

The Door-To-Door Work – Is It Scripturally Based?

*The following article is an excerpt from the publication called: **The "Report" Volume I** pages 212 thru 220.*

Jehovah's Witnesses have long taught that one of the identifying marks of true worship today is their proclamation of the kingdom message by the **door-to-door** method. This distinctive feature or particular brand of ministry, asserts the Watchtower Society, makes them different from all other religions worldwide. Notice this comment found in the publication *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, pg. 128, 129, paragraph 13-14 which states:

"True worshipers also proclaim the kingdom of God as man's true hope. They could not do otherwise and be pleasing to Jehovah God, because he has clearly stated that the Kingdom is his provision for governing the earth. (Daniel 2:44; 7: 13, 14) Jesus set the example by going from one end of the land to the other "preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God." (Luke 8:1) He and his apostles did this by going from village to village and "from house to house." (Acts 20:20)

The publication further asserts:

". . . If someone comes to your door or to your neighbor's door and you hear him talking about God's kingdom as mankind's true hope, with what organization do you associate that person?"

The seriousness with which the Watchtower Society views this activity can be gleaned from the very next statement.

"THIS IS A PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY of those who actually do the will of the heavenly Father in imitation of his son Jesus."

A strong statement indeed!

Therefore, the Watchtower Society asserts that they have scriptural proof (Acts 20:20) that the "house-to-house" ministry has been long established by Jesus and the first century Christians as a model and example for us today. And since they, as an organization, are internationally renowned for this particular brand of proselytizing, this must serve as an identifying mark of their being unmistakably and conclusively the TRUE RELIGION of our day.

Therefore, in view of these thoughts, we ask the following important questions:

(1) Does Acts 20:20, as well as **Acts 5:42** really give support to the fact that Jehovah's

Witnesses under the leadership of the Watchtower Society is the only religion today that is strictly following and adhering to the pattern established by Jesus Christ and the apostles?

(2) Is this an identifying mark of the True Religion as asserted by this publication?

(3) And since it is undeniable that Jesus and the apostles preached the kingdom message throughout the land to all who would listen, *did they use this particular method or mode of operation*, in carrying out their preaching assignment? In short, did they use the same identical method that the Jehovah's Witnesses employ today, namely the door-to-door work?

These questions should be of paramount importance to each and every sincere Jehovah's Witnesses today who engages in this work.

ACTS 5:42 AND 20:20

To get the correct understanding of these two verses Acts 5:42; 20:20, we have to go back to the original Greek word that is translated "house-to-house." First, let's take Acts 5:42. In the *New World Translation* it reads:

"And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus."

And in a similar vein, let's also consider Acts 20:20 where Paul makes this statement to fellow Christians from Ephesus:

"While I did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house."

Most Jehovah's Witnesses have to admit that they have never taken the time to research these often quoted verses to see what they really mean. From just from a casual reading of these verses, one might think that this preaching was done by the particular and unique mode advocated by the Watchtower Society, that is -- actual house-over-house or door-to-door preaching in the neighborhoods and communities. However, as shown in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, published by Watchtower Society in 1969, the exact rendering of the Greek expression *kat oikous* literally means "according to houses" and not house-to-house. The closest expression we can find that could accurately be translated "house-to-house" would be at **Luke 10:7** which says:

"... Go not from house to house [oikias eis oikiav]." (*KJV*)

The Greek expression used here can be literally translated as "house-to-house." But, many up-to-date translations of the Bible such as the *American Standard Version* render the expression *kat oikous* at Acts 5:42 more accurately as follows:

"And every day, in the temple and *AT HOME*, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ."

The thought being that the apostles taught in the temple area or in the public before people openly and ALSO in the *private homes* of persons of interest where small groups could congregate.

