

JUDICIAL COMMITTEE MEETING

July 5, 1991

SUBJECT: Judicial Committee Meeting of Dale & Bette Baker
Charges: Apostasy

BACKGROUND: In September of 1990, after a year of intensive research into the historical and doctrinal foundations of Jehovah's Witnesses, the religion in which I was raised, I mailed a 110 page Open Letter to Family and Friends. In it I documented my search for truth, and outlined the Scriptural reasons that I could no longer accept the spiritual authority of the Governing Body of the Watchtower Society. The reason for sending such a letter was to discharge my responsibility before God to inform those many persons who I had influenced over many years as a Jehovah's Witness elder of the facts that I had recently learned about my religion. I felt they had a right to know, and that I had an obligation to tell them.

A group of elders in the Kansas City area sent copies of my letter to the Headquarters of the Watchtower Society, who then sent a copy and a request to the local congregation elders to investigate a charge of apostasy against my wife and I. Their goal was to get evidence of apostasy against us so that we could be disfellowshipped. This would mean that none of our friends or family members would be allowed to have any personal contact whatever with us, on pain of similar treatment.

I agreed to meet with them on the one condition that they would examine my letter and show me scripturally wherein it constituted apostasy according the Scriptures. I invite you to examine the proceedings of our "trial" on the charge of "apostasy."

They began by describing how they became involved in the matter.

Elder D: You have a long background as a Jehovah's Witness, isn't that correct?

Dale: Since about 1940.

Elder D: Were your parents Witnesses?

Dale: My mother; my grandfather was active in the 1920s.

Elder D: From the sound of it, you were used quite a bit.

Dale: Yes, I served at Bethel in the 50's, pioneered for years, and served as an elder for most of my years. It wasn't until the early 80's that we began experiencing problems in the organization.

Elder D: I understand those things, and I don't think these brothers haven't been around so long that they haven't seen similar things. The Bible book of James is full of those problems and what to do when those things happen. It's a shame that it does...

Dale: I hear stories like that from most every congre-

gation I know of.

Elder V: But there's a sifting going on.

Bette: Well, in our experience, the wrong people are being sifted out..

Dale: It's the wrong people that left..

Elder D: What's unfortunate is that, so many times, when we're touched by people like that, what people will often do is question, Why would Jehovah allow something like that to happen? The Bible mentions that would happen. All of the apostles warned about it. It's a human failing.

Dale: Well, I don't think you can expect a perfect congregation.

Elder D: But nonetheless, we still have our faith. That can be tested and tried. Our faith should survive.

Dale: Well, it has. It has been strengthened by it. It certainly hasn't been weakened.

Elder D: The point that really troubles us, Dale, is that the net, after all these years after the problem, that the net result is that you've actually veered away from Jehovah's organization.

Dale: I still consider myself a part of Jehovah's organization.

Elder D: Really?

Dale: I just disagree with you as to what it is. I believe Jehovah's organization is Christ's body, his kingdom made up of all his followers who are joined to the head. I believe I'm very much a part of that. I think all true Christians are. We don't know who they all are, and I'm not into judging them. I feel very much a part of that.

Elder D: The problem with that is that comment goes opposite of what the Bible says, because the Bible talks about our brothers. The scriptures indicate that we should be able to determine who our brothers are. It should be a simple matter to determine who they are.

Dale: How would you know?

Elder D: What I'm thinking about is the scriptures that talk about doing good to your brother. How can you love your God if you don't love your brother? The Bible isn't being ambiguous, it's being specific. It's not talking about our Christian brother who's out there somewhere, but people that we should specifically be doing good to.....

Dale: I can tell who is a Christian brother. If somebody is a believer in Christ, I'd have to accept him. If he behaves in a manner that doesn't show that he has a walk with God, I'd have to say, well, maybe he's not a Christian. I consider Jehovah's Witnesses, most of them that I know, my Christian brothers. I also consider other people my Christian brothers, too. I don't think that you can say that if they belong to this organization or that organization, or go to this church... I no longer am convinced that that's how you tell, just by a religious affiliation.

Elder D: The Bible talks about, what we're really doing, we're getting to the point where - I'm aware, and so is J-- and V--, where your disagreement with the points on chronology are, and we could talk from now until the end of time on the subject of chronology. It's a long and advanced discussion. But apart from that and without actually getting into the chronology aspect, do you believe the we're living in the last days?

Dale: It depends on how you define the last days. I don't think you can define it by a generation. We're certainly in the Christian Age. I don't know if it's going to come in my lifetime or not. I hope it does - I'd like to see it. But I don't think scripturally you can say that.

Elder D: You know, there's an awful lot of Bible prophecy that discusses events in relationship to the last days. And virtually all of them...show we're living in close proximity of the end.

Dale: You can believe in an urgency without setting a date.

Elder D: well, we're not setting a date.

Dale: Jehovah's Witnesses certainly have set dates. They have set so many of them, that that's one of the things that led me to start making an investigation of the Bible and of my religion, and of the history of my religion. I was appalled to find out how many dates they actually did set. And none of them have come true. I believe Jesus, when he said, "You do not know when your master will return." He said it so many times, that I think that's the whole point...In fact, in Luke he says, beware of those saying, "the due time has approached." Now that's just what we've been doing - that's what I've been doing for about forty-five years, telling people, "it's just around the corner", "a couple of years away." The early Christians had a sense of urgency, and we should too. You could die tomorrow and that would be the end for you. So we have to be right with God and with Christ all of the time.

Elder D: We've always taken that view.

Dale: I know, but you can't deny, the organization set dates that were wrong. I mean you can't deny that. They haven't been right about a date yet. Tell me one they're right about. I'd like to know.

Elder V: With your background and years in the truth, what caused you to doubt? You were in the truth many years. Did you believe in 1914 then?

Dale: Being raised a Witness, the only information I had to go on was what I was taught. I believed them. I believed, as I read in the Wt recently, that JW's were going around telling people, "watch out for 1914, a time of trouble is going to start." That's not what they said. That's absolute falsehood. They did not say that at all. Russell said that 1914 would be the end of the time of trouble. He said that the Jews would be returned to Palestine, God's kingdom would be ruling on the earth. If there was a war he said it would be well before 1914. He didn't say that a time of trouble would start after 1914; he believed Christ was already present, in 1874. He believed the time of the end began in 1799. Have you ever read any of that stuff? That's what they were preaching. I've gone back and read pre-1914 issues of the WT. I know what they said. And to come around and say after the fact, "oh, no, we didn't say that, we were preaching about a time of trouble to start in 1914," that's very misleading. And I've gone out and knocked on doors and told people that this is proof that this is God's organization. And now I find out they told me a something that wasn't really quite true. 1975 - I went through that. And I can remember, after 1975, I said, well, the society didn't really say that. But then a brother said, yes, they did. He showed me some of the Awakes and we started looking at them, and they really did say that. They really did

encourage a belief that 1975 would be the end; and when I look back and see all the damage that did to people, I started examining articles to find out just what they did say. What is a false prophet? A false prophet is somebody who gives a prophecy that doesn't come true, period. That's right out of Deuteronomy 18.

Elder V: Does Jehovah have an organization, or doesn't he?

Dale: Yes, he has an organization, but I don't agree that...

Elder V: Who do I have to go to now?

Dale: Christ Jesus. Directly. Without the aid of any human agency.

Elder V: Are you saying you're a born again Christian?

Dale: Well, that's a part of becoming a Christian - the early Christians did. Those of the 144,000 - they're born again, aren't they? They're part of the body of Christ...

Bette: Doesn't the Bible say, Everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born from God?

Elder V: That's different- that's a different connotation. It's not the same as born again. Born of God comes as a result of [our complying with] John 17:3. But you know that better than I, you've been in the truth for over 40 years.

Elder J: Apparently you're of the opinion now that there is only the hope of heaven.

Dale: I don't know what the status of the earth will be - I know there are scriptures that talk about the earth - I think that when I read anything in the New Testament, that it speaks to me, and any Christian who reads it. I don't believe that I can say, "well, that only applies to one millionth of the human race." I don't agree with that. That's been the hope down through the centuries. If you look at the 144,000, taking that literally, if you just count the numbers that Jehovah's Witnesses are happy with as far as increase, and apply that to the first century, they would have had 144,000 before the end of the first century.

Bette: There were more than 144,000 Christian martyrs.

Dale: I find it very hard to believe that they weren't real Christians. If you look in Revelation, (I know you take that literally), but it says, 12,000 out of each tribe. Are those 12,000 literal persons?

Elder D: Yes.

Dale: They are? Do people of spiritual Israel have a concept of what tribe they belong to?

Elder D: It just shows a correspondency to Israel.

Bette: Doesn't it say 12,000 out of each tribe, meaning that there are more in each tribe, but only 12,000 out of that tribe are taken?

Elder D: In that chapter it talks about the sealed ones, and in the very next breath, in the 9th verse...

Dale: Who are the 24 elders?

Elder D: [Body of Christ]

Dale: Since they're represented by the 144,000, and they're also represented by 24 elders, why can't they also be represented in another aspect by a great crowd -- an innumerable crowd?

Elder V: But why even entertain the idea, Dale, about the majority having a concept of heaven? Do you think this is just a big incubator that God made here on earth, to hatch out imperfect people so they could go to heaven? Is that what God wants, take all these Holier-than-thou people off the earth, and resurrect them to the heavens?

Dale: I don't think he's going to take all the holier-than-thou people, I think he's going to take true Christians and Jesus knows who they are, and I don't think we have a right to start picking and choosing and being the judges.

Elder V: Right, and ...They can't sing that song unless they're of that group...

Dale: How come, then, "there is one faith, one hope, one baptism", one hope. How is it that all of a sudden now, there's two hopes?

Elder V: Jesus said, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold."

Dale: Have you ever looked at that scripture in the Greek? It says, I have other sheep that are not of this fold- the word there is *aule*; it means a sheepfold. It says he takes his sheep out of it. He doesn't take them to another sheepfold, he takes them out. When he says I have other sheep which are not of this fold, the Greek there is *taute* - it refers back to this fold, that is, the Jewish people. There's no other way you can understand that in the Greek. I've gone through this with several Greek scholars, and they all say the same thing. There's no way contextually that you can say anything but that Jesus was saying 'I have other sheep which are not of this Jewish fold', the Hebrew system. These "other sheep" are simply Gentiles; they're not from the Hebrew ethnic background. And Jewish Christians, after Jesus died, after Cornelius was preached to, would understand what he's talking about. They'd say, "oh, yes, that's who he was talking about - the Gentile Christians." Jesus said they will be one flock, one shepherd. If you look at it from the WT's viewpoint, for 1900 years all you have is the original flock he took out of the sheepfold, right? Then in 1935, Rutherford had an inspiration, and all of a sudden we have this "other sheep group." So they're together for - from 1935 to whenever Armageddon is, and then they go up to heaven and the "other sheep" stay on earth. So out of all eternity, they're only going to be together about 65 years, as one flock. To understand it in a contextual sense, as Jesus said it, that these other sheep were merely

non-Jewish Christians, makes a lot more sense.

Elder J: The 144,000 are spoken of as standing on the Mount Zion with the Lamb. reigning with Christ on mount Zion, whereas the great crowd are standing before the Lamb. On the throne or before the throne.

Dale: But another chapter of Revelation also talks of the 144,000 standing before the throne. You can't prove the point by a preposition, because of the way the word is used in other places.

Elder J: casting their crowns before him...

Dale: On, or before, or around, the words are used so interchangeably...

Elder J: Revelation refers to them as ruling over the earth.

Bette: Only in your translation. The word is *epi*, meaning upon....

Elder J: Surely you'll agree that they'll reign over a paradise earth.

Dale: Well, that depends on when you want to say Revelation starts to apply. Obviously it applied in the first century to the churches to whom it was written, wouldn't you agree? I believe Revelation has had application all down through the centuries. A Christian in any era can look at those symbolisms and be encouraged...

