

“Answers to Questions About the Last Days”

2009 “Keep on the Watch!” District Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses

May 30, 2009 -- Tucson, Arizona

Friends, we are blessed people when it comes to getting answers to our Bible questions. We are privileged to have a wealth of information to be found in our Christian publications, as provided by the Faithful Slave. How do we get these answers? By doing research. Yes, it takes effort, but if we do that, make the effort, as Proverbs 2:4, 5 tells us, “If we keep seeking for these hidden treasures, and keep searching for them, in that case, we will find the very knowledge of God.” Most of the points that we’re going to cover in this question and answer period are found in the Our Theocratic Library. But the point being is, we have to be willing to do the research to get the answers.

Let us now consider our first question.

Why have some of Jehovah’s Witnesses entertained wrong expectations about dates?

The Bible indicates that true worshippers would receive the knowledge of the truth progressively. Proverbs 4:18 says “the path of the righteous one is like a bright light getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established.” For example, in Acts 1:6, the apostles assumed that Jesus would assume His kingship of Israel immediately upon his resurrection. That, of course, did not materialize, but their mistake did not prove that their religion was false. We, of course, recognize that the true religion is based upon such things, and identified by such things as our love for Jehovah and for fellow man--and most importantly, the honoring of God’s name, which the world does not do. Plus the kingdom preaching and teaching work that is being accomplished throughout the world today. Now, Jesus commanded us to keep awake and keep on the watch. I’d like you to notice his firm counsel on this as we read together Luke 12:36, 40: “And you yourselves be like men waiting for their

master when he returns from the marriage. So at his arriving and knocking, they may at once open to him." And verse 40: "You also keep ready, because at an hour you that do not think likely the Son of Man is coming." Let's illustrate the point this way. What is proved if a watchman wakes up the household when he thinks he hears the master's arrival, but it turns out to be only the sound of the wind? Does that prove that he is delinquent, or that he is alert? Well, some of the modern day Witnesses have entertained a mistaken expectation of dates. For example, back in the year 1925, many expected the fulfillment of certain marvelous Bible prophecies. They surmised that the time of the earthly resurrection would begin, bringing back these faithful men of old, like Abraham, and David and Daniel. Then, more recently, some hoped that 1975 might mark the beginning of Christ's thousand year reign. They thought the events associated with the beginning of Christ's millennial reign might start to take place in 1975. Their anticipation was based upon the understanding that the seventh millennium of human history would begin then. But it didn't prove to be so. Does this prove that such Witnesses were false worshippers? No, rather it showed they were alert and expectant. Habakkuk 2:3 assures us this: "For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it keeps panting on to the end, and it will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late." The May 1, '85 *Watchtower* explains it this way: "If God's judgment is for the appointed time, and if will not be late, why does Habakkuk say that 'even if it should delay'? Well, evidently, to show that some of God's people would expect it to come sooner than it actually would. Why? Because the exact time of its coming will remain unknown to them." Then, there are others, see, that would rather sleep, who may try to complain when someone tries to wake up them from sleeping. These individuals are like the ridiculers of Peter's day. Remember in 2 Peter chapter 3:3, it says that in the Last Days there would come ridiculers with their ridicule? You see friends, today it is only Jehovah's Witnesses who are awake to the need for preaching the kingdom good news. And it's only Jehovah's Witnesses who are warning people of this fast-approaching Great Tribulation.

Next question, please.

What is the difference between Armageddon and the Great Tribulation?

In Matthew 24:21, Jesus foretold that there would be a great tribulation. This Great Tribulation would include Jehovah's judgment during the period that starts with the destruction of the world empire of false religion, which includes Christendom, and it's finishing with the battle of Armageddon. The August 15, '96 *Watchtower* states it this way. "The opening phase of this tribulation will be an attack on the symbolic prostitute called Babylon the Great. She represents the world empire of false religion, with Christendom the most reprehensible. According to the words of Revelation chapter 17: 16–18, God will put it into the hearts of the political elements, to attack this symbolic harlot. Think how this could appear to Jehovah's anointed, the chosen ones, and their associates, the Great Crowd. As this devastating attack on religion advances, it might seem like it's going to wipe out all religious organizations, including Jehovah's Witnesses." Then what happens in response to God's attack? Well then, Jehovah launches the final phase, Armageddon itself. Then what happens? Well, the same '96 *Watchtower* says we can rest assured, though, that God's chosen ones and their associates will not be in the danger zone, and at risk of being killed. They will not have to flee to one area, as the first century Christians did in Jerusalem. Today, Jehovah's Witnesses are located all over the globe, so safety and protection is not based on some geographical location. The destruction will not be by human forces. Instead, the book of Revelation describes the executional forces as being from heaven. Yes, the final part of the Great Tribulation will be carried out, not by human armies, but by the Word of God, the King Jesus Christ, assisted by these armies in the heavens, included the resurrected anointed Christians. And then the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, Jesus, will carry out the execution far more thoroughly than the Romans did in 70 CE. Because he, that is Jesus, will eliminate all human opposers. But also, Armageddon includes the revelation of Jesus during the Great Tribulation, the final judgment of the sheep and the goats, Matthew 25:31–46, partially states for us, "When the Son of Man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne, and all the nations will be gathered before him. And he will separate the people one from another just as a shepherd separates the sheep and the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who have been blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world. But those on his left will be sent into everlasting cutting off," total destruction.