The private home was the **home base** or central location where first century Christians had their meetings. There is no record in the Bible or in secular history that Christians, in the first century during the apostle's time, ever engaged in a building work of erecting specific structures to facilitate Christian meetings. They always met in private chambers, upper rooms generally owned by the Christians themselves or persons who would be agreeable to such a temporary arrangement. (Luke 22:8-13; Acts 1:13-15) Group meetings for Christians could also be arranged in public facilities like school auditoriums, even for extended periods of time. (See Acts 19:9,10.) No, the 1st century Christians did not set out to build such auditoriums for places of worship! That would take them away from the more important work at hand C Preaching the message. It would be a distraction in Satan's world that could possibly stumble some. Yes, it could lead to materialism! -- See "**THE REPORT**" Chapter 2.

Kittles Theological Dictionary of the New Testament [TDNT] has this to say on the Greek expression *kat* [according to] *oikous* [house] under the subheading ***The "House" as a Group in the Structure of the Christian community.*** It says:

"Primitive Christianity structured its congregation in families, groups and `houses.' The house was both fellowship and a place of meeting. Thus we read of the `house of Stephanas' in 1 Corinthians 1:16, the `house of Philemon' in Philemon 2, the `house of Cornelius' in Acts 11:14, the `house of Lydia' in Acts 16:15 ..."

They also make this insightful comment concerning Acts 20:20. It further says:

"There is an interesting observation in Acts, 20:20: `And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.' Along with public preaching the apostle also gave instruction ***IN THE HOUSE MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITY.***"

Did you notice this comment? How much clearer could it be?

Yes, the "house meetings of the community" was where this instruction was given! That's what Acts 20:20 was talking about. Paul was able to help many in the local "house meetings," where people met to be taught privately. He was not literally going door-to-door or visiting each and every house in the community as the Society would have us believe! That is the way Bible scholars understand this Greek expression translated "house to house." The notion that Acts

20:20 was establishing a pre-set, prescribed method of disciple-making, that is, literally going from house-to-house, supposedly demonstrated by Jesus and the apostles, is far from the true meaning or intent of the Greek language here.

Also, the fact that Paul said in Acts 20:20 `I have taught you publicly **AND** from House-to-House' immediately shows that they were two different ministries, respectively. One was "public," that is among the people, in market places, the temple and other places people congregated, and one was *private*, in the homes of the friends where personal attention could be given. If this Greek expression [*kat oikous*] was taken the way the Society says, then the "house-to-house" ministry would also have to be a "public" ministry. There would not have been a need for Paul to say "publicly" **AND** "House-to-House" since both would be "public" ministries, done openly before the people. Right??? However, this particular "house-to-house" ministry that Paul spoke of was actually a ministry that Paul conducted in the "private homes." It's just that simple. This is why Paul said it this way. Think about it.

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND ACTS 2:46?

However, for those hard to convince, we also notice that this expression [*kat oikous*] rendered "house-to-house," is by no means unique or limited to these two verses in the Bible. For example, if we examine **Acts 2:46** we find the same Greek expression. But in this instance the Watchtower Society does not render it "house-to-house" in the *New World Translation*, but instead renders it this way:

"and day after day they were in constant attendance at the temple with one accord, and they took their meals in **PRIVATE HOMES** [Greek *kat oikou*] and partook of food with great rejoicing and sincerity of heart."

If we examine the large print *New World Translation* footnote, or the 1985 edition of *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* footnote for this verse, you will notice that this particular expression "private homes" could have been acceptably rendered from "house-to-house." Therefore, the *New World Translation* Committee makes a distinction and renders the same Greek expression [*kat oikous*] "private homes" where in the other two earlier cited verses (Acts 5:42; 20:20) it is rendered "house-to-house." Therefore, the Society is well aware of the facts!

But what modern translator of the Bible would want to render *kat oikous* as "house to house" in **Acts 2:46** as the *King James Version* does? It really, would not make sense. Obviously, Acts 2:46 is not talking about any such door-to-door method. Because if it were, then we would be left to imagine or understand that the apostles were literally going throughout the neighborhood, from door-to-door, yes house-to-house eating meals with any and everybody who would let them in? Ridiculous you say! Then it would be just as ridiculous to say that Acts 20:20 or Acts 5:42 is teaching a specific method of disciple-making, literally house-to-house. The Greek wordage is exactly the same in all three accounts. Think about it. -- See *TDNT*, pp. 130, ¶ 2, Vol. V.

