

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 5/6/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, May 7 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who disagree with each other over the situation in the Middle East. Pray that they find opportunities to discuss peacefully their differing viewpoints. Ask that they seek to understand rather than convince. Pray that understanding will lead to peaceful and just solutions to all disagreements.*

A lady has been coming by our home every two weeks to talk to me. She is a Jehovah's Witness and always has someone with her, though it has been a different person each time. I think she is a "trainer" for going out for the Witnesses and likes to bring them to demonstrate how to converse with a strong Christian.

Most of our conversations have focused on their argument that JESUS is not GOD. They point out that JESUS refers to GOD as FATHER and prays to the FATHER. If JESUS were GOD, why would HE pray to HIMSELF? Jehovah's Witnesses believe that GOD created JESUS so that there would be a perfect sacrifice to pay the price for our sins. But when JESUS died, GOD did not. It's an interesting perspective and I wonder how many others looking at the Christian faith also have this perspective.

I've pointed out that their Bible (and they have their own version that was first created in the 1950s and revised in the 2000s) is inaccurately translated from the oldest versions of the Greek and Hebrew. Particularly, their version of John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the WORD and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was a god." Note the addition of "a" before the final word god. This small change makes JESUS, the WORD, a lesser god than the FATHER. The Witnesses believe that others can become gods just as JESUS did. They have not given me a reason for this difference in translation other than the explanation in their Bible that, because it comes from a different language, there is flexibility in how the Bible is translated. When I asked if they were polytheistic, believing in multiple gods, they said, "No," that they worship GOD alone. Still, I pointed out, that they believe in more than one god—polytheism.

When we met four weeks ago, I raised the text from Isaiah 9:6 that says, "For to us a CHILD is born, to us a SON is given, and the government will be on HIS shoulders. And HE will be called Wonderful COUNSELOR, Mighty GOD, Everlasting FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE." I asked who this referred to and they immediately answered, "JESUS." But when I asked about JESUS as "Mighty GOD," the response I received was that there is a difference between "mighty" and "almighty." JESUS is mighty, but only GOD the FATHER is the ALMIGHTY. Concerning "Everlasting FATHER," they said that the work of JESUS is everlasting and that HE and the FATHER are of one mind, one purpose. But that doesn't mean that JESUS is GOD or the FATHER.

Most recently, I decided to discuss some passages where JESUS identifies HIMSELF as GOD. I asked if they knew what the Hebrew word "Yahweh" meant. They answered correctly that it means "I AM." The original Hebrew does not use vowels so that name is represented by the letters YHWH. The Jews in order to not misuse the name of GOD transliterate the "Y" to a "J" and the "W" to a "V," both similar pronunciations of the letters. Then they added vowels to make the name "JEHOVAH," the name the Witnesses use. But the most accurate representation of the name is "YAHWEH," "I AM." To claim to be GOD in JESUS' time was blasphemy. If someone did this, the person should be stoned to death. On seven occasions in the Gospel of John, though JESUS describes HIMSELF using "I AM." "I AM the Bread of LIFE." "I AM the Light of the World." "I AM the Gate for the sheep." "I AM the Good Shepherd." "I AM the Vine." "I AM the Resurrection and the Life." "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life." I asked how they understood JESUS saying these things. They didn't have an answer. When Thomas first saw JESUS after the resurrection and the holes in HIS hands and side, Thomas said, "My LORD and my GOD." Again, this was a blasphemous statement that Thomas had made. I asked why JESUS did not correct him.

There are also other places where Scripture and JESUS HIMSELF identify JESUS as GOD. But it was at this point that my Jehovah's Witness friends said they had to leave. They thanked me for this and the other conversations we'd had. But my friend who came each time said she felt she had taken up enough of my time and they would likely not be back.

We believe that JESUS is GOD and is part of the TRINITY: FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT. GOD operates in different ways, often at the same time through these three persons of the TRINITY. (The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that HOLY SPIRIT is GOD, either. They believe the SPIRIT is just a force that GOD sends out to accomplish GOD's work.) Those who do not believe that JESUS is ONE with the FATHER are not Christians. While I enjoyed talking with these Jehovah's Witness friends and learning their perspectives on JESUS and the TRINITY, I cannot yield on the truth revealed in Scripture that GOD is ONE, FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, who dwells among us and is involved in our lives in many ways.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey