

A group of men in suits are seated around a conference table in a meeting room. A large window in the background shows a cityscape with red brick buildings. The text "THE GOVERNING BODY" is overlaid in the center of the image.

THE GOVERNING BODY

THESIS

- ▶ Witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses requires understanding and biblically disproving their most foundational beliefs; namely, their absolute unquestionable obedience to their leaders

WHAT IS THE GOVERNING BODY?

IN THE FIRST CENTURY, A SMALL GROUP, “THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS IN JERUSALEM,” SERVED AS A GOVERNING BODY TO MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS ON BEHALF OF THE ENTIRE ANOINTED CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION. (ACTS 15:2) WHEN THEY MADE A UNANIMOUS DECISION, IT WAS A RESULT OF DISCUSSING WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY AND YIELDING TO THE INFLUENCE OF GOD’S SPIRIT. (ACTS 15:25) THAT PATTERN IS FOLLOWED TODAY.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNING BODY?

THE ANOINTED BROTHERS WHO SERVE ON THE GOVERNING BODY HAVE AN INTENSE INTEREST IN GOD'S WORD AND MUCH EXPERIENCE IN HANDLING PRACTICAL AND SPIRITUAL MATTERS. THEY MEET EACH WEEK TO CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF THE WORLDWIDE BROTHERHOOD. AS IN THE FIRST CENTURY, BIBLE-BASED INSTRUCTIONS ARE PROVIDED EITHER THROUGH LETTERS OR BY MEANS OF TRAVELING OVERSEERS AND OTHERS. THIS PROMOTES UNITY IN THOUGHT AND ACTION AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE. (ACTS 16:4, 5) THE GOVERNING BODY OVERSEES THE PREPARATION OF SPIRITUAL FOOD, GIVES IMPETUS TO THE KINGDOM-PREACHING WORK, AND SUPERVISES THE APPOINTMENT OF BROTHERS TO POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNING BODY?

THE GOVERNING BODY LOOKS TO THE UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGN, JEHOVAH, AND TO THE HEAD OF THE CONGREGATION, JESUS, FOR GUIDANCE. (1 CORINTHIANS 11:3; EPHESIANS 5:23) ITS MEMBERS DO NOT REGARD THEMSELVES AS THE LEADERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. THEY, ALONG WITH ALL ANOINTED CHRISTIANS, "KEEP FOLLOWING THE LAMB [JESUS] NO MATTER WHERE HE GOES." (REVELATION 14:4) THE GOVERNING BODY APPRECIATES OUR PRAYERS IN ITS BEHALF.



THE GOVERNING BODY

AUTHORITY CLAIMS

**TO HOLD TO THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST, IT IS
THEREFORE NECESSARY TO OBEY THE ORGANIZATION
THAT HE IS PERSONALLY DIRECTING. DOING WHAT THE
ORGANIZATION SAYS IS TO DO WHAT HE SAYS.
RESISTING THE ORGANIZATION IS TO RESIST HIM**

**The Watchtower
5/1/59 p269**

MAKE HASTE TO IDENTIFY THE VISIBLE THEOCRATIC ORGANIZATION OF GOD THAT REPRESENTS HIS KING, JESUS CHRIST. IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE. DOING SO, BE COMPLETE IN ACCEPTING ITS EVERY ASPECT. WE CANNOT CLAIM TO LOVE GOD, YET DENY HIS WORD AND CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION...THEREFORE, IN SUBMITTING TO JEHOVAH'S VISIBLE THEOCRATIC ORGANIZATION, WE MUST BE IN FULL AND COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH EVERY FEATURE OF ITS APOSTOLIC PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS.

The Watchtower

10/1/67 p591-592

BEAR IN MIND THAT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HAS AN APPOINTED CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION, “THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE.” THAT “SLAVE” HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE WHAT INFORMATION IS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH, AS WELL AS “THE PROPER TIME” FOR IT TO BE DISPENSED. THIS SPIRITUAL FOOD IS AVAILABLE ONLY THROUGH THE THEOCRATIC ORGANIZATION. WE SHOULD ALWAYS LOOK TO GOD’S APPOINTED CHANNEL FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION, NOT TO A NETWORK OF INTERNET USERS.—MATT. 24:45.

Kingdom Ministry

9/02 p8

SINCE JEHOVAH GOD AND JESUS CHRIST COMPLETELY TRUST THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE, SHOULD WE NOT DO THE SAME? AFTER ALL, THE SLAVE HAS SHOWN ITSELF TO BE FAITHFUL IN DOING ITS ASSIGNED WORK.

**The Watchtower
2/15/09 p27**

WE NEED TO GUARD AGAINST DEVELOPING A SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE. BY WORD OR ACTION, MAY WE NEVER CHALLENGE THE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION THAT JEHOVAH IS USING TODAY.

**The Watchtower
11/15/09 p27**

**THE ANOINTED AND THEIR OTHER SHEEP COMPANIONS
RECOGNIZE THAT BY FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF THE
MODERN-DAY GOVERNING BODY, THEY ARE IN FACT
FOLLOWING THEIR LEADER, CHRIST.**

**The Watchtower
9/15/10 p23**

WE NEED TO GUARD AGAINST DEVELOPING A SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE. BY WORD OR ACTION, MAY WE NEVER CHALLENGE THE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION THAT JEHOVAH IS USING TODAY. (NUM. 16:1-3) ON THE CONTRARY, WE SHOULD CHERISH OUR PRIVILEGE TO COOPERATE WITH THE SLAVE CLASS. AND SHOULD WE NOT STRIVE TO BE OBEDIENT AND SUBMISSIVE TO THOSE TAKING THE LEAD IN OUR LOCAL CONGREGATION?

The Watchtower

11/15/09 p14

SIMILARLY TODAY, A GOVERNING BODY COMPOSED OF SPIRIT-ANOINTED CHRISTIANS CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNITY OF THE WORLDWIDE CONGREGATION. THE GOVERNING BODY PUBLISHES SPIRITUALLY ENCOURAGING LITERATURE IN MANY LANGUAGES. THIS SPIRITUAL FOOD IS BASED ON GOD'S WORD. THUS, WHAT IS TAUGHT IS NOT FROM MEN BUT FROM JEHOVAH.

**The Watchtower
9/15/10 p13**



THE GOVERNING BODY

IS IT BIBLICAL?

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS CASE

- ▶ In the first century, the elders and apostles made important decisions on behalf of the congregation (Acts 15:1-2)
- ▶ Instructions in the first century were provided by letters or traveling, to which all Christians were to obey (Acts 16:4-5). Christians prospered when they followed the counsel.
- ▶ A Governing Body, as in the first century, is the biblical basis for maintaining unity in all congregations worldwide
- ▶ A Worldwide preaching effort not only requires unified doctrine, but also an organization run by a Governing Body

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Do the relevant Scriptures teach an *established* position for the Governing Body as they do for elders and deacons?
- ▶ Do the gospels and epistles describe a Governing Body?
- ▶ Is there evidence for individual or congregational autonomy?
- ▶ Does the JW Governing Body closely parallel the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15?



EXAMINING ACTS 15

EXAMINING ACTS 15

“Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.” (Acts 15:1-2, NASB)

- ▶ JW assumption: the “apostles and elders” were a centralized Governing Body
- ▶ There is *no evidence* that this was the case

EXAMINING ACTS 15

“Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.” (Acts 15:3)

- ▶ Paul and Barnabas’ “being sent by the church” was a decision made autonomously rather than by a centralized Governing Body

EXAMINING ACTS 15

“When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.” (Acts 15:4-6)

- ▶ Still no mention of a centralized Governing Body who supervised all congregations worldwide
- ▶ Evidence will show that their looking “into this matter” did not happen behind closed doors, contrary to the JW Governing Body today

EXAMINING ACTS 15

“After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.” All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.” (Acts 15:7-11)

- ▶ **The mention of “All the people” keeping silent clearly shows this was not a meeting behind closed doors**

EXAMINING ACTS 15

“Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas – Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,” (Acts 15:22)

- ▶ Not only was the whole congregation present at this meeting, but they were *involved* in the decision making
- ▶ If Acts 15 is supposed to be the norm, or an example, then the JW Governing Body is certainly not following this with any regularity, if at all

