great," which was understood by "Jehovah's Witnesses" as being the wicked world empire of false religion, inclusive of all other Christian systems of worship (which also came to be referred to as Christendom).

Teachings which didn't fit in with Rutherford's understanding of the Bible were uprooted and cast out from the body of teachings, and areas that didn't seem to be getting addressed in other religions were *explained* by "Judge" Rutherford, incorporated into the body of teachings and expected to be accepted as though from God himself. Dissidents were removed swiftly, for Rutherford tolerated no rivalry.

Like the Pharisees of Israel, Rutherford was convinced that there had to be a "broadening" of the scriptures in order to have "Jehovah's Witnesses" appear as a holy people before the nations. Utilizing the resources of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society corporation, "Judge" Rutherford worked tirelessly to restore what he felt was true worship, and he did it by utilizing the one thing he was most familiar with by experience: legislation.

Through an establishing of legislation, it would make it easier to determine who could be viewed as one of "Jehovah's Witnesses" and who was not. It would make it easier to determine who was doing their part and who was to be found lacking. And by having a single set of teachings, determined by Rutherford himself, "Jehovah's Witnesses" could finally achieve the uniformity which Rutherford found lacking in all of the other "so-called Christian" systems of worship, further proof that only Witnesses stood approved before Jehovah God.

The incorporation of additional requirements in order to be "approved" and "worthy" of being one of "Jehovah's Witnesses" took place over the course of time that "Judge" Rutherford was at the helm of the organization and president of the corporation, but would continue long after as still *more* requirements became part of what it took to stand among "Jehovah's Witnesses."

One of those requirements developed progressively in the years after "Judge" Rutherford took the helm. During his tenure as president of the corporation and leader of the organization, the expression "the Society" came to represent a vague body of authority which had a special relationship with Jehovah God due to their role as the spiritual leader of "Jehovah's Witnesses." It began to be referred to as the "channel" that

Jehovah was using to impart scriptural understanding to “his people,” a work called the giving of “food at the right time.”

While this doctrine was still undergoing institution into the body of teachings, it was not enforced as a requirement in order to be among “Jehovah’s people,” namely the Bible Students (later known as “Jehovah’s Witnesses”). It would only later become a *required* belief.

Notice the following statement as it was published in the *Watch Tower*:

The mere fact that he (Jehovah God) would continue to use the Society as his channel *would not mean that others not in harmony with the Society have no truth.* They may have much truth.”—*Watch Tower*, April 1, 1920, page 100

The same article continues:

We would have no quarrel with any one who wants to seek truth through other channels. *We would not refuse to treat one as a brother because he did not believe the Society is the Lord’s channel.*—*Watch Tower*, April 1, 1920, page 100

Similarly, in the same article, the following statement was made:

The Society, therefore, has no desire to *put a test upon any of the brethren*, nor any purpose of putting a test upon any one except those who are offered for election as officers and servants of the Society; and this was clearly within its province when, in meeting officially, it put a test upon such, as heretofore set out. It has no purpose or desire and does not countenance the putting of specific tests upon any brethren relative to fellowship except that which is designated by the Scriptures. *It has not made the acceptance of the Society as the channel a test of fellowship.*...—*Watch Tower*, April 1, 1920, page 104

This was in the early 1920’s, but if this policy were read by “Jehovah’s Witnesses” *today*, they would read like foreign ideas, so strenuously is the acceptance of the Society as Jehovah’s “channel” emphasized and required.

Over the passage of time, the “Society” accrued more and more authority over what was acceptable teaching and what was not, what needed to be done to stand approved before Jehovah, and what should be considered of lesser importance. While “the Society” referred to the elected officials of the Watchtower corporation, the *reality* was that “Judge” J.F. Rutherford *was* the “Society.” The final decisions rested with him, the final understandings rested with him, the majority of the literature of his day originated with him, and the phonograph recordings were spoken by him. Even so, the body of men called “the Society” would take a familiar course to a group of men from centuries earlier.

Again, while nobody is certain how the Pharisees came to have authority over Israel and to become the sole authority on scripture, it seems *reasonable* to speculate that it happened in much the same fashion as how pharisaism came to be a part of “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” since both groups started off with a zeal for restoring true worship and establishing religious truth, and both, over the course of time, realized that God’s Word alone would not be enough to keep the organization separate from outside influences.

And both came to the same conclusion: the only way to *measure* one's faithfulness and adherence to God's Laws was by making things so that *others* could observe and make a determination, thus "works" became the means by which one's faith would be judged by others. The more "works," the more one could be judged to have faith. And the best way to accomplish that was by imposing a uniformity by which all adherents could be measured and expected to live up to.

As both president of the corporation and the head of the organization, Rutherford saw to it that his vision of a restored "true worship" was carried out. Changes to the way things were done came to be called "refinements" from Jehovah God and were accepted with little to no questioning on the part of the general populace of "Jehovah's Witnesses."

In fact, acceptance became a requirement, in spite of the published statements that "the Society" would *not* resort to tests regarding acceptance of "the Society" as Jehovah's channel (cited earlier). Notice the view of "the Society" concerning itself in this statement, published in the same flagship publication as the above-cited statements:

Rebellion against the slave is rebellion against God. A proper mental attitude toward the slave's direction is a part of keeping pace with the New World Society.—*Watchtower*, June 1, 1956, page 346

What a contrast to the earlier view. Where before, whether or not one accepted "the Society" as Jehovah's channel, one could be freely accepted as a "brother," now, the only way one would obtain survival into the New World was by accepting them. And, like the Pharisees before them, this insistence upon their authority would continue and all-the-more fervently into the modern day.