Elder J: The Society teaches that it has fulfillment in the Lord's day.

Dale: Well, the year 1914, I disagree with that. There's absolutely no way of proving it. And the Society's chronology that they use to prove it - the 2520 years- there's absolutely no way you can say Jerusalem fell in 607 B.C. I've been through that over and over again, and their chronology on 1914 is faulty...

Elder D: What is the sign?

Dale: The sign that could be applied if you're going to take wars, famines and pestilences and say that's the sign? What century could you not have applied that in?

Elder J: Then the horseman of Revelation 6 rides throughout all the generations?

Dale: Sure.

Elder J: But you're forgetting, they're preceded by the one with the crown on the white horse.

Dale: That explanation about the one on the white horse being Christ Jesus is another thing I have to disagree with; I've read all sorts of things about that, and I'm not sure that that's the application.

Elder J: Then it must not be the same white horse mentioned in Revelation...

Dale: I forget now, but I've read quite a bit about that. Interpreting Revelation, the society has done it how many times now? Four. They've reinterpreted Revelation four different times. Revelation's one of those books that it's hard to pin numbers and symbols to specific things...

Elder J: As things transpire we understand things more clearly...

Dale: How do you apply that to 1914?

Elder J: Well we tie that to 1914 because that's when wars famines and pestilences began to become intolerable as the white horse began to ride forth in his conquest...

Dale: How do you know when the king rode forth to complete his conquest?

Elder J: Because that's when the wars, famines, and earthquakes became worse as a result of his conquest...

Dale: But how do you put that in 1914? It seems to me that when it comes to evidence, that you are just making an assertion. But show me some evidence, how can you tie the year 1914 to that event?

Elder J: The generation that began in 1914 started with world war.

Dale: So did the generation that lived in Napoleon's time; that was as much a world war as 1914 was.

Bette: Doesn't that sound like you're saying we know that the rider was on the horse because of the war and that I know that's when he rode because...

Dale: Circular reasoning.

Elder J: Actually world war began a period of conflict, crisis and upheaval that people had never seen.

Dale: That's not really true statistically. I know that the Society has said about 1914, and that "World War I was seven times worse than all the previous wars of history," have you read that? That's one of the statements that they trot out from time to time. Wars have been going on ever since before Jesus' time, I mean there have been wars and wars and wars - you can hardly find a century in which there wasn't war. And there have been some centuries which were a whole lot worse than ours.

Elder J: One thing we have to remember is that [with the population growth and the progress in technological arms since 1914] makes them certainly far worse than the hand to hand combat of earlier generations.

Dale: How do you relate world population to wars, etc?

Elder J: What I'm saying is that world war during in the 1800's were fought when we had a much smaller earth population whereas in our day we have very, very large populated nations rising up against one another.

Dale: Then why did wars kill more people? That's a good point, but why did those wars kill more people than the first world war? The First world war killed 10-12 million people. There've been wars in the past in the 1600's, 1500's that killed 25 million people.

Elder J: Then why have they never been called a world war?

Dale: Some have been called world wars... The

French Revolution (and Napoleonic Wars) is considered a world war by some. Some earlier wars are considered by historians to have been more accurately "world wars" than World War I. World War II was a world war. But the First World War was basically European. It was fought mainly in Europe, and the United States was about the only non-European combatant.

Elder J: Sometimes we hear statesmen call it World War I...

Dale: I know, they call it that, but it is not unique. However you bring up a very good point about population, and that really shoots down the whole composite sign idea, because of the fact that if you look at world population, it was about, what, 300 million in the time of Christ? And it had gone up to about 600 some odd million in the 14th century, then it went back down to about 400 million. The 14th century was probably the worst century that the human race has ever survived. They had the black death, every 15 years, terrible famines, the hundred years war, Tamerlane who went all through Asia - I don't know if you've ever read any of that history, but world population actually decreased. And then about the 1700's I think it started up, and by 1830, I think, it reach the first billion, and then it's been going up ever since. It's been escalating ever since. Do you know the reason that can happen? Because wars, famines, and pestilence don't kill nearly as many people. Medical science, we've got food distribution, we've got agriculture that's finally efficient - there are a lot of factors involved, but those are the factors. Before we were just like rabbits - coyotes got us every time we went out. Nowadays, population is getting to be a problem, that's true. but...

Bette: It's because of lack of war and famine, I didn't know that until I started reading the history books. Everybody thinks that this is really a terrible time until you start reading history, then you really see it.

Elder J: There were more people killed in World War I than any other war in history.

Dale: That's not true. That's just not true. Let me read you some statistics. The Thirty Years War 1618-1648 killed 3 million soldiers and 4 or 5 times that many civilians, 30%-40% of the entire German population died, and that was a world war. The Manchu-Chinese War in 1644 killed 25 million, the Napoleonic Wars, 1792-1815, 5-6 million, Taiping Rebellion, 20-30 million, Genghis Khan, you've got people like that...Tamerlane; did you ever hear about Tamerlane in the 14th century? He went through whole countries, slaughtered whole cities, whole districts if anybody so much as raised a sword against him he killed the whole city. There were some bloody, bloody wars in history, and those

statistics...

Elder J: Those statistics are not accurate, you're talking about a 40 year war, a 10 year war, 12 year war, neither of the two world wars which were undoubtedly world wars lasted that long, 40 years, most any of them...

Bette: The percentage of the population killed in this century is very small compared to the past 20 centuries and in actual numbers it turns out that those other centuries had a lot more killed; I don't know what statistics they're giving....

Dale: But what you've got to look at is that someone sitting in this century with a particular population and with the rise in population and the growth in weaponry and that sort of thing, to that person sitting there, they have no idea what's going to happen in the future, and they can make a case for wars, famines, and pestilence in any century, that's the point I'm making. You could take any century and look at it from his standpoint and make a case that this is the worst period of time the human race has ever lived through. We don't know what's going to happen 10 years from now, we don't know what's going to happen 20 years from now. You can't make that case just on that point, you have to have something else. I recognized that a long time ago because I looked into this stuff 15 years ago and I found out that you couldn't prove the earthquake thing. As for famines and pestilence, that's no contest because this century has had far fewer famines and pestilence compared to previous times when there were famines many years and pestilence killed almost half the babies born. I came to realize that you couldn't prove the time of the end by statistics alone - but I always thought that you could prove it by the chronology of 1914. Now I find out that that doesn't hold up either.

Elder J: Then you disagree with all the Society's teachings?

Dale: Not everything.

Elder D: There are several things that I want to run by you quickly. Immortality of the soul, hell fire? From what I remember there was no question on that.

***** NOTE *****

I am answering these questions from the perspective of the viewpoint of what Jehovah's Witnesses by "trinity", etc. They are misinformed about what other Christians believe.

Dale: No, I don't believe in immortality of the soul. I agree that that was a Greek idea and many Bible scholars will agree with me too, if you get them aside where nobody will hear them...

Elder J: How about trinity?

Dale: I believe that Christ Jesus is God's son.

Elder J: Not the same person?

Dale: No, I have learned from talking to people that Jehovah's Witnesses have no idea what other people believe as far as what they call the Trinity, and they have no idea what Jehovah's Witnesses believe when they talk about not believing in the Trinity. And actually, you think they're way out here, but they're actually in here somewhere. They're a lot closer together because hardly anyone believes Jesus is Jehovah, or God is the Son. Maybe five percent of Christians believe the Modalist view, most view them as separate persons...

Elder J: What about the creeds?

Dale: Well, that's true, some of the creeds, they state it in that way, but that's not really what they mean, and as far as Trinity, you can get into a lot of tail-chasing arguments and arguments about words and I think it's fruitless because we're talking about the nature of God and none of us have ever been there, all we have are the examples in the Scriptures and that couched in human terminology. It's not an issue. What's an issue with me is the controlling, dominating attitudes that I've seen build up in the organization over the years. Because I remember reading what Russell said, and Russell made some classic comments about people who bring the "silly charge of traitor" to someone who dares to look at information that might raise questions about one's own religion. (Of course he said that before his own movement became an organization). I think that our personal freedom should be such that we shouldn't fear to read information from any source.

Elder D: How do you feel about the faithful and discreet slave?

Dale: Why don't you read that from Luke. Have you ever compared the accounts of Luke and Matthew? I've got a comparison I made here. I've printed up all the gospel accounts here in a three column format on my word processor, and it's really interesting when you compare the different gospel accounts. I know Matthew is always quoted, but in Luke he talks about the whole concept of being found ready when the master of the house returns. If you read that illustration in Matthew about the owner of the house you'll note that he says you must always be ready because the son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Elder J: [Reads Luke 12:41-48 NW]

Dale: I don't see that as a prophecy. I see that as an illustration that Jesus gave that had to do with what the illustration shows - our responsibility to be ready when the master returns, and each individual Christian can be a faithful slave, or he can be an unfaithful slave. He can be one who doesn't do his master's will and be beaten with a few strokes, or I don't know what the eventuality of the other course

will be, it doesn't sound too good to me and I wouldn't want to be there.

Bette: But Peter says "Lord, are you saying this illustration to us or to all", so he would know what Jesus meant then, and when Peter talks about stewards in 1 Peter 4:10 "In proportion as each one has received a gift, use in ministering to one another as fine stewards of God's undeserved kindness in various ways." So if anyone could understand that illustration Peter would and he seemed to apply it to all Christians; in fact this version says "Lord are you talking to just us or to everyone? And the Lord said, "I'm talking to any faithful, sensible man whose master gives him the responsibility of feeding the other servants."

Elder D: The question is when does it apply?

Dale: When Christ returns.

Bette: No, not in Luke account. It is not part of the sign at all.

Elder J: And particularly where it says "Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings."

Dale: Are you reading from Matthew or from Luke?

Elder J: From Matthew.

Bette: And then it says, in Luke's account, "But if ever that slave..."

Dale: An interesting thing I came across in Luke's account, and that's the problem with the phrase, "if ever that slave", so it doesn't seem that he is talking about a faithful slave and then over here is an unfaithful slave.

Elder J: "If the unfaithful slave..."

Dale&Bette: No, it says "if ever that slave".... in Luke...

Dale: In other words, if that slave should prove to be unfaithful" so that slave has two eventualities - he can be a faithful slave, or he can be an unfaithful slave.

Elder J: [Says that Matthew's account of the slave is part of the sign]

Dale: But it's same conversation. And that's something I wanted to ask you about. When do you apply Matthew 24:42-44? [long silence] When does that apply?

Elder V: Applies now.

Elder J: Jesus says that the days of Noah would be like the coming of the Son of Man.

Dale: He says "You must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him", when is that "coming" in verse 44?

[consensus of committee: at Armageddon, at his revelation]

Dale: That is how the Society has applied it. Now in verse 45, they apply that to 1914. Contextually you can't do that. It says "Who, then,..." The Greek

word *ara*, refers back to the previous information. I talked to a professor of Biblical Greek while back and he checked it out for me. You see the point I'm making? If you subscribe to the "two-stage coming" idea, the parousia idea as the Society does, you'll have a problem here because if you say that this part here in verses 42-44 applies at Armageddon, they you have to say that the "faithful and discreet slave" hasn't been appointed yet.

Elder J: In Matthew 24:37 Jesus talks about a period of time, "For just the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be." And then he talks about the days before the flood. And the days of Noah were a century. And the presence of the Son of Man is a time period culminating [in Armageddon].

Dale: Unfortunately that idea of the two-stage coming - are you familiar with the history of that? The idea was apparently started over in England by a banker named Henry Drummond who became a Bible expositor. Benjamin Wilson who had just published his *Emphatic Diaglott* was of this persuasion. These ideas were a part a religious awakening early 1800's, the Millerite movement - are you familiar with any of that? There were an incredible number of dates set using time periods based on the 2520 years, the 1260 years, and when these dates failed, a lot of people began to use this idea of parousia as meaning a period of time, as a method of salvaging their failed dates. Unfortunately that was before the real explosion of information on the koine Greek. You can check in any Greek-English lexicon, the *T.D.N.T.* by Kittel, has got 14 pages of discussion on the technical meaning of parousia, and that's not just Biblical, but includes the usage in the common Greek of the day. Parousia refers to the coming of a ruler in judgment. And this idea of a two-stage coming cannot really be supported in the Greek at all. It has been used to salvage failed predictions. In fact, that's what Barbour did. In 1874, when nothing happened visibly in 1874, he said Christ came invisibly. He was basing his 1874 date on the end of 6,000 years. And then he added 40 years to that to come up with 1914. I never did figure out exactly where Barbour got the 2520 years. Russell got it from Barbour. Also he may have gotten the parousia idea from Joseph Seitz, who was a prominent Second Adventist and a propagator of Second Adventist ideas. But that's real interesting how that came about. Russell didn't **figure it out by himself** by any means. But there is no way to support that idea of parousia.

Bette: Didn't you show me a side by side comparison of those words...?

Dale: Yes, that's the interesting thing about it, if you put those texts side by side you find that they are

essentially used as synonyms. For example parousia and epiphaneia are used almost interchangeably. When you look at all the usages of them, you can't really say that parousia has a different meaning than coming, since they're used as synonyms.

Bette: If you only read Matthew's account you would get that idea perhaps, but if you read the corresponding accounts you would probably notice that the opposite word is used in the same place so it must mean the same thing.

Elder J: In Thessalonians, when it talks about Jesus coming in flaming fire, that is his coming as far as the end of this system is concerned.

Dale: Which reference to parousia, in 1st Thess or 2nd? There's two places where he uses parousia in 2nd Thessalonians.

Elder J: In 2 Thessalonians.... and Revelation, of course.... that was comparable to one actually arriving back in those days where arriving was actually a period of time.

Dale: Yes, but the coming that he talks about, where he relates his coming with the days of Noah, Luke here uses apokalypsis, and the parallel account Matthew 24:39 it says "They knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away, that is how it will be at the coming, parousia, of the Son of Man." And Luke says, "It will be just like this on the day that the Son of Man is revealed, and he compares it with Sodom and Gomorrah, and also Noah entering the ark just prior to the flood.

Elder J: [Goes back to early part of Matthew 24 and tries to apply wars, famines and pestilence to the apostles asking for a "sign of his presence".]

Dale: Yes, but he did tell us what the sign was, he says at the end there, "Then they will see the sign of the Son of Man coming in the heavens."

Elder J: He says in verse 7 "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" and so forth, certainly Jesus was discussing things that would happen in answer to their question..."

Dale: I would say that he was discussing things that would happen all down through the centuries. Verse 4 all the way down to verse 28. Those were all things that would happen all down through the years, and you can say that those things happened all down through the centuries.

Elder J: Verse 15 is where he says that the "disgusting thing that causes desolation spoken of by Daniel would be standing in the Holy place" [...]

Dale: Ok, now that has direct application to the end of the Jewish system, that's one of the questions they asked, when was the temple going to be torn down, right? So these things did happen, and the temple was torn down, and these things have continued to happen, right on down through the ages. It can be interpreted that way just as rationally as the way

you are interpreting it.

Elder J: There's a fallacy there, however, because Jesus goes on to say there would be a time of "tribulation that has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." Then in Daniel 12 he says that Michael will stand up, and there will be a uniting of his people and he also says there that there would be a great tribulation or time of trouble."

Dale: But how can you apply that word tribulation to a particular time period? Are you saying that that tribulation was the one that the Jewish system came under...?

Elder J: We're saying that it was the same one that the great crowd come out of in Revelation 7.

Dale: Now it's very possible in looking at that, that Jesus could have meant several things. If you look at the words and the way they are used - *thlipsis*, the Greek word translated "tribulation", can refer to a number of things - such as the tribulation that Christians endure, the tribulation that came upon Jerusalem, the tribulation his followers would endure down through the centuries. If you look at it from this standpoint, that this tribulation that started back there, has continued down through the centuries and will be cut short when Jesus arrives then there's no problem.

Bette: I just came across something I didn't know before. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 he says that "the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his presence." Well, in that case, if his presence began in 1914, then the man of lawlessness should already have been done away with.

***** OBSERVATION *****

This threw some confusion into their ranks. They had obviously never confronted this problem. One seemed to think that the manifestation of his presence was Armageddon. However that is not what the Watchtower teaches. The Aid Book says that the *epiphaneia* (manifestation) was when he manifested himself to his followers in 1919. So here they are inconsistent even with their own doctrine.

Elder J: [Something about discrepancies..]

Dale: There are a lot of things that are not stated.

Elder V: It says Adam lived to be 930 years do you believe that?

Dale: True.

Elder V: Do you believe those were regular years, within 5 days or so?

Dale: I won't argue with that.

Bette: I just don't know what to do with scriptures that say that God planned for Jesus to die before he ever created the world. I just don't know what to do with

those Scriptures.

Elder J: Well the founding of the world has to do with....

Bette: I know what the Watchtower says, but I'm sorry, now I know too much to believe that.

Bette: I haven't thought about this lately, but I'm still researching and I don't have answers to everything yet.

Elder J: You're saying, then, that you don't know whether Adam was created [to go to heaven]

Dale: I don't know what the possibilities are, I don't know - I believe that maybe the possibility existed - it depended on the original purpose of God...

Elder V: Do you believe that God had a purpose in putting him on earth? Was there any reason why he couldn't have lived forever had he not done something contrary to God's wishes.

Dale: No, there's no reason, if God wanted to do it that way. I'm just not sure that he did it that way. Of course there are Scriptures in the Greek Scriptures that talk about God's purpose in bringing many sons to glory and so forth.

Elder V: Well, He told them to multiply and fill the earth and to have all things in subjection, now do you agree with this?

Dale: Sure.

Elder V: Now, Adam's children were born in the same perfection in which God made Adam, or in imperfection?

Dale: They were born imperfect.

Elder V: OK. Now, what was the penalty for imperfection?

Dale: Death.

Elder V: So for whatever eons of time, or corridor of time you want to come down to in our system, 6000, 100,000 years, whatever connotation you want to put on that, during that corridor of time man has progressively degenerated, right?

Dale: That's true.

Elder V: Now do you believe that God loved Adam?

Dale: Certainly.

Elder V: Does he love you?

Dale: Of course.

Elder V: Then why did Jesus die?

Dale: He died for our sins.

Elder V: All right, now, if He loves you and I the same as Adam, does it not make sense that he would restore the paradise and give you and I the same chance, the same opportunities that he gave Adam?

Dale: That doesn't necessarily follow.

Elder V: Well I'm asking a question, do you think that he might do that?

Dale: I don't know. I'm still researching a lot of things and I haven't answered every question. But I see too many conflicts in that reasoning. I see a hope in the New Testament that encompasses the entire Bible,

and I see that as something that applies to Christians.

Elder V: OK, now, if God is not a liar, if God is a God of love, if, if, if, if, if God didn't give all these things to men forever, and he provides his son Jesus Christ as you've admitted to and he died for us so that we would not have to die, then what's the alternative if God doesn't restore the paradisaic conditions to earth...

Dale: What's the alternative?

Elder V: What's the option? If God cannot carry out his word towards a perfect earth, and race of perfect persons upon it who can live forever, as the Bible says, "the meek shall inherit the earth," and "the righteous shall live forever upon it."

Bette: But when Jesus said "the meek shall inherit the earth," the Watchtower's interpretation of that was that the 144,000 would inherit it by ruling over it when they get to heaven.

Elder V: No, no, no, no, the Watchtower does not interpret the Bible, the meek are teachable people, the Greek word there means teachable.

Bette: Yes, but the rest of the verse talks about the pure in heart who will see God, and I know the Watchtower in times past, at least as recently as 5 years ago...

Elder V: Did you ever see Jesus?

Bette: Pardon?

Elder V: Did you ever see Jesus?

Bette: It says they will see Jesus.

Elder V: Well, have you ever seen Jesus? Do you believe he's there?

Bette: I know he's there but I haven't seen him.

Elder V: But you've seen him with the eye of the mind.

Bette: But I know that the Watchtower's interpretation is that the 144,000 inherit the earth.

Elder V: Well, let's get back to finish this point and then I'll get back to you in a second. Now this corridor of time that man lived down to the point of Jesus who died for our sins so that we did not have to die was 2000 years ago, and mankind is still dying - So when did historians record the day that Armageddon came and the resurrection came and people in Revelation the 7 chapter verses 9 came through that great tribulation? So none of that has happened? Is it going to happen? **So all this other stuff about chronology when it started, when it ended, it doesn't mean a thing.**

Bette: No, except that in Deuteronomy the 18th chapter it tells you not to pay attention to false prophets, and I don't mind people making mistakes, but I do mind when they cover it up and misrepresent what they actually said; mistakes are human, but cover-up is definitely evil. "However, the prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks

in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. And in case you should say in your heart: 'How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not spoken?' When the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true, that is the word that Jehovah did not speak. With presumptuousness the prophet spoke it. You must not get frightened at him.'" So that tells me that when people who make significant predictions claim to speak in God's name and none of those predictions come true, then I must not be frightened at him and that he is a false prophet.

Elder V: So then in continuation of our conversation earlier, and of the feelings you express, do you want to remain as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Dale: In the sense of Isaiah 43:14 I've always considered myself as one who bears witness for Jehovah.

Elder V: But not in the sense of the organization?

Dale: I'm not going to give you an answer on that because I know what you will do with it.

Elder V: But you should. Because Dale, what you've done so far is you've contradicted the Society on everything in question.

Dale: Can you show me, and this is getting back to the question, can you show me evidence that the Society is God's channel of communication? How can you prove that?

Elder V: Well, there is an organization that is doing the preaching work around the world, but very few do...

Elder D: What other people are preaching the good news of the kingdom?

Bette: Well, my Dad told me about how many were being converted in South America. I don't remember what the numbers were, but it was many times more than Jehovah's Witnesses convert.

Elder D: Who is preaching the good news of the Kingdom and spending so much money doing it...

Dale: There are a lot of Christians preaching the gospel about Christ. Now you have another idea. You're preaching a gospel that says Christ has returned invisibly and is now ruling invisibly in the midst of his enemies. That's your message, right?

Elder V: Well, it's a part of it.

Dale: Well it's a major part of it because the Society says that the message being preached by Jehovah's Witnesses is not the same as the message that has been preached throughout the centuries. Now, that is an assertion that has been made by the Watchtower Society. Now there is a lot of question about that, now if they are God's channel, and they have the right to say that, and they have God's spirit putting all this stuff out, then you're right, I should be there. That's absolutely correct. But how can you show me that they are? Now you brought up this thing about the faithful and discreet slave and

we've talked about that on the phone. Now the Society says that the faithful and discreet slave has existed all the way down through the centuries. Isn't that correct?

Elder V: There have always been faithful Christians...

Dale: But aren't they part of that faithful and discreet slave?

Elder J: We really don't know their identity...

Dale: That's true, nobody can say who they were...

Elder V: God's always had his witnesses, like Jacob, Daniel...

Elder D: We're talking about the Christian era, V--...

Dale: But anyway, you can't even show that during the first century that they acted as a faithful and discreet slave or a governing body, but down through the centuries, where we get into a problem is down around the 1800's. Who was the faithful and discreet slave in 1800?

Elder J: There wasn't always someone fulfilling that role...

Dale: No, they've always been in existence, is what the Watchtower has said, that they've always been represented on earth. Russell never found an organization that was the faithful and discreet slave. Russell was a maverick, he left all organized religion...