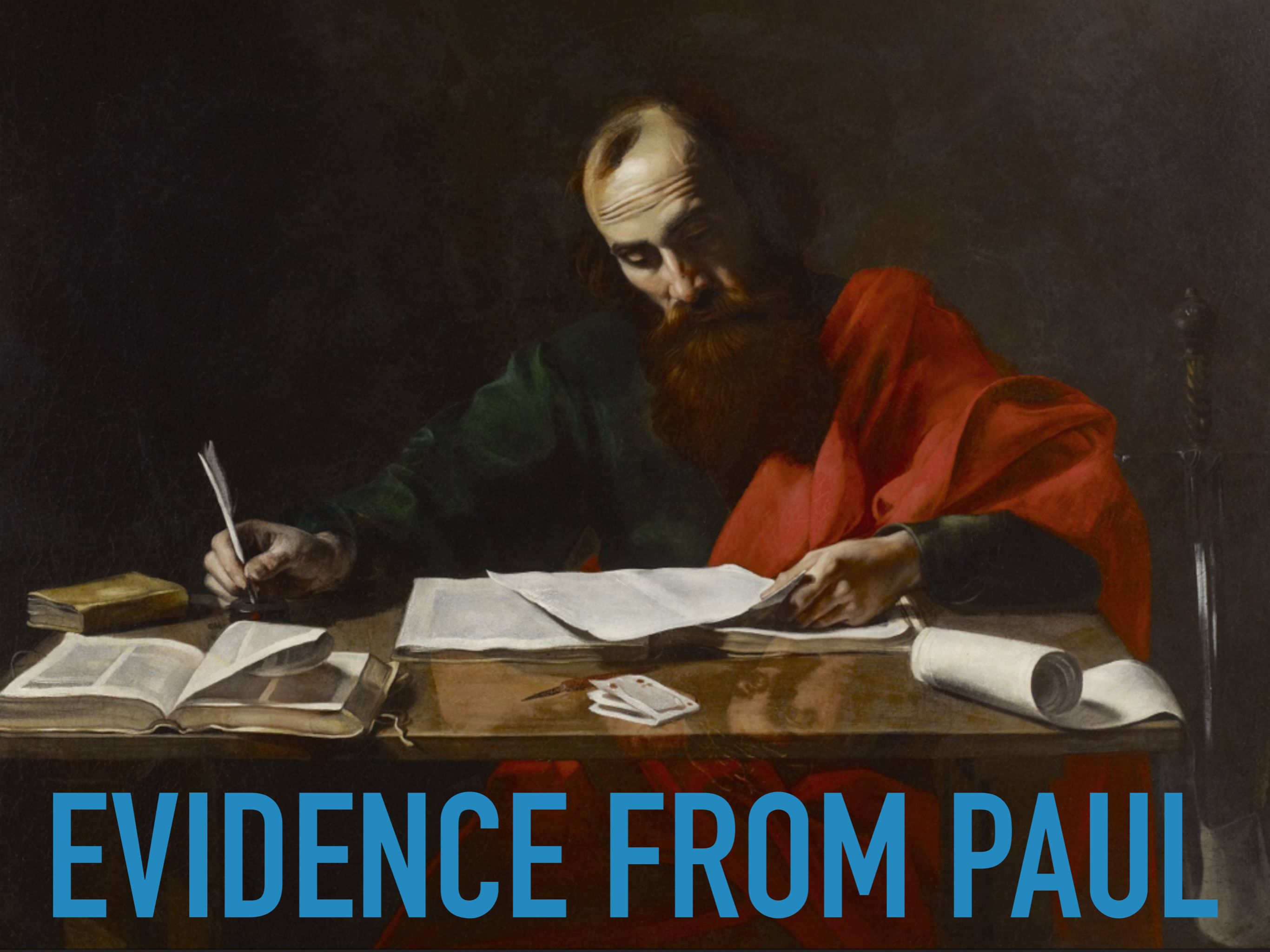
EXAMINING ACTS 15

“and they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. “Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by *word of mouth*. “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:23-29)

- ▶ If this letter was being written by a Governing Body, then “some of our number” must mean that Governing Body members were teaching this false doctrine
- ▶ Yet, there is no indication that the elders and apostles were a part of an established Governing Body

ACTS 15 SUMMARY

- ▶ Men came down to Antioch teaching that circumcision was required for salvation
- ▶ Paul and Barnabas debated the issue with them, so the church decided to send them to Jerusalem to talk about the issue
- ▶ The Jerusalem church agrees with Paul and Barnabas and writes a letter to other congregations to affirm their position
- ▶ The account shows *why* Jerusalem was the reasonable place to go for this particular issue. It was because Jerusalem was the *source* of the problem, *not* because it was the location of an international administrative body



EVIDENCE FROM PAUL

EVIDENCE FROM PAUL (AGAINST A GOVERNING BODY)

- ▶ To Saul/Paul...“Get up and enter the city (Damascus), and it will be told you what you must do.” (Acts 9:6)
- ▶ To Ananias...“Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.” (Acts 9:12)
- ▶ Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:19-20)