Among the first order of business to achieving unity under "the Society" was *centralizing* the organization to the corporation itself so that "Judge" Rutherford could better oversee activities and assignments and appointments of men throughout the movement. Well aware of what could happen if power and control was not closely held, Rutherford did not want a repeat against *him* as had happened against Russell following Charles' death, a usurping of the corporation by those who might prove more zealous than he. Arrangements that had formerly been "democratic" in operation now became *organizationally* arranged, decided upon by the corporation itself, with Rutherford having the final say in many matters. Even giving of money to the corporation was no longer a vote.

By the time Rutherford passed from the earthly scene in January of 1942, the organization now known as "Jehovah's Witnesses" no longer bore the resemblance it had during Russell's day. Rutherford had achieved the centralized rulership he had envisioned, and its accompanying uniformity. Most of Charles Taze Russell's writings were dismissed, replaced with "Judge" Rutherford's findings and proclamations—(although Russell continued to be upheld as the founder of the movement, in many respects, resembling a figurehead for the movement but little more, since nearly every one of Russell's teachings were disposed with).

The reins of the corporation and the organization, following Rutherford's death, would be passed to Nathan Knorr.

Probably the most notable "refinement" made by Knorr was that of establishing "theocratic schools" throughout the organization to make every one of "Jehovah's

Witnesses” a preacher for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Certainly there were already preachers in the organization, but their preaching was entirely based on promoting “Judge” Rutherford’s understandings and talks and literature. Rarely, if ever, did these preachers use the Bible itself, relying instead on phonographs recorded by Rutherford and spending their efforts on getting Rutherford’s multitude of books into the hands of the public.

Knorr’s plan was commendable in that it was *intended* to make each one of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” a capable defender of the organization’s body of beliefs while still retaining centralization of power and determination for what would or could be taught as “the truth.” The hope also seemed to be that dependence on the literature would be diminished, especially of any one man’s writings. This change was enacted as further evidence that Jehovah God was “refining” “his earthly organization” because it was continuing to present itself as holy and righteous, just as he demanded of a people that bore his name. Too, the movement continued to gain new members, understood to mean that Jehovah was blessing their efforts all the more.

But the start of *legalism* had already set in during Rutherford’s time at the helm, and it would continue to snowball in spite of Knorr’s best intentions to subdue it to some degree. There seemed to be no turning back now for “Jehovah’s Witnesses” just as there had been no turning back for the Pharisees in Jesus’ day. Since “works” became the standard by which one’s faith and righteousness became measured by the organization, to remove that as a standard became impossible due to its own weightiness and established value. In fact, it became *the modus operandi* for “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” allowing them to uphold their own “works” as “undeniable evidence” (e.g., August 1, 1953, *Watchtower*, page 475, paragraph 32; that they alone were approved out of all of the “so-called Christian” religions of the modern day. Who *else* were doing these things which the organization itself determined to be “acceptable” works according to the understanding of the organization’s top men?

To complicate matters still more, Pharisaism took its modern-day form when a “Governing Body” was granted authority over “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” removing control and authority from the corporation’s president. By 1975, this “Governing Body” became the sole source of Biblical understanding and enactment of any and all changes which would be made to keep the organization “clean and undefiled.” They were the ones to determine, like the Pharisees before them, what was considered righteous and what unrighteous. They became “the Society,” although occasional statements “suggested” that all of the so-called “anointed” made up the Society. However, when one of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” use the expression, “the Society teaches...,” what is really being said is that the “Governing Body teaches...”

Defending this monumental decision affecting “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in all the world, reference was made to “the Society’s” understanding that the early Christian organization had a “Governing Body” which made the final decision on all matters relating to the body of teachings, *starting with the issue over circumcision*. Once again the entire body of adherents accepted this shift in power, submitting to this group of men, convinced that Jehovah had brought it all about.

With *legalism* now fully set into place, along with the body of men to *defend* it and *incorporate* it into the already existing body of teachings, one’s “works” became all-the-more important to “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” The number of hours, for example, that

one spent going door-to-door to dispense Watchtower literature was held up as the most obvious way of determining if an individual really *was* trying to serve Jehovah. It was expected to be given priority by all who would call themselves “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” The more one could be *seen* as working for the organization, the more “righteous” they became, and the more “loyal” they were viewed by others.

Still, in the midst of this straying from the *simplicity* of the Law of the Christ—which only required that a person do what they could do, out of the sincerity of their own heart, just as they have resolved to do (2 Corinthians 9:7), the “scripture-containing cases” were “broadened” yet further. More *requirements* were added to the body of teachings, along with still more expectations and demands by the organization.

Amazing as it may seem now, Christianity began in sheer simplicity of only *one* requirement to become a Christian, asked by Philip after the Ethiopian eunuch sought to be baptized:

“Philip said to him: ‘If you believe with all your heart, it is permissible.’ In reply he said: ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’”—Acts 8:37 (NWT, footnote)

Today, a prospective Witness has over 200 requirements and doctrines they must accept as absolute “truth” before being allowed to get baptized, all of which can be found in the *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* publication. Truly, a “broadening” of the “scripture-containing cases”!

Each prospective Witness will sit down and cover a series of questions with two or more elders. A determination will be made as to whether the prospective Witness has made changes in his life which would denote his desire to live a Christian life. In addition, the regularity of his attendance at meetings, as well as the amount of time he is spending in the “field ministry” will be used by the elders to decide whether baptism is qualified for.

With the additional demands laid upon “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” the same stark reality which the Jews faced at the closing days of their system of worship is now being felt in the worldwide association of Watchtower adherents: there is simply no way to measure up to the expectations laid upon them, yet when one does *not*, they are left feeling like they’ve come up short, that they should be able to do more. Most Witnesses are aware of the fact that there is a “national average,” and so when one of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” falls below that average, it becomes a sign that there is probably something spiritually wrong with the individual. What should be an occasion for joyousness has now become a reason for sadness and depression and doubt over one’s worth to God because of their simply not being able to meet the demands of the organization and its leadership. Congregational members measure one another by the hours spent in the “field service” and the number of meetings that every person makes.

In addition, the situation of Jesus’ day has become a repeat in error, as those at the head of the organization who instituted all of these burdens, do nothing to lighten the load—even though they have it within their power to do so. If Jesus were to say anything of their apparent disregard for the spiritual and emotional damage that their “broadened” requirements were causing, he would say, as he did of the Pharisees:

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying: <sup>2</sup> “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses.” <sup>3</sup> Therefore all the things they tell YOU, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but do not perform. <sup>4</sup> “They bind up heavy loads and put them upon the shoulders of men, but they themselves are not willing to budge them with their finger.” <sup>5</sup> All the works they do they do to be viewed by men; for they broaden the [scripture-containing] cases that they wear as safeguards, and enlarge the fringes [of their garments].—Matthew 23:1-5 (NWT)

Indeed, the expectations to attend meetings every other day to the exclusion of any other secular activities is given significant reiteration in the literature itself under the guise of “putting kingdom interests first.” As was just mentioned, Witnesses are expected to regularly go out in “field service” and teach new ones what the Watchtower’s body of teachings entails, seeking out so-called “deserving ones.” Again, if a Witness does this less than 10 hours in a given month, they are informed that they have fallen below the “national average” and have somehow come up short in their service to God, regardless of whether that same month they perhaps spent more time in God’s Word than any given month they had gone out for 10 hours or more per month. If they continue to fall below 10 hours each month, they will be listed as an “irregular publishers.”

The preeminence given to *works* done “to be viewed by men” is more evidence that *legalism* or *Pharisaism* has become the norm for an organization which took God’s name upon themselves. And yet they have missed the reasonableness in trying to hard to set themselves apart from other systems of worship by their imposing of rules, guidelines, national averages, emphasis on magazine placement, and everything else that falls under “works” as the organization’s gauge to determine one’s righteousness, when Jehovah relates how what he really wants is “mercy, and not sacrifice.” (Matthew 9:13, NWT)

Unfortunately, the type of mercy that Jehovah is looking for is not possible under a *legislated* system of worship because no human can legislate the heart, which is where mercy is to be found, not in works. At the same time, because one cannot *legislate* acts of mercy, it equally means that a legalistic system cannot boast about being merciful. The Pharisees, in spite of their best efforts to maintain a uniform body of teachings adhering to true worship, failed to comprehend that it has to start in the heart, the seat of all emotion and motivation. One has to *feel* moved to serve Jehovah God; they can’t be directed to, ordered to, compelled to!

And if the Pharisees failed in the first century, why is there any reason to feel that a modern-day approach that is Pharisaic *in nature* will fare any better? Yet at the very heart of the system of worship which “Jehovah’s Witnesses” operate under, is legalism, an effort to legislate righteousness through the establishing of “works” which can *represent* righteousness of a people.

More importantly, can insistence on adherence to a legalistic system really pave the way to an approved standing before Jehovah God? If it *can*, why did Jehovah allow the system of worship under Mosaic Law to be done away with, along with those who clung to it and those who defended it as part of “Jehovah’s arrangement”? Jerusalem had been the center of true worship for centuries, and nearly every person of Israel looked to Jerusalem as something which would last forever. Its destruction has much to teach those who look to a system of worship as something permanent. Idolatry isn’t limited to golden

calves and statues of kings and so-called “saints.” There are other forms of idolatry which are far more insidious.

## **“They Have Said, ‘No Calamity will Come Upon You People.’”: The Delusion of Israel, Revisited**

Because “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are absolutely *convinced* that they, alone, are “Jehovah’s people,” his modern-day Witnesses that have been called out from the religions of “Christendom,” a modern-day embodiment of Israel, they are equally convinced that they are in line for all of the unfulfilled blessings that *could* have come upon natural Israel, had natural Israel proven itself faithful. The return to Pharisaism to accomplish uniformity in teachings and adherence thereof seems to have escaped notice, as has the growing number of problems developing in the organization.

Even more astonishing is that the general populace of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” who read the Bible’s cutting history of natural Israel will subconsciously view adverse judgments against Israel as applying to “apostate Christendom” and the blessings of Israel as applying to “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” This is astonishing because “Jehovah’s Witnesses” have been taught by the leaders of the organization that “Christendom” never really ever was a part of true worship, but was instead a mockery of true Christianity, or the evil twin spawned by Satan. Yet if this is true, then what reason or justification is there to refer to “Christendom” as *apostate*, since it was never a loyal part of Jehovah’s “arrangement” *in the first place?*

Actually, if “Jehovah’s Witnesses” *are* Jehovah’s modern-day Israel, set to inherit Jehovah’s blessings, then it is just as reasonable that they are subject to Jehovah’s judicial decisions, as well, when there is wrongdoing. The Bible assures us that Jehovah is not partial, even when it comes to discipline.