Bette: There should have been one there before Russell...

Dale: Yes, and lo and behold we have Russell. At first Russell taught that the "faithful and discreet slave" was a class. But from 1896 until his death he taught that he personally was the "faithful and discreet slave" who was feeding spiritual food to the domestics. But the point it is, if, as is claimed, in 1919 Jesus came to his temple and looked at all the organizations claiming to represent him and he chose this one, there would have to be a reason why he did, wouldn't there? And if I look at the things they were teaching and the things they were doing, they weren't any better than anybody else. I'm not putting Russell down; from what I know about Russell, he seems to have been an sincere man and a serious student of the Bible. It's my feeling, though, that his idea of being led and being used in the way he claimed was rather presumptuous. If you read all the things that he said, it's hard to see any evidence of the spirit really leading.

Bette: Wasn't he pretty heavily into numerology and using the great pyramid?

Dale: Did you know that there's a pyramid on his grave today?

Elder J: There's a pyramid shaped stone there and someone stuck his picture on it, but I don't know whether.....

Elder V: There's some today who still read and study his literature...

Dale: Oh I know, but they're out in left field some where, they even have less excuse than you or I would have...

Elder V: All right let's say that you convince us that this is not God's organization...

Dale: I'm not trying to convince you, that's your own decision to make...

Elder V: What spiritual organization does Jehovah have on the earth?

Dale: The spiritual organization is by Christ Jesus. True Christianity is in the Bible, and we go to Christ Jesus.

Elder V: Now, how are we going to win people over to the truth? Are the Catholics, they're going to burn you in hell, the Baptists are going to burn you in hell, the Episcopalians are going

Dale: And the Witnesses say the same thing, minus the hell.

Elder V: That's not true...

Dale: I know, but what you do say is that unless you are a Jehovah's Witness you are going to die at Armageddon and be dead forever.

Elder V: No, but what I'm saying is now which of these organizations should I turn to?

Dale: Maybe none of them...

Elder V: Why not? Who's going to get the preaching work done? Me and him?

Dale: Something that I have learned, in the first place, you don't go out and convince people logically and argue them into being a Christian. They have to be drawn by Jesus. He said that himself, that "my sheep hear my voice," and whether it's accomplished by knocking on doors, or by just interacting with people... Well, I'll give you an example. I know a man, at the place where I worked, at TWA, he was an instructor down there in the training department. Very, very fine individual. And his goal in working there, he would concentrate on one person for awhile and get to know him. And he would finally get to know someone well enough that at some point he could share his Christian hope with him. And then he would get to know someone else. And this man was somebody that, if you got to know him there was no way you could say he was not a real Christian. He's not a Jehovah's Witness. But there's no way you could say he's not a real Christian. He lived it. He was preaching - maybe not knocking on doors the way you do. And I have to say that out of my experience, there I've spent a whole lot of hours knocking on doors that didn't accomplish a whole lot. I don't know, maybe it has its place - I'm not putting it down - The early Christians did it to some extent, and they also used other methods. But, there are a lot of people out there who are living a Christian life and who give every evidence of being real Christians. That was one of

the hardest things for me to confront, because I knew some of these people, and my religion told me that they were going to die at Armageddon. And they were not the kind of people who say, "you need to come to my church." They were the kind of people who say, "you need to be a Christian." Now I think that's more in keeping with what Christianity is. And I'm not saying that you have to go to this or that church. You can find a lot of churches and you'll find the whole gamut; you'll find some like the Catholics where they're very authoritarian, very dogmatic, they think that they are God's organization, they've got the franchise on religion like McDonald's got on hamburgers. But I don't agree with that. I don't believe Christians should be that way. We can fellowship in a variety of places. God can use the variety... he uses people, he doesn't use organizations, that's my belief. He can use Jehovah's Witnesses too.

Elder J: I imagine you've read the book of Acts. Clearly in the Book of Acts it lays down the facts where the Christians met together, fellowshiped together. And when this question about the circumcision raised a bit of a problem they took the matter to the apostles and older men in Jerusalem, 15th chapter of Acts, and they sent out a letter about a decision about what should be done and it was sent to the various congregations..... As far as the way the decision was made by meeting together, the apostles and older men in Jerusalem...

Dale: And everybody who had a question in the matter was there...

Elder J: And the congregation of Christians were told what the decision was.

Dale: The reason that they went, if you take the background of the way the early church functioned - Paul did not work through the governing body. For fourteen years he never even went up to Jerusalem and this was when he was engaged in all kinds of active preaching, because the holy spirit was directing the organization directly through the apostles individually. This incident in Jerusalem is interesting, because it was brought about by the fact that there were gentiles coming into the congregation, and, particularly with the Jewish Christians, the matter of circumcision came up. And they went up from Antioch to settle the problem because it says right here that people came down from Judea to Antioch and began teaching the brothers, and apparently they didn't listen to Paul and Barnabas, and so they decided "let's go up to Jerusalem and see what your elders say about this problem." There seems to have been a number of congregations involved in this same sort of problem because of the fact that there were Jewish Christians in many of these cities. And it seems very likely that some of these things James

mentions here, were things that, if the Gentiles would abide by, they would satisfy the Jewish Christians, because you know the Jews did keep the law, even after Christ. Even James was a strict keeper of the Law. Early Christian documents tell us that, because if you lived in Judea and didn't keep the law, you got in a lot of trouble with the locals. When Paul went up to Jerusalem, he kept provisions of the law, paid for the sacrifice for the young men - not that he felt it was necessary, but it was necessary if he was going to be in Jerusalem. So the reason they went to Jerusalem was because that was the source of the problem. They went to seek a solution to a problem that came about because of the different cultures. But to use that account to try to prove the existence of a governing body that would continue to the present, is unreasonable in the light of history. Nineteen hundred years have passed, the apostasy has come, and the apostles are no longer present. And Jesus knew that there was going to be an apostasy, Paul knew it. All the apostles knew it, John knew it. It was very evident it was happening right then and there. So why would Jesus lock everybody into a hierarchical organization run by men, knowing that it would apostatize? What would be the position of a Christian back there in the early part of the second century or the third century, when you had people like Ignatius running around saying "obey your elders" no matter how they behave? How would a Christian react, where would he draw the line, when would he say, "Well I don't know, I've got to check this out in the Scriptures." You don't allow that today do you?

Elder D: You can't have disagreement.

Dale: Now I know there are things as a Christian you have to believe. You have to believe in Christ's sacrifice, you have to believe that Christ came and died - that he came in the flesh. John said that if you don't believe that he came in the flesh you're a heretic, an apostate. And there was a lot of that going on back then - the gnostics were going around teaching all sorts of things. That is the central doctrine of Christianity that you have to believe. But there's a lot of these other things that the Scriptures are not all that dogmatic on, and I don't think we should be either. I think we should allow each other our freedom of conscience and we shouldn't make issues. We shouldn't say "If you don't believe everything the way I do, you're not a Christian," on some of these other matters. On the ransom, on Christ, the central doctrine of Christianity, I believe we should agree.

Elder V: Here then is the crux of the matter. What you believe as one of Jehovah's Witnesses is contained within your heart and your mind. But when there is

the influencing of others - right or wrong, right or wrong, [you influence that individual, now you are in trouble;] then you are apostatizing.

Dale: What if I've lied to somebody? What am I supposed to do about it?

Elder V: You don't have to lie to people.

Dale: What if I have lied to them in the past? What if I've told them things that I know now are not true, what am I supposed to do? Give me a good answer? What am I supposed to do?

Elder V: Well that is something that will have to be decided.

Dale: What am I supposed to do? My obligation before God is to right the wrong if I can, to whatever extent I can.

Elder V: Are you going to set up an organization to get all this done, are you going to set up a printing shop to get all this writing?

Dale: No! The only reason I wrote this letter was because I learned some things that I felt were very important to me, and the people that I sent it to, for the most part, were people that I felt I had influenced. Over the years, I watched some of their lives fall apart as a result of their association, not just because they associated, but because they didn't get the help that they should have gotten, but didn't, because of different things about the teachings of the organization. But I won't go into that unless you want to hear about it.

Elder V: How about you, are you going to continue writing these letters?

Dale: No. I have not written any of these people, I explained that very plainly, I said that I feel I should explain these things, this is how I feel, what you do with it is up to you, and that's the end of it. I'm not going to any of these people trying to convert them. If they call me, I'll talk to them. But I'm not going chasing them, because, I don't know, maybe this is working for them. I'm not going to take it upon myself to try to get anybody in or out of an organization. If I can....

Elder V: If you can appreciate the reverberations of such a letter, while you're a scholar to an extensive degree, you've said some Greek words that I've never even heard before. Well, I'm satisfied with the point if I never knew any more about the truth other than that God is going to restore paradise on earth, and I want to be a part of it. I want life. And whether that is on earth or in heaven is immaterial to me.

Bette: I feel the same way.

Elder V: And so I want life. Now I was in the Methodist church and my first wife was in the Catholic church; I never heard about the paradisaic conditions either in the beginning or in the end. Now if it's God's purpose to restore the paradisaic conditions in the earth rather than this 30 year war thing and these

world wars which we can live without quite nicely, so if I can live in a time when there's no famine, no death, no sickness, no crime, that's the only hope I've got. And through the death of Jesus Christ, the man who died on calvary and was resurrected to heaven, that's the only way that I've got to get there. And in the meantime all he wants us to do is to tell others about the kingdom. And the kingdom is the essence of the whole thing. The kingdom that will bring blessings to the earth, or whether it's to the blacks, to the Indians, to the Jews, to the Hungarians, whoever wants it. Now we're back to the point, whoever wants it. If they will do the will of God, which is to tell others about the Kingdom, and when it comes ... And when it comes, and when it starts, you're confused in your mind. It doesn't matter that much. We know we're living pretty close to the time of the end, and I'll tell you why. Because for two thousand years people have repeated the Lord's prayer that he taught in Matthew the 6th chapter. Now historians, apparently some of the history books you've gone to, historians have documented every major event that they wanted you and I to know about 5000 years ago. What wasn't recorded in the Bible was recorded in the history books. Every major event that they wanted to preserve for posterity, for you and me to read about, if we wanted to read about it. Well where did we read [the event] of God's Kingdom being done on earth just as Jesus said. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. How is it in heaven? How is it in heaven?

Dale: What do you mean?

Elder V: Well he said, "thy will be done on earth as in heaven." What's his will? What's going to be done on earth the same as in heaven? And so you can go ahead and keep reading all that stuff, if you're a scholar. I'm not that much of a scholar. But I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins and I won't have to die, and if I do die, I will be resurrected.

Bette: All of that is perfectly true, but what does it have to do with a human organization?

Elder V: That's where I learned it. I didn't learn it in the churches.

Bette: Well, you went to a couple of lousy churches.

Elder V: Well, yes.

Bette: Well. I went to the Methodist church too, and that's what attracted me....

Dale: That brings up a question: you keep saying that you learned it from Jehovah's Witnesses. Well it's true some of the things I know I did learn from them, but I have since learned that the Witnesses were not the source of the information. Russell did not get the teaching about immortality of the soul, trinity, hell-fire, he did not discover them himself, he got them from other people.

Elder V: Well, like you said, there was an organization in England before...

Dale: That wasn't an organization. These were people writing newsletters, and people getting together, and people...

Elder V: It's immaterial, it doesn't matter.

Dale: The idea comes from here [Bible], it comes from people reading this and talking about it. You don't need to do it through an organization. You can do it lots of different ways. Fellowships, study groups, it's not important...

Elder D: People in general do not. They do not read the Bible. It's the most printed piece of literature in the world.