EVIDENCE FROM PAUL (AGAINST A GOVERNING BODY)

- ▶ If a Christ-appointed Governing Body existed, then surely Paul would have been instructed to contact them promptly to seek direction and guidance, especially to coordinate his work in being “an apostle to the Gentiles.”
- ▶ Paul was given *no* instruction to go to Jerusalem. Instead, he was instructed to go to someone who would have *not* been a Governing Body member; namely, Ananias
- ▶ Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Galatians that he...
 - ▶ Was “not sent from men nor through the agency of man” (1:1)
 - ▶ Was not “striving to please men” (1:10)
 - ▶ Preached a gospel “not according to man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:11-12)

EVIDENCE FROM PAUL (AGAINST A GOVERNING BODY)

“I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.” (Acts 15:22)

- ▶ It was not until *three years later* that Paul made a trip to Jerusalem
- ▶ Even then, he only saw Peter and James. He was therefore *not* around a Governing Body receiving instructions.
- ▶ It would be *fourteen years* before Paul would make his next trip to Jerusalem; specifically, to take part in the circumcision controversy (Gal. 2:1-2)

EVIDENCE FROM PAUL

“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” (Acts 20:29-32)

- ▶ After Paul’s departure, he did not admonish the Ephesus congregation to follow the instructions of the Governing Body. If such a Governing Body existed, why wouldn’t he?
- ▶ It would be a vain search to find any such reference in *any* of Paul’s letters in admonishing Christians to submit to a Governing Body
- ▶ Instead, commended them to follow God and His Word

**JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
GOVERNING BODY**

VS

THE FIRST CENTURY

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ Meets regularly and decrees what all JW's must believe in virtually every area of life

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ Scripture records only one instance where a council gathered, which included the congregation, to discuss and resolve a major controversy

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ Meets privately and behind closed doors with no public access

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ Open discussion that included the congregation. Operated on a level of full disclosure

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ Governing Body members and other high level officials pursue major ministry endeavors with the permission and agreement of the Governing Body

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ In Acts 15:36, Paul visited "the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." JW's today would not have this kind of authority.

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ Jehovah's Witnesses are not authorized in any way to criticize or put Governing Body members to the test.

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ Christians were praised in Revelation 2:2 for putting apostles "to the test... and finding them liars."

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ Doctrinal revisions or creations happen only through the collective agreement of the Governing Body

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ Doctrines could be revised or created wholly separate from a Governing Body. Peter did exactly that when it was revealed that Gentiles could be a part of the Christian congregation. He did not seek approval from a Governing Body

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ There are no Apostles in the Governing Body, nor are their writings inspired and infallible

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ The Jerusalem council had Apostles who wrote inspired and infallible letters

JW GOVERNING BODY

- ▶ JW's are not authorized to print or distribute any literature that claims to represent JW's unless approved by the Governing Body

FIRST CENTURY

- ▶ There is no evidence that the vast majority of the New Testament was written under the authority and approval of a Governing Body prior to distribution

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Jehovah's Witnesses

APPLICATION

WHY BOTHER WITH LEARNING THIS STUFF?

- ▶ These topics tackle the most foundational aspects of their worldview
- ▶ While arguing for the Trinity, Hell, or the Soul *may* be fruitful, the JW will trust the Governing Body interpretation more than yours
- ▶ JW's are *most* prepared to discuss the Trinity, Hell, and the Soul
 - ▶ But most JW's will probably never hear a biblically reasoned case against their leaders in their entire lifetime

MOST OF US WILL
ENCOUNTER AT LEAST
ONE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS
BEFORE THE YEAR ENDS

WILL YOU BE READY?

**...WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO
BE GOD'S WORD AND ALL OUR
BELIEFS ARE BASED ON IT**

Every JW presentation at your door

HOW TO ENGAGE

- ▶ *Ask questions*
 - ▶ Don't you guys believe that there is a Governing Body? Can you show me that in the Bible?
 - ▶ Don't your leaders claim to have been chosen by Jesus in 1919? I'm curious to see where that's taught in the Bible.
 - ▶ I heard that you teach Jesus became King in 1914. Is that in the Bible?

HOW TO ENGAGE

- ▶ Don't expect immediate agreement to your points
- ▶ Don't press the JW
- ▶ Reserve an in depth analysis of their doctrines for their 2nd visit
- ▶ Show them the utmost respect and express your love for them
- ▶ Listen and take notes
- ▶ Explain why you're asking them all these questions

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-Question-