Of course, no member of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” will deny that everyone is subject to Jehovah’s discipline, even “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” However, what the Witness may not fully comprehend is that his leaders believe that any disciplinary action that Jehovah needed to take to correct “Jehovah’s Witnesses” organizationally was done in the very early history of the movement, and that only blessings are now expected to come from Jehovah God. This period of discipline took place in the form of the imprisonment of J.F. Rutherford and a few other high-ranking men of the organization, with Jehovah “restoring” his people by seeing to it that those men were released a short time later, in the year 1919, and things have been wonderful ever since.

Attendance at any of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” circuit assemblies or district assemblies, or even by perusing the pages of the *Watchtower* magazine, which has become the flagship publication for the worldwide organization, gives clear evidence that the leaders of the organization are saying to Witnesses everywhere that “No calamity will come upon you people.” And everywhere, Witnesses are convinced of their words.

Of course, the spiritual leaders of Israel told Israel the very same thing, just before Jehovah rained down his judicial decision upon them for their errant confidence and self-

righteousness. They, like the modern-day “Governing Body” of “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” claimed to know the mind of Jehovah God, that they were approved and could do no wrong.

And like the spiritual leaders of natural Israel, if “Jehovah’s Witnesses” really *are* a modern-day Israel, a *spiritual* Israel, then they are very wrong about Jehovah’s approving of what they are doing *in his name*. Indeed, the past couple years have made it abundantly clear, far more than the time after time when an expectation went unfulfilled and dates were set, came, and passed without event, that “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are profaning Jehovah God’s name, not only amongst themselves, but also as a group that claims to represent Jehovah’s earthly organization as onlooking nations watch to see what “Jehovah’s Witnesses” do before their God.

Like natural Israel before them, “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are causing humankind to laugh at this God, Jehovah, to jeer at Jehovah, because they see nothing at all different with “Jehovah’s Witnesses” other than the boastfulness by which they preach that they, alone, are the approved and true religion.

And as before, Jehovah will take action to sanctify his precious name, to regain the respect it deserves, and certainly not because of anything “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are doing or have done. No, he will take action *because of* what they have done and are doing.

## **“How Long will You Keep on Judging with Injustice and Showing Partiality to the Wicked Themselves?”: Child Molestation: The Failure of *Legalism***

If there is any issue which strikes at the heart more quickly, more resoundingly than any other, it is the issue of child molestation. In recent times, the Roman Catholic Church has come under attack for having covered over the problem of child molestation in their midst for decades. One would be hard-pressed to understand how it is, at the same time, that a religious organization adamantly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, denigrating the Catholic system of worship in hundreds of publications, would come under the *same* series of accusations as their antithesis—and yet that is precisely what has transpired in the past few years, with each new day uncovering further damage, further accusations, and further denials by the leaders of “Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

The debate among “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and their opposers is reaching an unparalleled crescendo, and even the “Governing Body” of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” has spent considerable time in trying to maintain control on the situation by issuing such admonitions as “do not trust the media,” and accusing the accusers themselves of only doing so out of avarice or some personal vendetta. Longtime members of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” who speak out in support of those claiming to have been sexually molested have quickly been removed from the organization and given the defaming title of *apostate*. Various newspapers and television news programs have carried touching accounts of injustice at the hands of the organization which bears Jehovah’s name and claims to be his only approved people.

The leaders and the legal representatives, acting harmoniously as modern-day Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, vehemently defend the current policy governing their handling of child molesters among Jehovah's Witnesses. While the policy *itself* will be discussed in another article to follow this one, the focus of *this* article is on whether or not "Jehovah's Witnesses" have brought reproach upon Jehovah's sacred name either through action or inaction, and whether said doings by a group of people who have taken that name upon themselves, claiming to be its sole rightful heirs will cause Jehovah to bring judgment against them.

While it would be unreasonable to expect perfection from imperfect individuals, it still remains feasible to expect a certain degree of justice to be meted out to *prevent* Jehovah's name from being slandered by onlookers, to keep both "Jehovah's Witnesses" and Jehovah's name both above reproach.

This requires that priority be given to staying "holy and clean" and to "hate what is bad, even abhorring what is wicked:

\*\*\* w83 5/1 p. 26 "Keep Yourselves Clean"! \*\*\*

#### **Hate All That Is Bad!**

<sup>13</sup> Among the first things we must do to stay holy and clean as "lovers of Jehovah" is to "hate what is bad." Yes, we need to "abhor what is wicked." (Psalm 97:10; Romans 12:9) We must have strong feelings of aversion, of disgust, as to things that are bad, no matter how pleasurable they may momentarily be to our fallen flesh. We also need to keep telling ourselves that harm will come to us if we do not keep clean. (Galatians 6:7, 8) Moreover, we should bear in mind the harm that comes to others when we commit gross sins. Above all, we need to hate and avoid all that is bad so that we do not bring reproach upon Jehovah God.

The leaders of "Jehovah's Witnesses" likewise recognize that it is a requirement that no tolerance be given for badness if the organization is to continue to have Jehovah's blessings:

\*\*\* w62 10/15 pp. 631-632 Bible-based Society of Kingdom Witnesses \*\*\*

#### **A CLEAN ORGANIZATION**

No one is invited to go out in the witness work if he is living an immoral life, gets drunk, or is dishonest in his business dealings. One must change from that way of life if he is to serve God acceptably and enter God's new world. (1 Cor. 6:9-11) When one has been washed clean from those practices, Jehovah requires him to remain clean. (2 Pet. 2:20-22) In order to have God's spirit and prosper, the congregation must carefully guard that no unchristian conduct is tolerated. A service committee composed of the congregation overseer, assistant congregation servant and Bible study servant are primarily charged with that responsibility. If they find that through immaturity or imperfection one makes a misstep before he is aware of it, and he is sincerely repentant, the committee may show mercy and place such one on probation. (Gal. 6:1) But anyone making a practice of sin must be disfellowshipped. (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 John 10, 11) One disfellowshipped and later reinstated cannot be recommended as an overseer or ministerial servant, since his reputation is not above reproach. (2 Cor. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 3:1, 2, 7; Titus 1:7) The committee and the Society will take appropriate disciplinary action against any dedicated minister who does wrong, regardless of his position in the organization. Since each Christian follows Christ and not men, this action should not be a cause for stumbling to one who loves righteousness. (Heb. 12:1, 2; Luke 17:1; 2 Pet. 2:1, 2) Rather, it is an assurance to you that you are associated with a clean organization, one that God will bless.—Eph. 5:27; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16.

Interestingly, the leaders of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” changed their Bible-based ruling that “one disfellowshipped and later reinstated cannot be recommended as an overseer or ministerial servant since his reputation is not above reproach” to an *allowance* for such an appointment, provided he “had lived down any reproach,” but with the change in ruling there was no accompanying scriptural basis:

**\*\*\* w90 9/1 p. 24 Are You Qualified to Serve? \*\*\***

<sup>5</sup> *Irreprehensible; having fine testimony from people outside; free from accusation.* (1 Timothy 3:2, 7, 8, 10; Titus 1:6, 7) When appointed and while serving, ministerial servants and elders must be irreprehensible, that is, free of blame and of any need to be reprovved for a *just* accusation of wrong conduct or teaching. *Untrue* charges made by “false brothers” or others do not make a man reprehensible. To disqualify a man from serving in the congregation, a charge must not be frivolous, and it must be proved in harmony with Scriptural standards. (2 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Timothy 5:19) One appointed in the congregation “should also have a fine testimony from people on the outside, in order that he might not fall into reproach and a snare of the Devil.” If a man committed some serious sin in the past, he could be appointed only if he had lived down any reproach and made a good name for himself.

Starting by citing the scriptural demand that an elder or ministerial servant be “*free* from accusation,” the reasoning ends with *past* accusations, proven or not, will not bar a person from becoming an elder or ministerial servant, thus overriding the “*free* from accusation” requirement and replacing it with a more legalistic rationalizing on the matter.

Because of this making invalid the very Word of God through commandments of men, any instances that are uncovered where a former molester, according to the arbitrary determination of other elders or the organization’s leaders, has “lived down” any reproach or accusation, will subsequently bring reproach upon Jehovah’s good name, because the man will *not* have “fine testimony from people outside” of the organization.

**\*\*\* w61 11/1 p. 649 Bearers of the Fear-inspiring Name \*\*\***

<sup>2</sup> There may be great prejudice against the name, but does the people called by the name both honor and impart honor to it?

Really, *that* should be the concern of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” everywhere, because what they do directly impacts how those “outside” view Jehovah. If “Jehovah’s Witnesses” act unjustly, Jehovah will be viewed unjustly as their God, for they are *his* people. However, the legal representatives of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” which defend the current policy on child molestation do so because they feel that by not being “overly harsh” with the offender, they will be able to help the offender. But their obligation is *not* to the individual who has offended the congregation, but to the reputation of Jehovah’s wondrous name first and next the congregation itself—both must be kept above reproach, but instead the offender is kept above reproach. Paul said as much in his powerful letter to the Corinthians:

<sup>9</sup> In my letter I wrote YOU to quit mixing in company with fornicators, <sup>10</sup> not [meaning] entirely with the fornicators of this world or the greedy persons and extortioners or idolaters. Otherwise, YOU would actually have to get out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing YOU to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a

drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man. <sup>12</sup> For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Do YOU not judge those inside, <sup>13</sup> while God judges those outside? “Remove the wicked [man] from among yourselves.”—1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NWT)

That child molestation falls under *porneia* is clear to any student of God’s Word, and *porneia* is fornication. Thus, “anyone called a brother that is a” child molester *is* a fornicator, and according to Paul, they are to unrelentingly be removed from the congregation, disfellowshipped or excommunicated.

However, it seems that the organization has skewed God’s standards of justice, lending more weight to the offender’s rights than the rights of the one offended, and not without notice by Jehovah:

“How long will YOU keep on judging with injustice  
And showing partiality to the wicked themselves? *Se’lah.*

<sup>3</sup> Be judges for the lowly one and the fatherless boy.  
To the afflicted one and the one of little means do justice.

<sup>4</sup> Provide escape for the lowly one and the poor one;  
Out of the hand of the wicked ones deliver [them].—Psalms 82:2-4 (NWT)

The leaders of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” seem to recognize that while they have an obligation to cast out fornicators, the offender may actually plead that the only way he can overcome his weakness is to remain a part of the organization:

\*\*\* w51 4/15 pp. 239 “Let Marriage Be Honorable Among All” \*\*\*

#### IN BEHALF OF IDEAL MARRIAGE

<sup>22</sup> The Most High God will now have a clean visible theocratic organization. He will see to it therefore that now since his coming to the temple it is kept clean from immorality and other reproachful things. A person guilty of immorality may claim he has a right to mix in with the organization and may protest against being disfellowshipped. He protests and argues that by having access freely to the organization he will be helped to overcome his immoral relations with one of the opposite sex and thus be saved from the evil consequences of his course. But God’s Word orders the disfellowshipping of such immoral person as an expression of His judgment against him. Unless the guilty one repents and straightens out his life, he may not be forgiven and taken back into the society of the theocratic organization.