Bette: I have met people who not only know the Bible better than Jehovah's Witnesses, but know things about prayer and worship that I never had any inkling of. Real, spiritual people that I haven't seen the like of for years. And all these myths that I was taught about everybody else in the world simply aren't true. And it makes me think of the Scripture that says "You say that you have all these things and you don't need anything, but you don't know that you are miserable and pitiable and poor and blind and naked." And here they're talking about such a spiritual paradise. If that's a paradise, I'd hate to see the opposite.

Elder V: Well, what's your objection to not being one of Jehovah's Witnesses? You made the statement "them".

Elder D: By your words you don't consider yourself one of Jehovah's Witnesses, obviously...

Dale: You're talking about being one of Jehovah's Witnesses; in the first place, I have no objection to fellowshipping with people who are Jehovah's Witnesses. I consider them my friends, but I don't know, they may not consider me their friends. Knowing the organization, they probably won't. But, that is not an issue with me, I consider them very fine people. I know a great many of them are in a mindset that is a little strange, but I know I was in it a long time myself. But being a Jehovah's Witness in the sense of being an active Jehovah's Witness, (you can call me an inactive Jehovah's Witness if you want to), but to be an active Jehovah's Witness requires some things that I would find very difficult to do. I would find it very difficult to go out and knock on people's doors and tell them things that I know are not true, and yet you have to do that. I would have to study books with them, and I would have to tell them "Jehovah's Witnesses knew all about World War I and 1914", and I know that that is not true. I know that a lot of things are not true, and I would have a hard time doing that; that amounts to **deceptive recruiting practices** if you want to put it in legal terms.

Elder V: Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggert, and several others lie to their congregations too...

Dale: Well, you ought to be thankful to Jimmy Swaggert: now you don't have to pay for your literature any more, right?

Elder V: ...how would you like to be sending your money to him?

Dale: You knew about Jimmy Swaggert, didn't you? The Society filed a friend of the court brief for Jimmy Swaggert. Did you know that? The Society, the National Council of Churches, and Hare Krishna all filed "friend of the court" briefs on behalf of Jimmy Swaggert in his tax case...

Bette: And within five days of when Jimmy Swaggert lost his tax case, is when the Society decided to give the literature free.

Dale: No, I have no use for Jimmy Swaggert, and people like that and what's that other guy's name in the World Wide Church of God, Armstrong...

Elder V: What about Dr. Schuller?

Dale: The apostle of wealth? No, that's not Christianity.

Elder V: What about Humbard down in Louisiana?

Dale: Humbard? I don't know him, no, I don't listen to those guys on the tube, I have no interest in them.

Elder J: You know in 2 Timothy, Paul says, "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in connection with Christ Jesus. This fine trust guard through the holy spirit which is dwelling in us." [2 Tim 1:13,14] So we view the overall understanding of the truth that we have as a pattern of healthful words that we have received and we are happy to have received, and Paul goes on to say that some in his day for example, who were teaching that the resurrection had already occurred. In fact, he mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 that some were saying that there was no resurrection. So there was some confusing teaching going on and it disturbed matters, and so Paul had to write about the matter...

Dale: What did he do about it?

Elder J: Well, for example here he says "But shun empty speeches that violate what is holy; for they will advance to more and more ungodliness, and their word will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of that number. These very men have deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred; and the are subverting the faith of some." [2 Timothy 2:16-18]

Dale: What did he say next?

Elder J: "For all that, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'Jehovah knows those who belong to him,' and: 'Let everyone naming the name of Jehovah renounce unrighteousness.'" vs 19

Dale: So what did he do about those people?

Elder J: In those days some of them were actually

disfellowshipped or disassociated from the congregation as a result of their being...

Dale: There is no record of that, though, is there, except for 1 Corinthians 5 where he was very definite about taking action in moral matters...

Bette: Well, mostly, Paul just wrote long letters to explain what was true and let people decide for themselves, that's why Galatians was written, that's why Colossians was written, that's why Romans, any of those...

Dale: In fact, where it says it was necessary to "silence the mouths of these men" - are you familiar with the scripture I'm talking about? - If you look at that, the silencing was done by giving such strong exposition in the way of doctrine to the rest of the church, to the congregations involved, and they were spread around, everybody read them, that people had both sides. These guys were saying one thing, but here's what Paul said. And Paul gave a good, clear, solid argument for the resurrection that was irrefutable. To a Christian who wanted to believe Jesus, who wanted to believe the Scriptures, and like he says, that "even with all of this, the church is secure," in other words. "These men may mislead some, but they're not going to get any real Christians." And what did Paul tell Timothy about the house with the honorable vessels and the dishonorable vessels? Did he say "Go through the house and throw out any vessels you don't like?" He said, "just stay clear of them," didn't he? He's talking about chatterers who are teaching things that are wrong, and that's good advice and I agree with it 100%. You're going to find - and Jesus knew this, he knew that the wicked one was going to come and oversow the field with weeds, and that was going to last until his coming, and that the angels were going to do the gathering and the weeding out and so forth. So he knew that this was going to happen, and yet true Christians are not going to be misled. The only case there is in 2 John. In 1 John he talks about testing the spirits and then he also talks about the spirit which would teach them the things that they need to know, they didn't need to listen to the traveling Gnostics propagandizers that were going around...

Bette: Well, he says you don't need any man to teach you..

Dale: Yes, you don't need any man to teach you because the spirit teaches you, and I believe that. And those who said that Jesus did not come in the flesh were the Gnostics. Their teachings clearly undermined the very basis of Christianity. I just read Albert Barnes' comments on that, the Society quotes him a lot. If you don't believe that Jesus came in the flesh, you aren't a Christian, period. And so John says, "don't take these people into

your home, don't subsidize their spreading of false doctrine." And I agree with that. But I certainly don't believe I'm in the position of saying that Jesus didn't come in the flesh. I believe, more strongly than I ever did before, that Jesus came in the flesh and died for me and all mankind. I agree with you on all of that.

Bette: Didn't Rutherford say that the spirit acted as a paraclete until 1919?

Elder V: What's a paraclete?

Elder D: A helper.

Dale: Oh yes, Rutherford in the 20's in Preparation and 3 or 4 books I traced it down to, where he said that the spirit no longer teaches individual Christians. But it did up until 1919.

Elder J: But they changed that. The spirit does teach us. We're taught by the holy spirit.

Dale: Individually? Does the spirit teach you?

Elder J: It teaches, well, through the Bible.

Dale: Well, there's a statement here [in my letter] from a Watchtower where they discuss 1 John 1:27, about "you do not need any man" and they insert "apostate" in there, but before that they say that the spirit only teaches the 144,000, the remnant.

Elder J: In the days of the early Christians it was similar, that one had to be in contact with the body or organization of Christians that Christ was using, such as Philip was directed to the Ethiopian...

Dale: God's spirit directed him, not the organization...

Elder J: ...in contact with one of the visible Christian congregations.

Dale: I don't disagree, I'm not saying that the congregation is unnecessary. Don't misunderstand me. I think congregations are necessary, fellowship is necessary, but I don't think it has to be under one big umbrella organization.

Elder J: Think of Paul when Jesus appeared to him and he was chosen and so forth, he was told to into the city and wait for Annanias to come, Annanias who was from the local Christian congregation, came and furthered his understanding and directed him further.

Dale: Let me pose a question to you. Suppose someone comes into the Kingdom Hall and he's had a vision and now he's a Christian, and he comes and meets with Annanias, and you; you talk with him, spend a week with - I think that's what Paul spent - and then he never came back for fourteen years, but you hear that he's appointed himself a missionary over in Africa. What would you say about that?

Elder J: Well, there's no question that the Apostle Paul had a wealth of knowledge and a splendid foundation in the law...

Dale: But he went out and started new congregations undirected by anyone...

Elder J: But he certainly had holy spirit and Christ Jesus who was directing his congregation.

Dale: That's true. But the point I'm making is that there are so many things in the first century that were different, from the way you do things now. That's why I believe that our relationship is directly with Christ. The apostles were a special group, never repeated again in history. They were the ones that Jesus used directly. He didn't go through a governing body to talk to Paul; the spirit talked right to Paul, and others. That was the way the teaching was done.

Elder D: He also told him to appoint elders.

Dale: Yes he did. But we don't know anything about how the men in Jerusalem were appointed, do we? We only know about the ones that Paul personally appointed, as he did in Antioch, he gave some instructions to Timothy and Titus, and those are good instructions that any body of Christians could use to examine any man who is going to be a teacher, or an overseer. I agree with that. And a lot of churches use that too, you'd be surprised. Of course there's a lot of them that fail, but there's just as many failures among Jehovah's Witnesses as there are in some of these other churches too. The point that I'm making is, the organization, - and I really don't like to use that word - I should say, **the church** is being directed by Christ. People can get together and form organizations and God can use these men if they are truly, truly spirit led, and if they're truly seeking to serve him.

Bette: And they don't misuse their power.

Dale: And they don't use their power in a wrong way. Christianity has become so big and spread all over the world, that there is a problem of trying to control it as humans - I see the fallacy of that. I've lived through it, I was at Bethel and I know what goes on up there. I could tell you some things that happened at Bethel that would curl your hair. I just put them in the back of my mind and said, well..., I see it as a pattern. They're good people, they're trying hard, but they're imperfect. I just don't think that God is really using a particular group. He can move people in a lot of different ways. Far be it from me to try to tell him how to do it, or try to organize it for him.

Elder J: You know Paul used the illustration of the human body...

Dale: Yes, and you know what the trouble with that is, that people like Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Mormons - **they want to be the neck**. They want to be the source **through which all teaching comes**, all thinking comes - everything. And yet Paul was not using that illustration to show a hierarchial organization because he says there is "neither Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor master, male or female in the body of Christ." Our relationship is **directly** with Christ and we're all on level ground. Now, we have

other relationships, husband - wife, slave - master, relationships between people in the congregations and those that serve as elders, pastors, deacons, ministerial servants; those are human relationships that have a bearing on our worship. But our connection with the head is direct. Paul was using the illustration of the human body, which is a great illustration to show how we all work together. If one is hurt, the other one hurts too. We all cooperate. Some have prominent positions, some have not-so-prominent positions. Wherever we find ourselves, we do the best we can and all cooperate together. But you can't use that illustration to show a hierarchial organization, like there's the head and directives go through the neck and then through the arm and if you're a finger you get your orders through the arm...

Elder J: No, simply that the body itself is an organization.

Dale: Yes, but it's a spiritual organization...

Elder J: The body in its functions are individuals - even that little toe is important.

Dale: But does it have to be a human organization?

Elder J: Well the thing is that there is direction, there is a need for direction...

Dale: But why can't it be through the spirit?

Elder J: We feel that an elder, for example, which we are, is no better or higher than anybody else...

Dale: But you **do have** a hierarchial organization. I came to appreciate that in the early seventies, when the arrangement started. When they started the elder arrangement, although I had served in such position for many years, there were some elders in my congregation who didn't want to appoint me because they didn't like my job. They didn't think you ought to be an airline pilot if you're going to be an elder. For that two years, I was really amazed. The brothers would come to me because they knew that I wouldn't tell everything to the elders. You'd be surprised. The brothers know that there is a power structure within the organization. We like to say there isn't, but it's there.

Elder J: Well certainly there are those with responsibility. You might say it's like you are in an airplane, you certainly have a measure of responsibility, and stewardesses don't have the same responsibility that you have.

Dale: That's true, but now we're talking about a business organization and I hate to make an analogy between the body of Christ and **any** human organization.

Elder J: Let just take a look at one other scripture and that is Hebrews 10:25,26, about "associating together and encouraging one another all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." Now you haven't associated a whole lot in the last several

years, now I'm wondering if you feel that that's unnecessary or if you fulfill that in some other way, or...

Dale: I know a number of good Christians, I talk to them a lot, associate with them. I feel that I am doing that in a way that is meaningful.

Elder J: As far as there being any organized...

Dale: I seriously doubt that I'll ever join another organization...

