

Christians' heavenly hope

The unity of all Christians.

Does the Bible support the separation of Christians into two classes?

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me (...) Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:20-21.24)

The main signs spoken of by Jesus, through, which the world can recognise his followers, are love and unity. The perfect unity, for which He also prayed, is realised both in this life and after.

God, who wanted so much for his children to be in unity, promised the same hope for all who believe in Him: eternal life in deep community with Him in heaven.¹

The aim of Jesus' coming was "... to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Because of our sins we were far from and alien to God², our Creator: we were as his enemies.³ Jesus overcame sin⁴, brought us forgiveness, reconciled us to God⁵, renewed our lives⁶ and so brought us back into sonship. In this way we can again call God our Father⁷, be in eternal community with Him and with Jesus and with all those who love Him.

All those who serve Jesus will be there, where Jesus is.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (John 12: 24-26)

In the context of the passage above, Jesus speaks about the suffering that will come upon Him, and the fruit of His suffering and obedience. He will bring much fruit through this and will bring salvation to all those who obey Him. He also draws a parallel: those who follow Him, should also be ready to give up their lives (not necessarily physically but first of all spiritually, not to live for themselves), and so He gives them the promise that they will be with Him for ever; as they participated in His suffering so they will participate in his glory as well. Similarly in 2 Timothy and John it is written:

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him... (2 Timothy 2:11-12)

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going. Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:1-6)

Jesus encourages the disciples to have trust in Him, because this is why he came: to show the way to the Father, to prepare a place for us, and to take us with Him into heavenly glory - into eternal community with Him and the

¹ Heaven is the final fulfilment of our faith. It does not belong to the material, visible world (1 Corinthians 15:50.53; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18). "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." (1 Corinthians 13:12). It was God's original plan that man lives in eternity in perfect relationship with Him. There we will have the fullness of this relationship with Him, our Father, and with all our fellow-believers.

² See: Ephesians 2:1-3

³ See: Colossians 1:21

⁴ See: Romans 8:3-4

⁵ See: Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

⁶ See: Ephesians 4:20-24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:16

⁷ See: Romans 8:15, John 1: 12-13

Father. His statement about the way shows that this is the goal and the way for **all** those who want to follow Jesus.

In spite of these clear words from Jesus, the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that there are two classes of Christians who have different hopes⁸: one class (consisting of 144,000 chosen ones) has a heavenly hope; the other class (a great multitude) has an earthly hope. They can interpret it so only by ignoring the very clear words of Jesus and the apostles.

Besides the words of Jesus mentioned above (where Jesus clearly says that **all** those who serve Him and **all** those who will believe the words of the apostles will be **together** with Him, will see His glory in its fullness and will share in the same joy⁹ as Him), there are a lot of passages in the New Testament which speak about the heavenly hope that Christians have¹⁰. Jehovah's Witnesses interpret these passages as referring to the 144,000 chosen ones, or sometimes they simply say, "it refers to the first Christians"¹¹.

But let's examine first one of their most important passages, a pillar of their teaching:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom... And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers." (Luke 12:32.42-46)

This passage – according to them¹² – speaks about the 144,000 chosen ones who form "the little flock". Additionally, this passage "gives them" the basis upon which they demand that their members obey the Watchtower Society without question, because it is the "faithful servant" "who gives food at the proper time" to the other servants.

Actually, it is not possible to find a base for such an interpretation from Jesus' words - rather the contrary.

If we look at v.32 in its context, it is obvious that Jesus didn't address these words to a special group of his followers, but they are a part of an encouragement, which is valid for all time for anyone who wants to follow him. The flock is little, not because it consists of only 144,000, but because it consists of those who walk on the narrow way.¹³

Furthermore, a central topic in Jesus' teaching is that no one should be smaller or greater; that we should all be brothers, children of the same Father.¹⁴

In the parables we should not try to attribute a meaning to each detail, as they are a pictorial way of expressing certain ideas. This parable has a similar content to the previous ones (verses 36-40). Jesus told many parables which focus on the aspect of watchfulness, since he wanted to make us conscious, that only by persevering in good and by remaining steadfast in obeying Him can we reach the goal.

An additional aspect expressed in this parable is summarised in verses 47-48. Everyone is accountable according to the responsibility they received: those who know the will of God – the Christians, as well as those who do not know – the others. This idea might be an answer to Peter's question from verse 41. Jesus wanted to make him conscious of the fact that everybody should be watchful and aware of how they conduct their lives, regardless of their level of understanding or responsibility.

