

## 1914: True Prophecy or False Prophecy?

Jehovah's Witnesses are known for speaking much about the year 1914. They currently teach that Christ returned invisibly in October of 1914 - and at that time he set up his heavenly kingdom. Watch Tower publications presently state that the generation of people alive in 1914 will not pass away before the battle of Armageddon.

With these facts in mind and without commenting on the correctness of their teachings about 1914, we would like you to consider this statement made on page 24 of the September 1, 1985 Watchtower magazine:

From 1876 onward, Jehovah's people served notice upon the world, and particularly upon Christendom, that the Gentile Times would end in the fall of 1914...The clergy could not ignore this preliminary work of almost 40 years - a work corresponding to that of John the Baptist. Those clergymen waited eagerly to pounce upon this journal's editor should 1914 pass without any outstanding events to correspond with those about which he warned. But, oh, how they were silenced when on July 28, 1914, peace was shattered by the outbreak of World War 1!

The Watchtower seems to be saying that World War 1 fulfilled the predictions they had made about 1914. However, we ask you to compare this recent statement in the Watchtower with what was printed in the book *Light*, volume 1, page 194. This book was published in 1930 by the Watch Tower Society:

The Watch Tower, and its companion publications of the Society, for forty years emphasized the fact that 1914 would witness the establishment of God's kingdom and the complete glorification of the church. During that period of forty years God's people on earth were carrying on a witness work, which work was foreshadowed by Elijah and John the Baptist. All of the Lord's people looked forward to 1914 with joyful expectation. When that time came and passed there was much disappointment, chagrin and mourning, and the Lord's people were greatly in reproach. They were ridiculed by the clergy and their allies in particular, and pointed to with scorn, because they had said so much about 1914, and what would come to pass, and their "prophecies" had not been fulfilled. [Emphasis added]

Which Watchtower publication is telling the truth? Were their critics silenced by the outbreak of World War 1, or did their critics point to them with scorn because their prophecies about 1914 had not been fulfilled?

What did Charles Taze Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society, predict for the year 1914? Let's consider what he wrote in *The Time is at Hand*, volume 2 of *Studies in the Scriptures*. This book was written in 1889. On page 99 Russell wrote:

In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the Kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished by the end of A.D. 1914.

Russell considered it an established truth that all the kingdoms of the world would be destroyed in 1914. When he spoke of the full establishment of God's Kingdom, he was not referring to a heavenly kingdom. On page 101 of this same book he explained that he believed the Kingdom had been set up in heaven in 1878. Notice also what Russell wrote on pages 76 and 77:

In this chapter we present the Bible evidence proving that the full end of the times of the Gentiles, i.e., the full end of their lease of dominion, will be reached in A.D. 1914; and that that date will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men. [Emphasis added]

What else was Russell expecting for 1914? He continues:

That at that date the Kingdom of God... will have obtained full, universal control, and that it will then be 'set up' or firmly established, in the earth... [Emphasis added]

Russell, on the same page, also said:

It will prove that some time before the end of A.D. 1914 the last member of divinely recognized Church of Christ, the "royal priesthood," "the body of Christ," will be glorified with the Head.

No wonder Russell's critics pointed to his followers with scorn when his predictions did not come true. There was

no destruction of earthly kingdoms by 1914 - no set up of God's Kingdom on earth. Nor were Russell's followers taken to heaven at that time, either.

True, when World War 1 did break out in the summer of 1914, Russell thought his prophecies were about to be fulfilled. But when October of 1914 came, nothing extraordinary happened.

But Russell, of necessity, had already been "hedging his bets" about 1914. A year or so before he was changing some of his statements in Studies in the Scriptures about 1914 to 1915. He started printing some cautionary statements to try to prepare people if his prophecies did not come to pass. In the September 1, 1914 Watchtower, Russell suggested:

While it is possible that Armageddon may begin next Spring, yet it is purely speculation to attempt to say just when. We see, however, that there are parallels between the close of the Jewish age and this Gospel age. These parallels seem to point to the year just before us - particularly the early months.

Russell was learning not to be so dogmatic. However, he did feel Armageddon was imminent. In the book Pastor Russell's Sermons, published by the Watch Tower Society in 1917, Russell said on page 676:

The present great war in Europe is the beginning of the Armageddon of the Scriptures (Rev. 16:16-20.) It will eventuate in the complete overthrow of all the systems of error which have so long oppressed the people of God and deluded the world. [Emphasis added]

In fact, shortly before his death in 1916 Russell was proposing 1918 as a new date. Charles Russell lived and died believing God had given him special insight into His times and seasons, predicting things for 1878, 1881, 1910, and 1914. Nothing he prophesied came to pass. He would have been better off following Jesus' words at Acts 1:6, 7 where He counseled His disciples that it does not belong to us to get knowledge of God's times and seasons. Instead, Russell, according to Deuteronomy 18:20-22 proved himself a false prophet.



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