Elder J: The entire association of our brothers is organized for work and certainly the entire religious family of Jehovah's people, certainly there are some bonds there...

Bette: If you're all a family, how is it that only a few of you are sons of God?

Elder D: We will all eventually be sons of God.

Bette: Yes, in a thousand and some years. Why is it that Romans says that "all who are led by God's spirit are sons of God," and in 1st John it says "by this we recognize the children of God and children of the devil?"

Elder D: We can get into all sorts of semantical arguments too. Every time the word son is mentioned it doesn't necessarily mean it's the same type of son.

Bette: But there's only two groups in 1st John, the children of God, and the children of the devil. If you aren't a child of God, what are you?

Elder D: Rom 3:3[??] can be used to prove we are all sons of God.

Bette: But you're taking away the entire new testament from people, so that they can't believe that God is speaking to them.

Elder J: This is the mistake of false religious organizations which claim Christianity. That everything in the Scriptures that talks about those that have the heavenly hope applies to everyone, and that all good people go to heaven and all of this. And here is where they have gone off the beam to start with.

Bette: But to take away something that God gives me, by a human organization, just to consolidate their own power, is not God's way of doing things. Besides that in Jeremiah he says "'Look there are days coming', is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I will conclude with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant; not one like the covenant that I concluded with their forefathers in the day of my taking hold of their hand to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt, which covenant of mine they themselves broke, although, I myself had husbandly ownership of them,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For this is the covenant that I shall conclude with the house of Israel after those days,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'I will put my law within them, and in their heart I shall write it. And I will become their God, and they themselves will become my people....For I shall forgive their error,

and their sin I shall remember no more.'" So if you're not in the new covenant, where is the forgiveness of sin?

Elder J: Those that are in the new covenant are the first to receive the benefits of that forgiveness of sin.

Bette: So meanwhile our sins are not forgiven, because according to this, we have to be in the new covenant.

Elder J: The new covenant is based on the ransom of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins is made possible through his blood like the Apostle John writes, "Not our sins only but also those of the whole world."

Dale: So that still doesn't answer the question, if you're not in the new covenant, how are your sins forgiven?

Elder J: The new covenant was made with spiritual Israel to make possible a class that would [bring this benefit] as a part of the seed. That was the purpose of the new covenant.

Dale: There is a problem with that argument, and that is that the seed of Abraham, according to Galatians chapter 3, is only one person, Christ Jesus, it's not 144,000.

Elder J: Paul says in verse 29 "if you belong to Christ, you are really Abraham's seed."

Dale: If you read the context it's really not hard to sort out, because Abraham's seed is used in several different senses. It's used in the sense of his natural progeny, right? Those who are his physical progeny are called Abraham's seed in Scripture. And then he says Christ Jesus is Abraham's seed, it's in the sense of a seed of promise. And that Christians are his seed in a spiritual sense, they are his spiritual progeny, you might say. The scripture is very clear when it says, "And not to seeds, as in the case of many such, but as in the case of one; and to your seed who is Christ."

Bette: Because he says earlier in that chapter "Now the Scripture, seeing in advance that God would declare people of the nations righteous due to faith, declared the good news beforehand to Abraham, namely: By means of you all the nations will be blessed. Consequently those who adhere to faith are being blessed together with faithful Abraham." So Paul gives the interpretation of that scripture about "by means of you the nations will be blessed" and says, "it is happening, we are being blessed." Those with a heavenly hope are receiving a blessing.

Dale: The Society's saying that the 144,000 are serving as a blessing, and that doesn't square with what I am reading here. I'm sorry, it just doesn't square.

Elder J: Now you're saying that the seed of Abraham in one verse isn't the same seed of Abraham in another verse.

Dale: Obviously it's not.

Elder J: Why would you say that? If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed.

Bette: And you get the blessing, you don't give the blessing, according to Paul.

Elder J: We all know that in Revelation 21 the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife represents the Kingdom class now united with him in heaven... It says that "there came forth a river of life from the throne and it came down the broad way of the city New Jerusalem to mankind on earth." Now the New Jerusalem, the city, is not a city, it is that body of Christ that is with him in the heavens, and through that family with Christ as its number one head, or husband as depicted in the illustration, with reference to what? Well through Christ, and those with him the blessings come to mankind.

Bette: How did those blessings come before they went to heaven in 1919?

Elder J: Certainly not all of them are in heaven yet.

Bette: Well, what I mean is, according to your theology, nobody went to heaven until 1919. How did all those nations get the blessings meanwhile for the last 2000 years?

Elder J: The blessings are not spoken of as blessings, but air and water and food that we eat...

Bette: But it says "Let anyone who wishes come and take life's waters freely... So they're all Christians."

Elder J: The reference there is the blessings to flow and benefits of Christ's ransom that begin flowing in connection the kingdom paradise.

Bette: According to your theology, yes, but that's taking a piece of a scripture here and a piece of a scripture there. You're using a particular interpretation of a scripture as though it were proof. I find it much better to take the scriptures verse by verse.

Elder J: Well let's go a step further. Genesis 3:15 speaks of a seed, the same seed that later Abraham was told would come through his name. Now in Revelation Jesus speaks to those in that heavenly class [3:26,27] he says, "I will give him an iron rod and let him shepherd the nations." So they would share in the dispensing action which Christ Jesus brings upon the earth. So they are a means for the earth, together with Christ, for bringing that destruction that is referred to, and as far as Satan's complete destruction we know that the angel that comes down to bind Satan is Christ Jesus. Certainly those of his kingdom class are sharers in his experiences and sharers in his kingdom with him, so the idea of their being part of that kingly secondary part, nonetheless part of the body of Christ united with him, I can't see where there is any...

Dale: It still conflicts with the seed being only "one person who is the Christ." He wrote this quite some

time later in the middle 50's. Now being Abraham's seed in a spiritual sense, would mean being part of spiritual Israel which relates to Abraham due to the promise. You can look at it in that way. For you to arbitrarily say that being Abraham's seed makes them part of the seed which refers to Christ - that's not what that Scripture says...

Bette: But, mostly, in the 3 chapter of Galatians in the 9th verse where Paul gives the interpretation of "by means of you all the nations will be blessed", they [Watchtower] interpret that to mean that the Christians of his day were giving the blessing, but he says, "consequently those who adhere to faith are being blessed." It doesn't say "you will bless the nations." It says you "are being blessed." That's Paul's interpretation of "by means of you all the nations will be blessed." He says they are receiving the blessing, and then in verse 16 he says "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. It says, not: 'And to seeds,' as in the case of many such, but as in the case of one: 'And to you seed', who is Christ."

Elder J: And then in the 29th verse there "Moreover, if you belong to Christ, you are really Abraham's seed, heirs with reference to a promise." So they become heirs to the same promise that Jesus is heir of.

Dale: Well, I can't agree with that. (Making them part of the "seed" that does the blessing)

Elder J: They're joint heirs with Christ, the Scripture says that.

Dale: Abraham was the father of the literal nation of Israel. He was also the father in a sense of spiritual Israel. But to say that Spiritual Israel is the same as the seed of promise who is Christ Jesus -- Paul has to be using a different connotation of "seed" there, because he limits it to one person; in black and white.

Bette: Notice what other translations say there: "And now we are Christ we are the true descendants of Abraham and all of God's promises continue on to us." "If you belong to Christ you are a true descendant of Abraham and true heirs of his promise." "Merely by belonging to Christ you are the posterity of Abraham, the heirs to his promise." "If you belong to Christ then you are descendants of Abraham and will receive his promise."

Elder D: The Bible was written to common people. They weren't scholars of their day. They were fishermen, common people. And with the complicity of theology, how does anyone find the truth? How many thousands of people pray, "help me understand this", and they come up with nothing. They come up with nothing because they need to be directed in their thinking and their understanding. [discussion continues about lack of spiritual understanding of people locally]. I may not have called on

as many doors as you have, since 1948, but I have talked to thousands, with the real intent of helping them understand the Bible. That's been my purpose in calling. Now, I don't know where you've found all these Christians, and a true knowledge of [?.] but when it comes right down to understanding the Bible, or reading it, or receiving [?] from it, ... it's hard to find people who do.

Dale: Well, I'll grant you that.

Elder D: Now I probably haven't called on every home in our community, but I've come close; but quite frankly, people just don't have a concern for, I won't say that none do, but quite frankly, if they do, one thing I've always found is that if someone has a genuine interest in spiritual things, regardless of who you are, if you get this out [Bible], they'll talk. They're afraid of it. Most people are afraid of it because they have no understanding of it, and they may have some fear in the back of their heart that it is God's word..

Bette: Well, I used to run into people who knew the Bible, but sometimes they would quote that Scripture in 2 John about bringing another gospel, and they would feel that they could not invite me in. And I have tried to explain to several people that, in that day, the traveling evangelists would go and be put up in people's homes. And so it was talking about the Gnostics - "don't put them up in your home and feed them." It doesn't mean you can't invite them in and talk to them if they have a different belief.

Dale: Some churches teach that. I agree, though, that only a small majority of the population are really interested in the Bible on a deep level. But since when should we ever expect true Christians to be in the majority in the world? The Bible tells us that. It's always been that way.

Elder V: That's why Jesus said that "narrow is the road to life and few are the ones finding it." So if you're going to look for any organization, the "few" is the place to look. Not the majority, look for the few.

Bette: Every religion - like the Mormons, and the Moonies - every religion claims that same type of thing, and that's not the identity.

Elder V: Well no, that's not the identity, but that's the place to start looking, where there's few.

Dale: I don't think that's a criteria, but you're right, there are not that many people who are interested and are going to become Christians. That's just a sad fact of life. Jesus died for all, but not all are going to avail themselves of it.

Bette: I know that every once in awhile I would run into someone at the door, and it would be unsettling to me because I recognized that they knew Jesus better than I did. And I had to discount that - it wasn't "real". Your belief system says it can't be,

therefore you deny it. But it was true.

Elder V: There's a lot of things going on, they talk Christ and they say they know him, but they get caught up in emotion.

Dale: How do you know that they aren't Christians? I mean, you can't judge the house servant of another. Now there are some matters you can judge in a congregation; immorality and things like that. If someone wants to be a part of the congregation and wants to live with someone else's wife, then you have to take care of that. There's no question about that. But the central doctrine of Christianity is not all that complicated, and you asked that question and I want to make one comment on that. You don't have to be a scholar to understand the Bible and to understand the message of Christ. But if you're going to be a teacher, and claim to be a teacher and teach others, you should be qualified. Now there are a great many things that would have been common knowledge to anyone living in the first century that I daresay most of us have no knowledge of whatever. First of all is the Greek language; second, the culture; third, the history. [The early Christians knew all of that without specialized education.] The Bible has to be understood in the context of the times in which it was written. There is a place for scholars.

Bette: Otherwise you are reading present culture back into it...

Dale: Yes, and that's what I see so many religions doing. They say "Well this is the way we do it today, so that must have been the way they did it back then."

Elder D: We don't do that.

Dale: Well, I'm not so sure.

Elder V: How long did it take them to figure out how congregations ought to be organized?

Elder D: There are very few that ever did.

Bette: And then that doesn't account for a lot of Paul's activities and lot of Peter's. There's a lot of things that the apostles and some who were not apostles did, that if a Witness overseer or elder did today, they'd have his hide for that, and yet the early Christians didn't operate that way at all. I noticed a lot of those things just reading the Bible. But on the one hand, you say you don't need to be a scholar, but on the other hand you're saying that people cannot just read the Bible anywhere and get the truth out of it, they need your organization.

Elder D: But Romans says that there is a need for teachers, you do agree with that, don't you?

Bette: Well people need to know about Jesus Christ and what he did, that's what Philip did, all he filled him in on was some history.

Elder D: No, that man had a lot of knowledge. He was a Jewish proselyte.