For further examination we shall take a close look at two questions:

1. DO THE PROMISES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT REFER ONLY TO THE FIRST CHRISTIANS OR TO ALL

⁸ "The Government That Will Bring Paradise", 1985, ed. By the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, p.14-15

⁹ See also Revelation 3:12-21

¹⁰ Hebrews 3:1; 10,34 Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:5; 1 Peter 1,4; 2 Corinthians 5,1-10; Ephesians 2,6

¹¹ "United in Worship of the Only True God", 1983, ed. By the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, p.111-114

¹² "The Government That Will Bring Paradise", 1985, ed. By the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, p.14,25

¹³ Luke 13:23-24; Matthew 7:13-14

¹⁴ Even if there are differences in responsibility among Christians. There are older Christians, who can take care and help younger Christians more, but their relationships should be as older and younger brothers and sisters in a family. Every Christian is responsible for edifying his fellow Christians. 1 Peter 4:5, Ephesians 5:18-21

CHRISTIANS?

Jesus came to save mankind, to call all those who long for God's glory. That's why we can state clearly, that the New Testament was not only written for the first Christians, or for 144,000 chosen Christians.¹⁵ The promises it contains refer to **all** Christians of **every time**. This fact is plainly visible from some passages:

John, the apostle, writes about Jesus' coming into the world:

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10-13)

Jesus did not come only for His generation, but for everybody (which even the Jehovah's Witnesses accept as fact). So, John's statement that those who receive Him receive the right to become **children of God**, is valid for **everybody** who believes in Him.

However, according to Romans 8:12-17, the children of God are led by the Spirit of God and are heirs of God and **fellow heirs with Christ**. Wouldn't the fellow heirs of Christ be together with him in heaven?

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:12-17)

Similarly, Christians are called the "seed of Abraham", "heirs of the promises", "children of God", "the temple of God" and the "new Israel" (Galatians 3:6-7.16.29; Ephesians 2:11-23, 3:6-7; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 3,16-17, etc.). Jehovah's Witnesses claim that all these expressions are used only for the first Christians, for the 144,000 chosen.¹⁶

In the case of Romans 8:17 we can see that this interpretation is completely without base. We can still examine some further cases.

Paul explains in Galatians 3 about the identity of the **sons (or seed) of Abraham**.

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "all the nations will be blessed in you." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (Galatians 3:6-9)

He says, that the sons of Abraham are **all** those who **believe** (verses 6-7), because they **follow** the faith of Abraham. According to verse 9 they are blessed together with Abraham. They are sons of God through their faith in Jesus Christ (verse 26) and **heirs according to the promise** (verse 29). Their faith is the assurance of their inheritance (verses 26-29).

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

¹⁵ As Jehovah's Witnesses assert: "United in Worship of the Only True God", 1983, ed. By the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, p.111, paragraph 4

¹⁶ You can live forever in Paradise on Earth, ed.1981, Watchtower Society, chapter 14, paragraph 18, p.126

So Abraham (an heir of the earthly hope according to the teaching of the Jehovah's witnesses) inherits the same blessing as all those who believe in Jesus, who are children of God and heirs of the heavenly hope.¹⁷

In this context we arrive at the point at which we shall examine the second proposed question:

2. ARE THERE BELIEVERS WHO DO NOT GO TO HEAVEN? DID THE BELIEVERS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT GO TO HEAVEN?

2.1. The unity of all believers

In order to treat this question correctly, we should clear up that the New Testament speaks about the unity of **all** believers, as we can see in the passage above (that all the believers are blessed together with Abraham), or also in other passages:

Luke 13:25-29 shows clearly that **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, together with **all the prophets** and **all the saved ones** will be **together in the kingdom of God**.

And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from me, all you evildoers.' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.
(Luke 13:22-29)

Jesus answers the question about the number of those who are being saved. He shows how seriously we should take the fight, not only to hear His words, but also to fulfil them. He speaks of only two categories of people: those who are not saved, and those who are saved – who will sit together in the kingdom of God. Those who “come from the east and west and from north and south” are mentioned in contrast to those in that time who rejected Jesus. It includes all those who will accept Jesus.

The New Testament believers – even in the view of Jehovah's Witnesses – have heavenly hope¹⁸. Hence, according to this passage, they will enjoy the same fellowship with God as Abraham and the prophets.¹⁹

It is also expressed in the letter to the Hebrews, that God prepared the **same gift, the same fullness** for those believers who lived in the Old Testament as for those of the time of the New Testament (Hebrews 11:8-10.16.39-40).²⁰

The only way to conclude that people in the Old Testament are deprived of their heavenly hope is to interpret the above-mentioned passages outside of their context.

