

PASTOR RUSSELL NOT THE FOUNDER OF “JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES”

Contrary to some publicity made concerning "Jehovah's Witnesses," Pastor Russell is *not* the founder of this religious group. He has never associated with "Jehovah's Witnesses" nor did he ever claim the name. Pastor Charles T. Russell died in 1916. The "Jehovah's Witnesses" came into existence later. Associating 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 Allegheny, Pa. and earnest Christians formed a Bible class for advanced Bible study to meet the then rising wave of infidelity. In 1879 Zion's Watch Tower 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 Watch Tower Bible and Tract 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" and other writings of Pastor Russell were discarded. The congregations in harmony with the Society thereafter 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.

BIBLE STUDENTS TODAY

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.

DOCTRINES

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.

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 and not on their conduct while in ignorance. This teaching separated Bible Students from all other religious groups. Now it separates them from "Jehovah's Witnesses" as well.

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 hear, uncertainty and confusion exists in their minds because Churchianity of today is burdened with contradictory beliefs and teachings. "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, those of Sodom, Samaria, Gomorrah, etc., - they believe those people perished eternally, with no hope for a resurrection, while Pastor Russell pointed to the Scriptures, such as Ezek. 16:55, where it declares that these are all going to return to their "former estate." And our Lord, in Matt. 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."

The "Jehovah's Witnesses" deny that Adam will ever have a resurrection, while the Scriptures plainly state that Jesus Christ tasted death "for every man." Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2: 5, 6. Pastor Russell pointed out these Scriptures and many others such as 1 Cor. 15: 22, - "As in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive." Also Hosea 13:14, I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy 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." (Acts 3:21) 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. Contrary to our Lord's Word, every "Jehovah's Witness" becomes a missionary of life or death, using the fear of eternal destruction or second death, as their final appeal.

The Jewish people figure in another difference between Pastor Russell and the "Jehovah's Witnesses." After applying the Scripture, "Ye are my witnesses saith Jehovah" (Isa. 43:12) to themselves, "Jehovah's Witnesses" declare that the Jewish people have no special role in the Divine Plan since the death of Jesus. On the contrary, Pastor Russell taught that the Jewish people and nation have a leading role in the Divine Plan for man, and accordingly during the year 1910 he spoke to vast Jewish audiences, comforting them according to the Scripture, Isa. 40:2 - "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." He encouraged them not to join the various churches of today but to wait for the fulfillment of the many Old Testament promises that they would be blessed as a nation. While they were yet: a scattered and dispersed people, he said, upon the basis of these promises, that they would be regathered to Palestine and established as an independent nation. Time has proven this to be so. Although denied by "Jehovah's Witnesses," Bible Students today teach that the new state of Israel emerged in Divine Providence and is a precursor to the fulfillment of God's promise to that nation that, - "Lo the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to *return to the land that I gave to their fathers*, and they shall possess it." (Jer. 30:3)

And again, Jer. 24:6, 7, says, - "I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and *I will bring them again to this land*: and I will build them and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall *return unto me with their whole heart*."

And a further promise in Jer. 31 :27-34 was that, - "Like as I have watched over them to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build and to plant saith the Lord . . . and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in that day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they break . . . but this shall be the covenant that I will make . . . I will put my Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. . . and they shall be my people . . . I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more."

From these facts it can be seen that Pastor Charles T. Russell was neither in principle nor in spirit, the founder of "Jehovah's Witnesses."

For a complete understanding of Pastor Russell's teachings write for the 350 page book, "The Divine Plan of the Ages." This book is a veritable "key to the Scriptures." It gives the Bible answer to many highly important questions, amongst which are the following: "Why did God permit evil?" "What is the Judgment Day?" "Where will the different classes be in the resurrection?" "Where are the dead?" Upon request this book of 350 pages may be purchased for the small sum of 25¢ or may be had as a loan.