Bette: Well, he knew the law, and all Philip needed to

do was to tell him what Jesus did to fulfill it. He gave him some information he lacked. Big deal.

Elder D: Well, quite frankly, that in itself was a big deal. They were looking for the Messiah.

Dale: But how do you account for the Gentiles who were converted in a very short time? Cornelius - he wasn't a Jew?

Elder D: To a large degree they had miracles to help in the establishment of a personal relationship...

Dale: But one's personal conversion didn't necessarily have to do with a miracle, at least not in the case of Cornelius.

Elder D: No, not necessarily....

Elder V: It's heart condition, he was ready for a change.

Bette: Now here's the thing. The Watchtower says that when Moses was given the law he had the miracles to prove that he was from God. And then when God began using the Christian congregation they had the miracles to show that God had changed his dealings. So now if you've got a new gospel, which you say is different from what has been preached for the last two thousand years, then by all means if God's going to make that radical a change then there ought to be miracles to prove that, because it's a new gospel. They themselves [The Watchtower] have admitted that it's not the same gospel. In fact Galatians says that if you teach a different gospel you're under a curse.

Elder J: The only new thing about it...

Bette: The two-class system...

Elder J: No, the only thing that's different is we feel that the kingdom began when Christ began his reign from 1914 onward.

Dale: The proof of that assertion is what I have challenged. Why doesn't anybody want to refute that challenge? I know of a number of different research programs done by Witnesses into that question of why does history give 587 BC and why does the Watchtower give 607. There's been any number of independent studies into this question. I read one the other day that I wish I could let you guys read, but I wouldn't dare cause I don't want to blow the guy's cover. He's a prominent elder somewhere in these United States. The research that he did was incredible. He attacked it from a slightly different approach than Carl Jonsson, but it's just as valid. And the Society didn't do anything about it. I guess it's because it didn't show up in anybody's mail box. He ended his letter by characterizing the Society's approach to the evidence for 1914 by likening it to an old man who goes to a pick-and-choose banquet, but has forgotten his teeth. He will only pick what he is sure he won't choke on. And that's the way they pick their facts and figures when it comes to history. I mean, he actually said that stuff.

Bette: And he said that "we have this time bomb ticking away and it won't go away just by climbing into bed and pulling the covers over our heads."

Dale: He said, "I don't want another surprise", he was talking about 1975, he said, "I've already had one bad surprise, and I don't want another one. And this is going to happen."

Elder V: And why doesn't he get out?

Dale: Because he's probably got kids, he's probably got a wife, probably got a mother, and a grandmother and he doesn't want to be treated like an outcast.

Elder V: Then if the Society's right then he's a dead man anyway.

Dale: I don't think he's a dead man. And he'll probably get out one of these days. Anyway, the point is, there has been a lot of research on this, and the Society will not attack this problem in the open. They will not give an honest, up-front, above board consideration of the evidence against their theory. They won't do it. Why?

Elder V: Well if my memory doesn't fail me the Society has registered the chronology of other people, other organizations.

Dale: Show me where they have given a dissertation or done anything like Paul did on questions like resurrection. Show me where they have honestly considered the information.

Bette: And refuted it.

Dale: I mean, most Witnesses are not even aware of how strong the evidence for 587 is for the fall of Jerusalem, and there's a real easy way, you don't have to say "we follow the Bible", that's garbage; because the 70 years can be shown to be "for Babylon", not for Jerusalem. And most scholars recognize it. And it works out to the year. In fact you can have an exact 70 year period for Babylon if you start with 609 which is the year that the Assyrian empire was effectively overrun by Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar, and there are no discrepancies of more than a year, and these can be answered by correlating the methods of counting reigns in the various empires. And there are astronomical diaries that fix exactly Nebuchadnezzar's thirty-seventh year. It fits with Egyptian history, it fits with Persian history, it fits with Grecian history. It all hangs together so well.

Bette: It fits with all the dates in the Bible where Egyptian and Babylonian events are mentioned.

Dale: And why the Society won't look into this thing, well, I know why they won't. It blows their 1914 date, that's the casualty. But everything else works. It fits with history, it fits with the Bible, it fits with everything else. Now, you can say, "I'm going to stick with the Bible, I'm not going to pay any attention to secular historians." Now, you have that

information I gave you about George Storrs, how he did the same thing with the seventy weeks, which cuts about a hundred years of history out. Many fundamentalists today say "the earth was made in six literal days," Well, you don't agree with that, because the evidence obviously proves that false. So to say "I'm going to take the Bible" [over secular history] is an admirable thing, but if the Bible itself gives you an answer, why not accept that answer? And I think it does very well. And these are questions that really strike at the heart of the authority of the organization - any organization. And why don't they come out in the open and answer these things? They haven't. Why don't they? "If you have the truth, what is there to be afraid of?" That's right out of the Truth book. That's what we used to say to people. When people would tell us, "My minister says I'd better not talk to you because you might mislead me." "Oh no, all we want to do is read the Bible to you, and if you have the truth, what is there to be afraid of?" Have you said that to people? I'll bet you have. So if we have the truth, put it on the table and show me. They won't do it. And it has to do with the whole underpinnings of the authority structure. But that's important. If you misrepresent yourself... You see, the Bible is where we get our authority. That's where anybody gets it. That's where the truth comes from. It's all we have. We don't have any succession of Popes, or Apostles, or anything like that. We can't trace our history back. The Catholics have tried it - it doesn't work. We can't trace ours back to any authority. We've got to get it from the Scriptures. And if you can't support that, maybe there's something wrong. And that's where I'm at.

Elder D: I knew you had some problems from the first time I learned about your letter... in fact all three of us....

Dale: But if you had an interest...[in giving evidence]...

Elder D: Well quite frankly, we could get into a long drawn out question about history...

Bette: That's why I brought this notepad, because I figured if anybody had an answer to what Dale had written, I want to know about it. That's what I want to know, does anybody have any refutation? [Bette shows them her blank notepad]....

Elder D: There are other points besides chronology that would indicate who true Christians are. The Bible says they would have love amongst themselves. And quite frankly, I have experienced, and I would be shocked and surprised if you hadn't experienced, a lovable Jehovah's Witness, having love for one another. How would you explain that?

Bette: I have met people who are more loving.

Dale: That is not to say that some of Jehovah's Witnesses are not loving. However, their love is hooked

up to a switch in New York.

Bette: It can be highly conditional. And that smacks of mind-control. However I will have to say that in the last 10 years it has gotten worse. Once they got scared and had no answer, it has really gotten bad. Thirty-five years ago, that would be 1952, if they had taken the position that they do now, I would have recognized it as unchristian and run the other way. At that time they said "if we have the truth we have nothing to fear" in looking into, or reading anything else. At that time we weren't worried if someone had written anything about us.

Dale: You know, something that bothered me too, and I have to say this to you because of the fact that we had many, many people coming into the organization, they were coming in in droves-. If they got between you and a swimming pool, they got baptized. But after 1975, things really, really fell apart. And one of the things I observed, and I felt very strongly about - we were getting many of the basket cases of society, people who wanted something better, the failure of the churches, people with marriages on the rocks, kids running wild, that sort of thing. We had all kinds of problems. I felt that we made a big effort to get people to quit drinking, quit smoking, quit running around on their wives, things you could see, they're visible. We did a fairly good job in that. New ones were going on momentum, because here was a new hope, something that would solve their problems. But then as far as really making Christians, we got them so busy going to meetings, studying for this, studying for that, going out in service, just on and on. I saw so many of those people spin, crash, and burn, after about three years, and they finally gave up and said "this does not work either." Well, what some of those people needed was psychological counseling, family counseling - but boy, I'll tell you, that if you even breathed the word, you were on the carpet with the rest of the elders. We just weren't trained to do that sort of thing.

Bette: There were dozens of them who were suicidal, including an elder's wife and some of the pioneers, and do you think they'd even let them go to a psychologist who was a witness?

Dale: I saw so many needs within the congregation for services that we would not provide because we didn't believe in it. And you can't let a kid go to college, my God no, don't let him go to college! I got into all kinds of trouble for letting my son go to college. Thank God he did! And he's a very committed Christian today. It didn't hurt him. He didn't get into immorality, he didn't get into drugs. Our family has always been an excellent family. I saw a lot of these things happen, and I finally had to say, "there are a lot of things we don't know that we need to

learn them from someone else." The attitude seemed to be, "Armageddon's always going to come in couple years and they didn't to be concerned about these problems because if they can just coast through they can make it." And that's not true. It doesn't happen. The end has been "just around the corner" for all of my life.

Bette: It's a band-aid approach.

Dale: And the band-aid approach at some point wears out. Now you can say "God's spirit is supposed to do that." I'm not saying that God's spirit can't do things, but there are various helps that we can give them as humans and there is expertise that we can apply that is available that we don't do, Witnesses do not do. Now if you say they do it, I don't know where it is that they do it, but they sure didn't do it in any congregation I've ever been in.

Bette: What made me start thinking was mostly when this character who moved in [into our congregation] who was a real wheeler and dealer, and he got 30 people to pioneer, and what was the big shock to me was that those people began to lose their Christianity. They got harsh and judgmental, and the things they would say about the non-pioneers-- and the whole support system just fell apart - the love, the closeness...

Dale: That's the trouble with works-oriented systems...

Bette: And when I saw people actually forced to live it, and saw the rotten fruits, I thought "What is the matter?" Because you recognize the tree by its fruits. Before that, I could say that if people would really do it, it would work. But then when they did it and the opposite happened, that was really something that was amazing.

Elder V: Well now you've just come up with a problem, and to some degree the problem still exists. Now how are you going to solve it? How are these people needing all this psychiatric help and love, and all this stuff that you say they needed, how are they going to get it? If you don't have an organization to get it done how are they going to get it?

Bette: There is a wonderful woman who lives across the street who is trained as a counselor and she has streams of people come into her house day and night. Her husband is a doctor, and they wear themselves out helping people and charging nothing. She was a ministers wife, and she knows Greek, she does all those things, but she is a really loving person. All that she asks people is that they find a special person, not a family member, and do something special for that person. Do something for someone else. They also help the poor and witness to the street people.

Dale: There are people like that out there.

Elder V: You're right, I won't argue that point.

Dale: You say, "where are you going to go, who are

you going to associate with", there are people right on our street here; there are some very fine people.

Elder J: Within the last eight or ten years we have had four or five different articles in the Awake and Watchtower on depression, many of them bringing out that there are time when counseling is...

Dale: Yes, and it took Richard Wheelock jumping off the roof of Bethel to get that done. Did you know Richard?

Elder J: Yes, I knew Richard Wheelock.

Dale: So did I, I worked under him for three and a half years.

Elder J: When he was sick in the infirmary my son wheeled him about...

Dale: First time they finally changed their mind on something like that was when something happened to someone that was close enough to them. Isn't it a shame that it took that long?

Bette: And another thing, they cautioned in those articles that if it was a drug that they gave you, then it was ok, but if it was talk therapy, then you have to be very, very careful.

Dale: I'll tell you another story that happened at Bethel. You know Russ Kurzen? Do you know Art Barnett? They both worked on the Bethel reception desk. They had a sister from over in Thailand who developed a psychiatric problem while she was going to Gilead. Several times she tried to jump off the roof of Bethel. Did you know her?

Elder J: Yes, I knew her.