The Watchtower Society chose to use the **correct** and **most reasonable** rendering of this Greek expression in Acts 2:46 in the *New World Translation*. They DID NOT, however, choose to render it the same way in Acts 5:42 or Acts 20:20. Why??? Because if they did, the reader would clearly get the idea of personal instruction being done in the "private homes" of the friends, rather than house-over-house in literal fashion throughout the community of worldlings and unbelievers! Clearly, Acts 5:42 and Acts 20:20 is not teaching a specific mode or method of preaching the kingdom message to the people! There can be little doubt that the Society conveniently translated the expression Greek [*kat oikous*] in the *New World Translation* at **Acts 5:42** and **Acts 20:20** to give further support to their already established, unique, and so-called identifying mark of "true christianity!"

MATTHEW 10:12, 13 AND LUKE 10:5,6

But what about the accounts at Matthew 10:12, 13 and Luke 10:5, 6? Did not Jesus Christ, himself specifically outline the procedure for engaging in the house to house ministry? Was not he establishing the rules of conduct when one receives a negative response in his door-to-door service? Again, the answer is NO!

If we consider the entire account, we see Jesus was outlining the procedure for establishing a *home base* for their ministry in EACH city or village. Notice verse 11 of Matthew chapter 10 which says:

"Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving, and STAY THERE until you leave."

Now if we took this scripture literally as specific instructions pertaining to the door-to-door ministry, that would mean that when the disciples found **only one** 'deserving person' in their so-called 'house-to-house' ministry -- they would CEASE in this work since they were told to "stay there until you leave." How ridiculous! Nevertheless, we find the same thought is expressed in **Luke 9:4**. Also at Luke 10:7 it says:

"So stay in that house, eating and drinking the thing they provide, for the worker is worthy of his wages. DO NOT BE TRANSFERRING FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE."

The thought being, not to search throughout the village or city for the best possible accommodations, just accept whatever Jehovah's provides. Now that makes more sense, right???

Obviously then, Jesus was giving them specific instructions for establishing a **home base** for launching their ministry in that particular town. This would thus provide them with a place to confidentially give personal instruction to those who would listen -- yes in the privacy and relaxed atmosphere of a home belonging to a "friend of peace." (Luke 10:6) However, if by chance in 'searching out' the town or village, they encountered an unappreciative person, or *even an inhospitable village or city*, Jesus said for them to "Shake the dust off your feet for a witness

against them." -- Luke 9:5; 10:8-13.

For these reasons the *Phillips Modern English Version* (and numerous other translations) renders **Matthew 10:11-15** this way:

"Wherever you go, whether it is into a town or a village, find out someone who is respected, and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house give it your blessing. If the house deserves it, the peace of your blessing will come to it. But if it doesn't, your peace will return to you. And if no one will welcome you or even listen to what you have to say, leave that house or town, and once outside it shake off the dust of that place from your feet. Believe me, it will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that town."

Therefore, we can see that neither Jesus nor the apostles established a particular door-to-door method of preaching the kingdom message as taught by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and its Governing Body! Neither **(a)** Acts 5:42, **(b)** Acts 20:20, **(c)** Matthew 10:12, 13 nor **(d)** Luke 10:5, 6 can be used as scriptural support to establish precedent for the door-to-door method employed exclusively by the Jehovah's Witnesses!

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Therefore, this particular brand of proselytizing **DOES NOT SERVE** in any way, shape or form as being a distinctive, identifying mark of true religion today. But regrettably, it only serves to highlight the *weighty burden* placed upon the shoulders of enslaved Jehovah's Witnesses to a lifelong career of book-selling, magazine-selling, and illegal Bible hucksterism for the singular and sole purpose of enriching the coffers of the Watchtower Society! Think about it. -- See Matthew 23:4; Ezekiel 34:27; 2 Corinthians 2:17.

End of Excerpt

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