Next question.

How can you prove that Armageddon will not be a nuclear holocaust?

First of all, Armageddon is the climax of the Great Tribulation. And Jesus spoke of this in the account of Matthew that we just discussed, and Revelation 16:14 mentions that it's God's war against the governments of the world. Daniel 2:44 tells us that God will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. But also that God will crush and put to an end all worldly governments and kingdoms. So Armageddon is God's war against all governments of the world. That being the case, would a loving God like Jehovah allow such a horrific end to humankind, and its home – the earth? Well, Isaiah 45:18 says, "For this is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the former of the earth, the maker of it. He, the one who firmly established, did not simply create it for nothing, He formed it even to be inhabited." Now we have an additional guarantee that the earth is to be protected in Psalm 96:10, which states in part, "This productive land also will become firmly established, so that it cannot be made to totter." Friends, weighing all this evidence, we can see that destruction is going to be selective. And only those who oppose God's Kingdom, who are part of Satan's wicked system, will be destroyed.

Next question.

What does the transfiguration account tell us about the Last Days?

Well, Jehovah provided the transfiguration vision for Jesus' disciples at a challenging time. That vision strengthened the faith of Peter, James, and John at a time when many had left following Jesus. It was because he, that is Jesus, had not fulfilled their unscriptural expectations. That transfiguration was a brilliant foregleam of Christ in his kingdom glory. Likewise, in this time of the end that we are now living in, Jehovah has strengthened his modern-day servants by shedding increased light on the fulfillment of that awesome vision, and many

related prophecies. An example of this is the fact that Jesus is now a powerful King. He is portrayed as riding on a horse. The biblical symbol of warfare here. Revelation 6:2 says “Look, a white horse! The one seated upon it had a bow, and a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering to complete his conquests.” And how? By destroying every vestige of Satan’s wicked, visible organizations. Now in this transfiguration vision, Moses and Elijah appear alongside of Jesus. They were conversing with him. To whom then, does Moses and Elijah foreshadow? Well, since Moses and Elijah, you see, shared in Christ’s glory, these two witnesses, faithful witnesses, must represent those who rule with Jesus in His kingdom. The understanding that Jesus has co-rulers is also in harmony with the visionary foreshowing of the enthroned Messiah that the prophet Daniel had been granted to visualize. In Daniel 7:13, 14, it tells us that the son of Man, Jesus, appeared before the Ancient of Days, and Jesus was given a rulership, and a kingdom, that would a lasting, indefinite kingdom. Verse 27 identifies the holy ones that would rule with him. So, friends, more than five centuries before the Transfiguration, Jehovah revealed a certain holy one would share in Christ’s royal reign. As a result of this transfiguration, the prophetic word was made more sure for us. We can read about that in 2 Peter 1:19. Notice what it says, “Consequently, we have this prophetic word made more sure, and you are doing well in paying attention to it , as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day-star arises in your hearts.” Now, Revelation 22:16 identifies the glorified Jesus as this figurative day-star. Of course Jesus rose in 1914 when God’s Kingdom was formed in the heavens, marking the dawn of a new era. Yes, it’s a golden age of spiritual provisions.

Let’s have our final question.

What features of the Sign are there in addition to what is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21?

Well, in giving the sign, Jesus discussed the last days largely in terms of sweeping, historical, and political conditions. But the Apostle Paul put his focus on the social problems and prevailing attitudes. He wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1–5, “In the last days, times hard to deal with will be here. Men will be lovers of themselves, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement,

without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Friends, do those words strike a familiar chord with you? Consider just one aspect of the social decay in the world today. The disintegration of the family circle, the flood tide of broken homes, the battered spouses, the abused children, the mal treated elderly parents. Now how do these people then, certainly show that they have no natural affections, even betrayers that are without love of goodness? We see that this is an epidemic situation today. It's very prominent. Prior to the coming of the destruction of Satan's wicked system of things, we're going to see another Bible fulfillment. Revelation 11:18, that man would be ruining the earth, which is happening throughout the earth today. Remember too, what Peter said, in 2 Peter 3:3, that there would come ridiculers with their ridicule? Verse 4 continues: "Where's His promised presence? Why all things continue exactly as from Creation's beginning." These ridiculers are rejecting the signs of what we're living in these last days. So friends, continue to search your Bibles for the answers, thereby keeping awake. So continue to search, take the time to search Bible questions. The answers you find will deepen your appreciation for these Bible truths. Yes, searching answers for Scriptural questions will keep you alert in the time in which we are living, and thereby assist you in keeping on the watch.

(applause)