Dale: In the first place, they wouldn't send someone back to Thailand with her to take care of her, even though she begged for a plane ticket, or at least a companion. They sent her back by boat, by herself. She had another one of her seizures, she jumped overboard. What happened? When the word got back to Bethel and Russ Kurzen told somebody, he got called on the carpet and taken off his job for letting that out and letting the Bethel family know about it. When I was at Bethel there was a young man who developed diabetes. We didn't have a doctor there, and they wouldn't sent him to a doctor or to a hospital. He just got so sick he couldn't get out of bed and go to work so they decided to send him home. Some of his friends thought, "he isn't going to make it home, he has to go all the way to Seattle on a bus." The least we could do for him was to help buy him an airline ticket. So about thirty of us got together and chipped in about five bucks apiece. My roommate took it down to the Bethel office and said "We've got a little money to put with the Society's money so Jack can have an airline ticket home. That way we know he'll get there." And they told my roommate that he'd better get right back up there and give every penny of the money back. The Society had decided how he was

going home, and we had taken up a collection; and that was unscriptural. Well, they took the poor kid down to the bus, he was practically in a diabetic coma; they had to put him in the bus because he couldn't figure out which one to get on. We didn't hear from him for almost a year. They picked him up in a drunk tank somewhere down in Iowa, and some police officer recognized that he was sick and put him in a hospital. He had been living on skid row for six months. His one living relative was worried sick about him, nobody knew where he was. Finally he recovered enough to write his friends that he was ok. Is that caring? And that was before the sister jumped off the ship. But it's the same story. Do they ever learn?

Elder J: There were several who came from Thailand, because I was in Thailand. There were several other sisters from Thailand in her Gilead class. Because of her condition they kept her for a number of months longer so she could rest and recuperate. I know Brother Franz was personally involved trying to help her.

Bette: But since she requested an airline ticket home, why didn't they do that? Or if they had to send her by boat, why didn't they send someone with her since she asked them to?

Elder J: I don't want to comment since I don't know all the circumstances, but I do know that it did happen because I was on the receiving end in Thailand at the time.

Bette: And then there was another case at a district assembly where babies were getting heat stroke and dying, and there were two doctors who were Witnesses working in first aid, and they went to chairman's office and asked them to please make a public announcement to the effect, "Mothers, don't leave your babies in the sun, don't let them sleep, don't leave them there. They could get seriously overheated and die." And they were told that the assembly program was too precious to be used for personal announcements.

Dale: I don't necessarily see these people as uncaring or unloving. I see a system that says that the message, the work, is more important than people.

Bette: And refuses to take responsibility, because everything is under God's direction.

Dale: Real Christianity is people-oriented, it's just loving people. And when an organization's dictates, or requirements, or agendas get in the way of people loving people and taking care of people, then something is off track. Now I realize this doesn't happen all the time, it doesn't happen everywhere, it doesn't happen to every person. But there is enough of it to cause me to wonder if this is really the exclusive organization of God, the only one God uses...

Elder D: But we've already acknowledged earlier in the

evening that nobody's perfect, no person is perfect, no individual, not any organization. And then you've picked a few situations out of a hat...

Dale: Of course, the same thing can happen in any organization.

Bette: But, if any organization claims to be God's exclusive channel in the world, then they're taking on a lot of responsibility.

Elder D: But when is somebody responsible for any thing? My comment is that you are responsible for something or it becomes a sin to you if you are aware of it. Some people are hurt by this, some people are not. Some people experience one thing in life, and say "well, I believe this is a necessary thing." Most people don't need to see the track record of anything to believe. And quite frankly, watching the Society move for several decades, I've noticed that they've made changes conservatively, although not always quickly. But they've made changes conservatively as they see in God's Word because a lot weighs on them. It's a faith they can stand on. Or if they get too liberal, people will take it and run with it. I've found that to be...

Dale: Then you haven't really made Christians out of them. If you have to say, "you can't give them an inch because they'll take a mile," you're saying these people are really not well-intentioned and you can't trust them to be good.

Bette: It also means it's a legalistic system based on human rules, and it's not going to work right, because it's the Holy Spirit that produces the fruit-ages within the Christian, not the organization.

Elder D: People are still by nature followers. Because, by and large, of the majority, very few would have the inclination or the desire or expertise to be a leader, quite frankly. That's partly just due to human nature.

Dale: Well, the problem, of course, is that the wrong people often have the desire to lead. It's true, I've seen that happen. I used to tell people "I don't know why in the world anybody would want to be an elder." It's a lot of work. A lot of work in helping people. I remember spending hours and hours, and getting called out in the middle of the night back in 1976 to pull somebody's wife out of a bar or somebody's husband out of somebody else's bedroom. That was back during what we came to call the "class of '75". I was so busy during that time that I didn't have time to think. But it made me start thinking afterward. But when you see so much piling up, you have to start asking questions. Here's another thing I began to see. Elders are supposed to be "appointed by holy spirit." How many times have you sat in an elder's meeting and they were going through the list, and somebody's name comes up and they want to make an elder out of him. I re-

member numerous cases. And I would say, "now wait a minute, look at his family. He does not have a loving relationship with his wife." Now between two dedicated Christians, that's the first place love shows up, isn't it, within the family, the closest relationship we have? If he hasn't got it in his family life, you'd better look very carefully. Yet how many times I'd hear, "Hey, look, he's putting in 20 hours per month." I don't care about his hours.

Elder J: That's where the holy spirit comes in...

Dale: But he got appointed.

Elder J: Well, if you ignore those requirements set forth by the holy spirit...

Dale: But then when it goes up to New York, to the governing body, and the five men on the service committee pray about it, does holy spirit tip them off? They're the ones who make the appointment, and that's who the holy spirit comes through, it doesn't come through the elders, they just make a recommendation.

Bette: What about that communist spy who became a District Overseer in East Germany?

Elder J: Paul counseled Timothy not to "lay his hands hastily on another man"...

Dale: Absolutely right, and yet they do it all the time. How about the case we heard about from the Circuit Overseer here in California. A Circuit Overseer visiting a congregation got a sister pregnant. She went and confessed to the elders, naming the Circuit Overseer. They went to him and he said, "No, that wasn't me." He lied about it, but they disfellowshipped her mostly for "lying" about him.

Elder D: With how many witnesses?

Dale: None, except her. But they did it anyway. But here's the hooker...

Elder D: Well, we can't help that...

Dale: Right, of course, I know you can't help that. But that's not my point. Here's what happened. They disfellowshipped her, and not having the required witnesses, he went on his merry way. She did her time in the back of the hall with the bag over her head, the standard procedure, and eventually got reinstated. The Circuit Overseer continued to serve, was eventually appointed as a District Overseer. Fifteen years later he came back to the same area, and here was this sister, reinstated, and on the stage at the Circuit Assembly with her 15 year old son who is the spittin' image of the District Overseer. And it got to him and he admitted his sin, and he resigned or was removed, or whatever. So my brother-in-law said, "Well, you see, God's spirit took care of the problem." Fifteen years later! Well, ok, but, how can you explain to me how Holy spirit can appoint a man like that to a higher position, living in sin? My brother-in-law said, "Well maybe he was doing more good than harm." Well, come on, you

can't fool the Holy spirit, but Jehovah's Witnesses do a pretty good job of it. I know of a case where an elder left his wife, ran off with a sister and was disfellowshipped. They both moved clear across the country. Someone knocked on his door, and he said, "Oh sure, I want to study the Bible." He studied, got baptized, he became a ministerial servant, he became an elder. Finally Circuit Overseer from his old area happened to get transferred up there and walked in and recognized him, years later. Now, where was the holy spirit? You've got to ask these questions.

Elder D: Back in the time of the Apostles, Annanias and Saphira played false to the Holy spirit...

Dale: How long did it take them? How long did it take them?

Elder D: Well, it would be nice if we had the opportunity to take the life force out of them for doing that sort of thing, but, quite frankly, we don't have that power, and nobody does today.

Bette: Then why assume the same authority that the Apostles had? No human organization today can safely do that.

Elder D: Timothy made appointments and he was not an apostle.

Bette: But they had apostles with those groups then, but for an organization to make the sort of claims that they do...

Elder D:they worked as a support group for those in the community in the first century.

Dale: But it's the authoritarian control, though it doesn't appear in the New Testament, it doesn't appear in the early church of the first couple of centuries, and it isn't until the later part of the second and early third that you start running into this sort of thing, it's the iron-clad control over peoples minds that causes them to stop thinking.

Elder V: Well, it may very well be as you said, but if that's the way it seemed to me, I'd want out. I would not want to be associated- I don't care how many kids of mine, how many relatives- with an attitude like you two have. Go on, get out!

Bette: I have in fact had to say good-bye to my mother and brother, and I'm willing to do that because my integrity to Jehovah is more important. But at the same time, reading the Bible, I feel that the way Jehovah's Witnesses handle shunning is unscriptural, and I'm not about to cooperate in an unscriptural application which keeps me from carrying out my scriptural obligations.

Elder D: I'm aware of your views - some religious organizations do exercise mind control. Nonetheless it was our earnest intention to see if there wasn't some point we could find some positive thing. I've done some work or researching your letter. It's not completed, but some day I would like to share it

with you.

Bette: That's what I would like to see.

Elder D: But, quite frankly, that doesn't stop our... quite frankly, one of the things that I used to say to people is that when people are positive about the way they feel, and you can call it control of information, thought control...

Bette: Mind control.

Elder D: Yes, I've studied mind control too, I went to some higher education, but I had some opportunity to see how it works, the deprogramming and so forth, so I'm familiar with how it works, and your correlation to the Watchtower Society and the way it deals with people, even though some of the essential ingredients are similar, in no way are they the same. What draws us together, there's a bond of love based upon our mutual affection for our father in heaven. Quite frankly, I would have a hard time believing that the first century Christians were not operating similarly [to JW's] despite what you've been saying. Quite frankly, they were well defined, there was usually one in every community.

Dale: They were autonomous.

Elder D: No, they were not.

Dale: You need to read some history.

Elder D: When one was disfellowshipped by one congregation, they were also viewed in the same position somewhere else, and that's not autonomous.

Dale: There's only one place in the Scriptures that talk about it...

Elder J: One congregation sends a letter and it is distributed....[he is talking about the Corinthian Letters being circulated]

Dale: Well, after the fact, it was only 2 months later.

Elder D: How many examples do you need?

Dale: Well, it was the congregation's responsibility to do it.

Elder D: Jehovah's Witnesses congregations are

somewhat autonomous...

Dale: Oh, no no no no no

Elder D: Well, that's your view, that's your view. You must realize that the time must come....

Dale: Well, upon what scriptural basis would you base that on..

Elder D: You know exactly.

Dale: No, you tell me, what scripture, I want to hear it from you!

Elder D: You understand.

Dale: Have I slandered? Have I committed adultery? Have I bowed down to an idol? That's 1st Corinthians. Do you have a basis there?

Elder D: The charges brought against you are for apostasy.

Dale: And that's being an anti-Christ, right? Have I denied that Jesus came in the flesh?

Bette: Or that he is the son of God?

Dale: Or that he died for our sins?

Elder D: No.

Dale: That's right, I haven't. You haven't proven me Scripturally wrong on the questions I've raised. You've just disagreed with what I've said. I may be wrong on some doctrinal point, but I know where I stand with Jesus Christ.

Elder D: The long and the short of it will be, quite frankly, not whatever action this group takes, but what happens in the long run as far as all of our everlasting future is concerned.

Dale: I'm very sure of that.

Elder D: And you need to be, quite frankly, you need to be....there will be quite a number of Jehovah's Witnesses, quite frankly, who will not survive...

Dale: What are you going to do when those people who were living in 1844 are dead and gone? There's not many left.

Elder J: Well, I guess we'll know pretty soon who is right.

The meeting ended shortly thereafter, with the usual promise, "We will get back to you with our decision." It is not hard to imagine what that will be. For the record, I will say that these men conducted themselves amicably throughout the discussion, and at the end, thanked us for being pleasant. That is not normally the case where "apostasy" is concerned. In fact, I am surprised that they even allowed themselves to hear some of the points we presented. However, they seemed deathly afraid to tackle the challenge that chronology presents to their entire belief system. I think that on some deeper level, they must know, or at least suspect the truth. It is a difficult matter for one to face, and they have been well trained in denial.