Now, it might be argued that these statements were made in regards to adultery, but adultery is an act of fornication, thus equal to child molestation in the type of sin. If an adulterer faces mandatory expulsion for their transgression, then it would be justifiable (perhaps even *more* so) that a molester face mandatory expulsion from the organization. Really, how can a person who molests and robs a child of their virginal innocence *ever* rise above reproach? Or become free of accusation? Again, while such arguments will be dealt with elsewhere, the *issue* is what sort of reproach such *legalism* brings upon Jehovah’s name, and the leaders of the Witness movement recognize this, as their own words offer testimony, in the above-cited article:

<sup>23</sup> God's organization is more important to him than the salvation of an immoral or disobedient creature. The vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty and the keeping his name above reproach is of higher importance than the preservation of willful sinners. Hence these paramount things must come first. Accordingly God shows due respect for the organization which bears his name.

Here, the leaders of "Jehovah's Witnesses" openly acknowledge that Jehovah's acceptance of a people daring to bear his name is directly related to the extent to which his name is kept above reproach. Conversely, if his name is brought into reproach, he will remove his blessings and approval of them.

By the same note, there is also acknowledgment that the goings-on within the congregation *as viewed by outsiders* can result in reproach not only upon the congregation, but also upon Jehovah's name, as evidenced in the following citation from 1991:

**\*\*\* w91 11/15 p. 22 "An Overseer Must Be . . . Self-Controlled" \*\*\***

<sup>15</sup> How much harm to the truth has resulted because some elders did not exercise self-control in their dealings with sisters in the congregation! A few years ago, an elder was disfellowshipped because he had committed adultery with a Christian sister whose husband was not a Witness. On the very night that the disfellowshipping of the former elder was announced, the aggrieved husband strode into the Kingdom Hall with a rifle and fired at the two guilty individuals. Neither of them was killed, and he was at once disarmed, but the next day a major newspaper featured on its front page the news of 'a shooting at a church.' What reproach that elder's lack of self-control brought upon the congregation and upon Jehovah's name!

This provides a disturbing trend in recent times as more news stories erupt concerning the child molestation issue and how it is handled among "Jehovah's Witnesses," a group that has, for decades boasted as to their uniqueness and holiness and cleanliness and being in a "spiritual paradise," above all other "so-called Christian" religions. The reputation of "Jehovah's Witnesses" is not the only thing being dragged into the public eye of criticism. No, lest it be overlooked, Jehovah's own good name is likewise going trampled before the nations as the leaders of the Witness movement and their legal representatives continue to deny, defy, and justify their policies which disfellowship adulterers and retain molesters.

In 1975, an article was published which addressed the need to be concerned where the organization's standing with Jehovah was concerned when being too complacent or liberal with wrongdoers, especially fornicators, relating how it was necessary to "always be in fear" as a congregation, lest they come under the same judgment that caused Jehovah God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, two wicked nations known for their sexual deviance:

**\*\*\* w75 12/15 p. 755 The Kind of Persons Approved for God's New Order \*\*\***

<sup>13</sup> All members of the true Christian congregation are anxious to keep the organization spotless in its form of worship. We do not care to have in our membership those who are spots on the organization. The apostle Peter speaks of such kind of undesirables in the Christian congregation, saying: "They are spots and blemishes, indulging with unrestrained delight in their deceptive teachings while feasting together with you." (2 Pet. 2:13) If not sincerely repenting and turning around and away from deceptive teachings, these spot-like persons need to be dismissed from the congregation for the protection of the practicers of the true worship of God. Otherwise, in addition to being a danger to God's flock of sheep, they are a reproach to the congregation.— 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

**\*\*\* w75 12/15 pp. 755-756 The Kind of Persons Approved for God's New Order \*\*\***

<sup>16</sup> The congregation can never sympathize with sexual immorality if it wants to be found spotless by Jehovah at his day for executing judgment. It can be merciful and have pity for members who commit an act of immorality because of fleshly weakness or other influences. But these must give evidence of true repentance. Still, it is with great caution that the congregation must show mercy and forgive the repentant ones, always being in fear for itself, as it does not desire to weaken in its stand for righteousness in the midst of an ungodly generation that has sunk to depths of immorality such as brought Jehovah's fiery judgments upon the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4.

**\*\*\* w75 12/15 p. 756 The Kind of Persons Approved for God's New Order \*\*\***

<sup>19</sup> Such a commandment to Christians we should want to obey in a manner that is “spotless and irreprehensible” before Jehovah God. We do not want our record of obedience to be spotty, having disfiguring black marks against us, and with much to be found fault with as to how we perform. We should do our utmost to show a sincere desire to be obedient at all times. Like the ark-builder Noah during the “time of the end” of the antediluvian system of things, we should take care to walk blamelessly with our God.—Gen. 6:3, 9.

It would be in the best interests of the leaders of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” to reflect on the words they published in 1975 and compare such determination with their current failure to protect the organization from having “black marks against us” and “much to be found fault with as to how we perform,” rather than continuing to deny, defy, and justify. Such recklessness is not only bringing “reproach to the congregation,” but upon the great name of Jehovah, and *his* reputation.