If Jehovah's Witnesses state, that contrary to these clear statements, the Old Testament believers and many from among the New Testament believers have another kind of hope – an earthly one - they should provide clear passages for this. Let's examine some of the misinterpreted passages used by them for this purpose²¹.

2.2. Are there people who do not go to heaven?

¹⁷ See the explanation for Romans 8: 17 above

¹⁸ You can live forever in Paradise on Earth, ed. 1981, Watchtower Society, chapter 14, paragraph 3, p.120

¹⁹ "To recline at the table" means, in the Jewish understanding, to be together, to have fellowship. See Luke 14:15-24 and Matthew 8:11-12, where the same idea is emphasised: the Jews, who regarded themselves to be "the sons of the kingdom" because they were the chosen nation, will be cast out into the darkness, and others will be chosen (Christians) who will sit together in the Kingdom of God with those from the Old Testament who were obedient.

²⁰ As we also saw previously in Galatians 3 concerning Abraham: he has the same inheritance and is blessed together with all those who believe.

²¹ We should mention that they themselves did not always have this teaching. The idea of the separation of believers into two classes was cleared up only in 1935, when they 'realised', that Ezekiel 9:1-11, John 10:16, Matthew 25:31-46, Revelation 7:9-17, Acts 2:29.34, Job 14:13-15, Matthew 11:11 and John 3:13 speak about the earthly hope, and that the number of the 144,000 chosen ones was completed ("United in Worship of the Only True God", 1983, ed. By the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, chapter 13, paragraph 2; p. 103-104).

The first proof in their train of thought is to show that there are believers who don't go to heaven. They base this idea mainly on **John 3:13**, by taking it to mean that up until the time when Jesus spoke, no-one had gone into heaven. Hence, the people in the Old Testament did not go to heaven, but just have an earthly hope.

Help in finding the right explanation of this verse is to look at the context of the passage.

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. (John 3:11-13)

It is emphasised that nobody from among those who live on Earth has gone into heaven (in the way only Jesus did), so no one can reveal what Jesus has revealed.²² He is the only one who has a heavenly origin, who came from the presence of the Father from above and has the knowledge and authority to speak about heavenly things and to invite us there. Jesus didn't intend to say anything about the fate of the dead.

The same idea is also expressed later on in chapter 3:

He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. (John 3:31-34)

Additionally, the Jehovah's Witnesses take some specific examples of important persons from the Old Testament, claiming that these people are not and will not be in heaven²³:

a. **David** (Acts 2:34 "For David did not ascend to heaven...")

Again it is help in finding the right explanation of these passages to examine the context in which they were written.

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. 'Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow your holy one to undergo decay. 'You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with your presence.' Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to SEAT one OF his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2:22-36)

Peter wants to prove that Jesus' resurrection was prophesised and that the Old Testament prophecy cannot be fulfilled in David, since he did not rise in the same way as Jesus did. Only Jesus' body didn't remain in the grave.

²² See also **John 1:18**: "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." No man has seen the Father; no man has really known Him: only Jesus was able to reveal Him. Therefore His words must have authority in front of those who wish to get to know God.

²³ You can live forever in Paradise on Earth, ed.1981, Watchtower Society, chapter 14, paragraph 4, p.120

This contrast is aimed at highlighting Jesus' resurrection, but it does not say anything about the state of David in eternity.

b. Job (Job 14:7-15)

For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail. Though its roots grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the dry soil, at the scent of water it will flourish and put forth sprigs like a plant. But man dies and lies prostrate Man expires, and where is he? As water evaporates from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dried up, So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, that You would set a limit for me and remember me! If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands.(Job 14:7-15)

Job 14:7-15 tells us about the hopeless thoughts of a suffering man. It is not justified to cite this passage in order to reason that Job did not have a heavenly hope, since Job was not dealing with the question of heavenly or earthly hope. He speaks in such a way as if there were neither the resurrection of the dead nor any hope (not even the earthly hope). But later, we see clearly that he knew that the decay of the earthly body is not the end of man's existence (see Job 19:25-27).²⁴

c. John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11-12)

Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. (Matthew 11:11-12)

Jesus wanted to show the people that the Good News he preaches has a higher spiritual value than all else found in the Old Testament. So He expresses in a pictorial way that although John the Baptist is the greatest prophet, he nevertheless belongs to the Old Testament (being the last prophet of the Old Testament), therefore anybody in the Kingdom of God (those who live in the time of the preaching of the kingdom – the good news of Jesus – in the New Testament) is greater than him, since they already know the salvation of Jesus.²⁵

