

Pastor Russell NOT the Founder of Jehovah's Witnesses

Contrary to some publicity made concerning "Jehovah's Witnesses," Pastor Charles Taze Russell is not the founder of this religious group. He was never associated with them, nor did he ever claim the name. Pastor Russell died in 1916, while the "Jehovah's Witnesses" did not come into existence until 1931. Linking Pastor Russell with "Jehovah's Witnesses" leaves the decidedly mistaken view that their teachings and beliefs are alike. Such is not the case.

Pastor Russell founded what has been called "The Bible Student's Association." This movement had its beginning in the 1860's in Allegheny, Pa. when earnest Christians formed a Bible class for advanced Bible study to meet the then rising wave of infidelity.

In 1879, Zion's Watch Tower Society was formed, later known as The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. This Society did not become the central authority for the Bible Students, for all cooperating congregations of Bible Students held strictly to congregational self-government. The Society only served to coordinate the activities of the various congregations.

After the death of Pastor Russell in 1916 the purpose of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society changed completely. The teachings of the six volumes of "Studies In The Scriptures" were discarded. The congregations in harmony with the Society relinquished congregational rule. The Society became the central head and authority over all congregations willing to yield their sovereignty. Basic doctrines of the Society seriously digressed from the teachings of Pastor Russell, and before long Judge Rutherford declared that those associated with the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society were "Jehovah's Witnesses" on this earth. Here is where the name emerged—certainly not in Pastor Russell's time.

After Pastor Russell's death, The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society began to rise as a hierarchy over the once independent congregations. Many refused to surrender their Christian liberty and here started the work of separation. As early as 1917 this exodus from the Society began, and those who appreciated the wonderful harmony of the Bible as taught by Pastor Russell are today known as "Associated Bible Students."

Contrasts with the Jehovah's Witnesses

The following doctrines are an example as to how Bible Students still retain the basic teachings of Pastor Russell in contrast with "Jehovah's Witnesses," who do not.

BIBLE STUDENTS:

Pastor Russell was led to believe in a future probation because millions have died and continue to die without hearing the Gospel. Of those that do hear, uncertainty and confusion exists in their minds because Christianity of today is burdened with contradictory beliefs and teachings.

JW'S:

"Jehovah's Witnesses" see no further probation for any of the present generation who do not subscribe to their teachings- which means that a large percentage of the world's population is to perish eternally in Armageddon. In this respect their views are less generous than most established Churches. They not only see no hope for those who live today, who do not subscribe to their teachings, but they entertain no hope for a large percentage of the millions who have gone into the grave since the creation of man. For example, JW'S believe that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. have perished eternally, with no hope for a resurrection.

BIBLE STUDENTS:

Pastor Russell pointed to the Scriptures, such as Ezekiel 16:55, where it declares that these are all going to return to their "former estate." And our Lord, in Matthew 10:15, confirms this thought when he said, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city"- (speaking of the Jews). Thus our Lord pointed forward to a day of judgment for those people who died centuries ago. And again it says, in Acts 17:31 that, "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness."

JW'S:

"Jehovah's Witnesses" deny that Adam will ever have a resurrection, while the Scriptures plainly state that Jesus Christ tasted death "for every man." Hebrews 2:9; 1T 2:5,6.

BIBLE STUDENTS:

Pastor Russell pointed to these scriptures and many others such as 1 Corinthians 15:22 - "As in Adam all die, even So in Christ shall all be made alive." Also Hos 13:14 - "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be they plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

Pastor Russell taught, according to the Scriptures, that now is "the day of salvation" for those who are to be the Bride of Christ, the Little Flock; and that another day- a day of salvation is awaiting mankind in general, in the Millennial Age- "the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." One of the main teachings of Pastor Russell was that all would be enlightened with a knowledge of God's Truth before they are placed

on trial and judged for their final destiny. For the majority of mankind this would be when they are raised from the dead at the time of the general resurrection. Their final judgment would be based on their conduct while enlightened, not while in ignorance. This teaching separated Bible Students from all other religious groups. Now it separates them from "Jehovah's Witnesses" as well. This view broke with the concept of salvation current in his day. At that time nearly all evangelists taught a literal hell of torment for those who did not accept Christ in this life. They felt hell- fire threats were necessary to restrain evil and, if need be, to bring salvation by fear. Many theologians have since broadened their concept of salvation beyond this life, but "Jehovah's Witnesses" hold strongly to the position that those who reject their message are rejecting salvation.