Again, it cannot be denied that the leaders of the Witness movement, at least at one time, recognized that sexually-based crimes required disfellowshipping in order to keep the congregation above reproach, and, by extension, Jehovah’s name above reproach:

**\*\*\* w70 7/1 pp. 404-405 Personally Benefiting from the Bible's Laws and Principles \*\*\***

**PURPOSE OF CONGREGATIONAL ACTION**

<sup>15</sup> In the Christian congregation there are definite laws against adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, murder, stealing and other things, any of which, when committed by a Christian, would bring reproach from the world against the congregation. These things the Bible has put under the authority of the congregation, that is, it is required to take some action. (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13) This action is not the punishment that the law calls for, at least not by any means the full punishment for the deed. The congregation acts, not primarily to punish the person, but to clear itself of reproach, uncleanness and contamination by cutting off (expelling) such a one from membership in the congregation. It may, if he is repentant, take disciplinary measures and place certain restrictions on him. If he is disfellowshipped (expelled), it is not to discipline him, but to get him out of God’s clean organization. The action also serves as an example working for the disciplining of the congregation. This is how we are to understand 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:20, where we read: “Hymenaeus and Alexander belong to these, and I have handed them over to Satan that they may be taught by discipline not to blaspheme.” “Reprove before all onlookers persons who practice sin, that the rest also may have fear.”

<sup>16</sup> The congregation acts according to the authority given it by God to maintain the congregation's good standing before God and to vindicate God's righteousness before the world. God himself has stated in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 that the practice of such things will keep one out of the Kingdom. In this case Jesus’ words apply: “Whatever things you [God’s earthly representatives]

may bind on earth will be things bound in heaven.” (Matt. 18:18) God has already made his will clear in the matter. The Christian congregation carries it out by expelling the offender.

Once again, it is evidently understood that “cutting off” of the offender is *required* to “maintain the congregation’s good standing before God and to vindicate God’s righteousness *before the world*. It is an action that must be taken “to clear itself of reproach.” That it is also a disciplinary action against the offender is secondary to the vital fact that the sanctification of Jehovah’s name must retain utmost priority.

At the same time, it is also evidently understood that the congregation has no scriptural right to protect, defend, or harbor criminals, as evidenced by the following statement by the leaders of the Witness movement:

**\*\*\* w62 11/15 p. 693 The Benefits of Subjection to Authorities \*\*\***

<sup>9</sup> Worldly authorities render a judgment and punish persons, whether they are inside the congregation or outside, if they violate the laws of decency and good order. The violators have no right to complain at such punishment, as Paul showed by his words before Caesar’s judgment seat. (Acts 25:11) Hence the Christian congregation cannot protect any of its members if they steal, smuggle, commit bigamy, murder, libel, defraud, and so forth. The congregation must release such guilty members to punishment by worldly authorities. Since the guilty break the laws of the land and thus oppose the “authority,” they are taking a stand against God’s arrangement.  
<sup>10</sup> The Christian congregation has no orders from God and has no right to protect such opposers and lawbreakers from the due punishment by the “authority” of the land. We cannot hinder, oppose or condemn the execution of the *krima* or judgment by aiding or shielding lawbreakers. To do so would put the Christian congregation also in opposition to God’s arrangement. Besides letting the *krima* or “judgment” take its course upon offending members who bring reproach upon God’s people, the congregation may disfellowship such lawbreakers. The congregation does not want to deserve a *krima* or “judgment” with the lawbreakers by siding or cooperating with them and opposing the worldly “authority.” It also wants no reproach.

Again, much good could be accomplished if the leaders of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and their legal representatives *reflected* on these published statements. Today, it is established fact that “Jehovah’s Witnesses” comply with “worldly authorities” only insofar as they are *legally* required to, irregardless of whatever *moral obligation* they may have.

While they may not be breaking any *legal laws*, they *are*, by their own admission as cited above, “siding” with or “cooperating with” the lawbreakers in their midst, and thus earning reproach and slandering Jehovah’s name and reputation before outsiders. And, by their own acknowledgment, said failure to do the Christian, *morally right* thing brings “Jehovah’s Witnesses” into opposition to God’s arrangement, whether they do so *legally* or not, for *God’s* laws are higher even than any laws concocted by men, and *God’s* law requires them to remove the wicked one from their midst forthright if they would retain their holiness before him and show themselves as determined to sanctify *his* name rather than their own.

## **“I Have Had Enough...”: Jehovah Sets Matters Straight Concerning These People That Bear His Name**

Jehovah God inspired his prophet, Isaiah, to record words that aptly describe his view of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and the extent of their waywardness:

<sup>10</sup> Hear the word of Jehovah, YOU dictators of Sod´om. Give ear to the law of our God, YOU people of Go-mor´rah. <sup>11</sup> “Of what benefit to me is the multitude of YOUR sacrifices?” says Jehovah. “I have had enough of whole burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed animals; and in the blood of young bulls and male lambs and he-goats I have taken no delight. <sup>12</sup> When YOU people keep coming in to see my face, who is it that has required this from YOUR hand, to trample my courtyards? <sup>13</sup> Stop bringing in any more valueless grain offerings. Incense—it is something detestable to me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of a convention—I cannot put up with the [use of] uncanny power along with the solemn assembly. <sup>14</sup> YOUR new moons and YOUR festal seasons my soul has hated. To me they have become a burden; I have become tired of bearing [them]. <sup>15</sup> And when YOU spread out YOUR palms, I hide my eyes from YOU. Even though YOU make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed YOUR very hands have become filled. <sup>16</sup> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the badness of YOUR dealings from in front of my eyes; cease to do bad. <sup>17</sup> Learn to do good; search for justice; set right the oppressor; render judgment for the fatherless boy; plead the cause of the widow.”—Isaiah 1:10-17 (NWT)

The name “Sodom” and the name “Gomorrah” was given to Israel itself, due to the abundant apostasy which was taking place while they patted themselves on their backs and each other backs for being “God’s people.” Jehovah proclaimed that he had “had enough” of their numerous sacrifices, and that we was no longer taking delight in them. Similarly today, for all the sacrifices that “Jehovah’s Witnesses” make in the modern day, the millions of hours that they engage in the “field service” and the billions of pages of *Watchtower* magazines that are published and dispensed to the world, Jehovah has “had enough” and no longer takes delight in their offerings. In his eyes, these boastings are little more than “valueless grain offerings,” even *detestable*.

The careful observance of the Memorial has likewise actually become *hated* by Jehovah God, and a burden to him. Even when the organization is being contrite, he declares that he is hiding his eyes from having to look at them. And their abundance of prayers is not being listened to. The way Jehovah sees it, the hands of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are full of bloodshed.

Even in the face of such severe criticism, Jehovah reminds them that all they need to do is to “make yourselves clean; remove the badness of your dealings from in front of” his eyes and “cease to do bad.” And he asks one more thing of them: “...*Search for justice...render judgment for the fatherless boy; plead the cause of the widow.*” In other words, set right the scales of righteous justice and stop pleading the case of the offender and start protecting the “fatherless boy” and the other less fortunate ones, and stop hiding behind *legalism* to avoid doing what is the *right* thing to do, the *moral* thing to do.

But if they refuse to heed the counsel of Jehovah, and do not turn from their apostasy, Jehovah will have no choice but to take action against them, for he cannot long allow his name to be treated with impunity and maligned.

Jehovah further address the leaders of those who would be his people, through his prophet, Isaiah:

Woe to those who are enacting harmful regulations and those who, constantly writing, have written out sheer trouble, <sup>2</sup> in order to push away the lowly ones from a legal case and to wrest away justice from the afflicted ones of my people, for the widows to become their spoil, and that they may plunder even the fatherless boys! <sup>3</sup> And what will YOU men do at the day of being given attention and at the ruin, when it comes from far away? Toward whom will YOU flee for assistance, and where will YOU leave YOUR glory, <sup>4</sup> except it be that one must bow down under the prisoners and that people keep falling under those who have been killed? In view of all this his anger has not turned back, but his hand is stretched out still.—Isaiah 10:1-4 (NWT)

A dangerous warning is given, a last attempt to get his people to repent of their apostate ways, lest he destroy them. There will be nowhere for them to turn, either, making null and void their years of proclaiming that “Jehovah’s Witnesses” will never suffer because they are Jehovah’s prized possession. But Jehovah sees through their façade and accuses them for it, saying that in order to maintain their delusion, they have failed to render justice to the afflicted ones of his people, including the molestation victims. Because of such utter disregard for mercy where it is required, Jehovah’s anger will *not* be turned back against them.

## Final Thoughts

The time is fast approaching when Jehovah God will see to it that his name is once and in finality sanctified before humankind, but especially before those who presumptuously have taken that name upon themselves, convinced that they were qualified to represent Jehovah before the nations, but failed to live up to their vow.

Still, he has not forgotten those harmed by the modern-day Pharisees and Sanhedrin, he has remembered that justice is yet to be meted out and that a healing is due to his faithful ones, even those who were stumbled from their faith due to the outworking of *legalism* under the guise of “Jehovah’s arrangement.” He has made a promise to those who have borne the unnecessary burden of shame and guilt and distress, not only at the hands of one who calls himself “brother” but is a fornicator, a molester of children, but at the hands of Pharisaic legalism.

What Jehovah has promised, while still ahead and thus to be looked forward to, will *not* fail:

Do not put YOUR trust in nobles,  
Nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs.

<sup>4</sup> His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground;  
In that day his thoughts do perish.

<sup>5</sup> Happy is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help,  
Whose hope is in Jehovah his God,

<sup>6</sup> The Maker of heaven and earth,  
Of the sea, and of all that is in them,  
The One keeping trueness to time indefinite,

<sup>7</sup> The One executing judgment for the defrauded ones,  
The One giving bread to the hungry ones.  
Jehovah is releasing those who are bound.

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah is opening [the eyes of] the blind ones;  
Jehovah is raising up the ones bowed down;  
Jehovah is loving the righteous ones.

<sup>9</sup> Jehovah is guarding the alien residents;  
The fatherless boy and the widow he relieves,  
But the way of the wicked ones he makes crooked.

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah will be king to time indefinite,  
Your God, O Zion, for generation after generation.  
Praise Jah, YOU people!—Psalms 146:3-10 (NWT)

It is my sincerest hope that you continue to make Jehovah God your fortress, and Jesus your loving high-priest, who acts with fellow-feeling and has been appointed a fitting judge over us. Trusting in an organization will only lead to disappointment and possible death, just as Israel trusted in Jerusalem’s longevity.

The pain you bear in the privacy of your inner heart has not gone without notice by our Heavenly Father, who knows what you are having to suffer by way of shame that should not have been yours nor was of your own volition.

Your heart is heavy with distress, confusion, and a feeling of taint that cannot easily be dismissed or washed away, and yet our Grand Creator knows the very Making of you, and only asks that you endure a short while longer, knowing full well how much he is asking from you in the face of all that you already endure. Vengeance *is* Jehovah's, and he *will* repay.

While it may seem but a dream, a fanciful wish, he *will* see to it that your tears are lovingly brushed away and your heart restored. And remember that you are not alone in your sufferings, for others are also suffering, many in silence. But there will come the day, for *Jehovah has promised*, when all shall stand in a righteous new world those who are lovers of righteousness. There will be no disruption of peace and safety and love in Christ's kingdom, nor the kingdom that comes after his. We will cry our plentiful tears, we will voice our sorrows, and we *will* heal.

--Timothy Kline,  
--July 31, 2003