In a similar way – by looking at the context – it is possible to uncover the misuse of the other passages as well.²⁶

3. IS THE PROMISE OF “INHERITING THE EARTH” GIVEN TO ANOTHER CATEGORY OF BELIEVERS?

An often-heard argument of Jehovah's Witnesses is that the Bible also speaks about the promise of “inheriting the Earth”, and that this must therefore refer to another category of believers. Is this really the case? Jesus spoke about this promise in the sermon on the Mount:

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

²⁴ In Job 14:7-15 Job speaks in such a way, as though there were no resurrection at all, no hope at all (not even an earthly hope); but later it is visible that he had the recognition that the perishing of his earthly body is not the end of his existence.

²⁵ We cannot always equalize the expression “kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven” with heaven, or with the church, since Jesus told many parables using these expressions in order to show just some aspects of God's work, To enter the kingdom of heaven often meant to accept the words of Jesus, to turn to God, or generally to live with God, not only after death but starting now.

²⁶ **Ezekiel 9:1-11** speaks about the punishment of the Jews in the time of the Babylonian exile. Because of their idolatry and sinful life they were defeated by the Babylonians, their temple was destroyed, many of them were killed and those that remained were brought into exile. Nevertheless, God promised that not all will be destroyed, but there will remain a remnant that are obedient and will escape. This passage has nothing to do with the question of earthly or heavenly hope of different people. John 10:16 and Revelation 7 are explained elsewhere in this treatise.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:1-12)

All the blessings: "to inherit the Earth", "to receive the kingdom of heaven", "to be filled", "to obtain mercy", "to see God" and "to become children of God" express the deep joy and fulfilment which God promises to those who seek Him with a pure heart. All the "conditions" described for inheriting these blessings: "to be poor in spirit", "to be merciful", "to be meek" and "to hunger and thirst after righteousness" express this honest and deep longing for God. It is impossible to divide these into two categories of people and two categories of blessings.

4. DO REVELATION 7 AND 14 SUPPORT THE TWO-CLASS THEORY?

Jehovah's Witnesses say that Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5 speak about those who inherit a heavenly hope, and 7:9-17 about those who will live in an Earthly paradise.

The pictorial expressions used in the Book of Revelation are often not easy to understand, which is why this Book is often misused to defend different theories.

In this case there are several contradictions and logical mistakes in the argumentation of the Jehovah's Witnesses:

If they understand the tribes from Israel in a symbolic sense (i.e. that they do not represent Jewish Christians, but certain Christians chosen from all nations), then what is the basis for understanding the number 144,000 literally? $12 \times 12 = 144$ is a symbolical number. Likewise a "thousand" is also symbolic, possibly representing fullness.

Both the 144,000 (in Revelation 14:3) and the great multitude (in Chapters 7, 9 and 15 - where they serve in His temple!) **stand in front of the throne of God** (so it is arbitrary to say that 144,000 are in heaven and the great multitude on the Earth!).

Those who belong to the great multitude are dressed in white clothes, which is the promised reward of those "who will overcome" (Revelation 3:5) together with the certainty of being written in the Book of Life (and so the right to enter the heavenly Jerusalem!). Similarly, those who overcome will be in the Temple of God (Revelation 3:12) and will sit on Jesus' throne (Revelation 3:21).

There is no hint to show that there were 2 groups of people who overcome, and that some would just be dressed in white clothes but would not receive the other promises.

5. FINAL THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSION

As a last passage, we can examine John 10:14-16:

Jesus declared: "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

According to the Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation, the "other sheep" are not accepted in the new covenant between God and the spiritual Israel, but they are those who inherit an Earthly promise.²⁷ This interpretation is in clear contradiction to the last statement in the passage.

That "there will be one flock and one shepherd" is fundamental to the New Testament. In the time of the Old Testament and also in the time of Jesus, there was enmity between the Jews and gentiles. Jesus came to destroy this enmity, and **to unite in one body** all those who believe in God.²⁸ This is the mystery of God: that He brings all his children together, giving them the same gift and uniting them deeply.

The Jehovah's Witnesses want to destroy this mystery by saying that "the one will be two" when the Bible says "the two will be one".

²⁷ "United in Worship of the Only True God", 1983, ed. By the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, p.116, paragraph 14

²⁸ Ephesians 2:15 (11-22); 3:4-7; Hebrews 11; John 10:16; Galatians 3:9; Romans 4:16