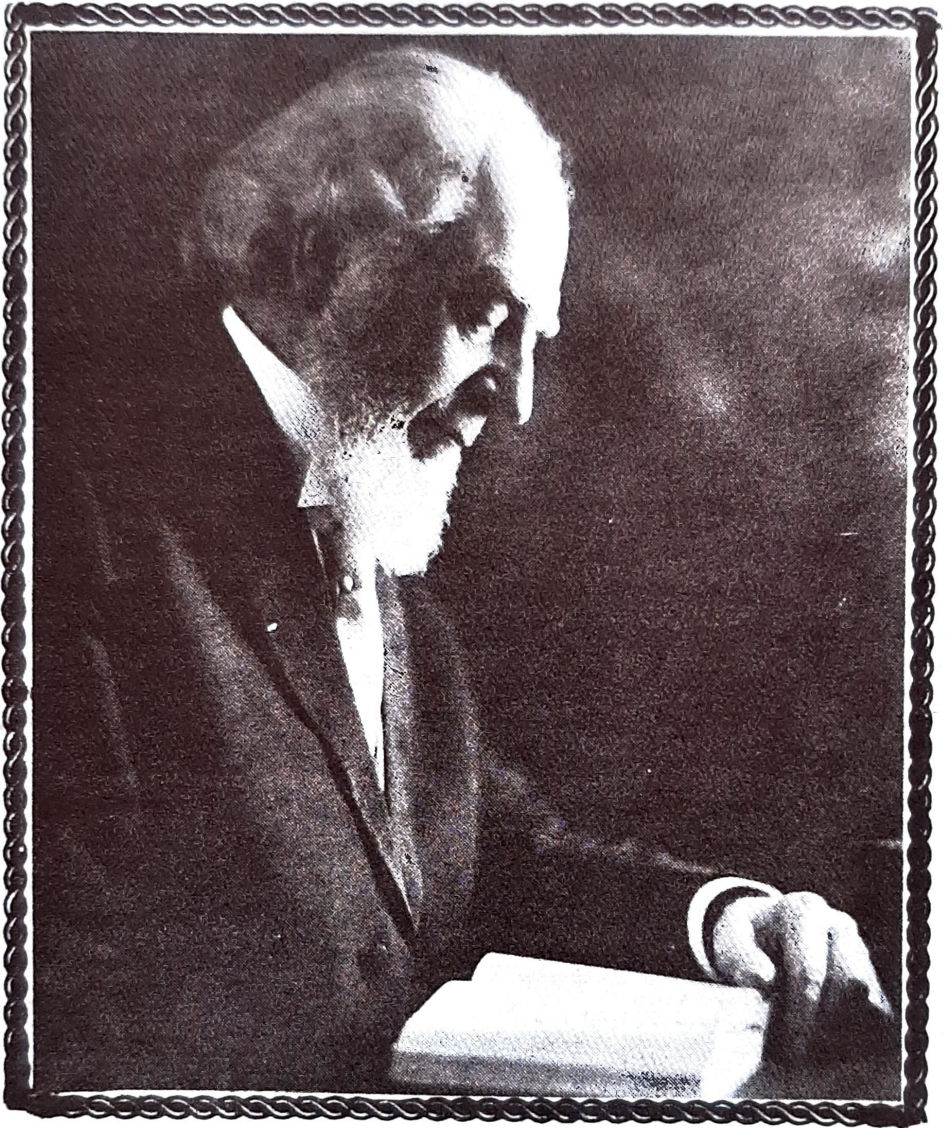


# Charles Taze Russell:



## **DISFELLOWSHIPED!**

It is surprising how few Jehovah's Witnesses know who the founder and first president of their organization was. Even fewer know that if Charles Taze Russell suddenly came back to life today and began teaching his theory to members of the very group that he founded, he would be disfellowshipped. The grounds for this disfellowshipping would be called "apostasy" — the teaching of doctrine that opposes God's revealed truth.

Russell founded the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in 1884. He called his followers International Bible Students. The corporation that published Russell's books and tracts has retained the Watchtower name, but in 1931, followers of the Society became known as Jehovah's Witnesses.

Russell claimed to be revealing God's divine truths and, in the Society's own publications, was regarded as highly as the Apostle Paul.

Since Russell controlled the Society's publications, it is obvious he had a high opinion of himself and his "Studies in the Scriptures."

In the Sept. 15, 1910 *Watchtower* magazine (pg. 298). Russell said: "Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the Divine Plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the Scripture Studies aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years — if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the Scripture Studies with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures."

It may seem strange that Russell, for all his claims of spiritual authority, would be kicked out of the very organization that he founded. However, a quick look at some of Russell's teachings will prove beyond doubt that, in the eyes of Jehovah's Witnesses today, he would be guilty of apostasy.

### 1) CHRIST'S RETURN TOOK PLACE IN 1874

Russell taught that the second presence of Jesus Christ began in 1874. He claimed to have based this belief on the Bible (*The Time is at Hand*, pg. 170 — Vol. 2 of *Studies in The Scriptures*): "The next chapter will present Bible evidence that 1874 A.D. was the exact date of the beginning of the 'Times of Restitution,' and hence of our Lord's return." This "Second Coming" doctrine continued not only throughout Russell's

reign as president, but also well into the term of the Society's second president, "Judge" Rutherford. Even in 1929 — 13 years after Russell's death — the 1874 date was still being promoted by the Watchtower organization (pg. 65 — "Prophecy").

However, the Watchtower Society now considers this doctrine heretical. The Dec. 1, 1981, *Watchtower* magazine says that "millions of persons around the world have come to recognize Christ's presence since the eventful year 1914" (pg. 8). With this "new light" from the Society, those endorsing the 1874 date are guilty of promoting false doctrine.

### 2) RUSSELL WAS THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE

Early Watchtower publications abounded with references to Russell as the "faithful and wise servant" of Matthew 24:45. One notable mention of this is found in the Dec. 15, 1916, *Watchtower* magazine (pg. 6024) where it is stated that "We must make the distinction between Brother Russell as a creature and his official capacity as that servant of the Master to give out the 'meat in due season.' To disregard the message would mean to disregard the Lord." In spite of the many early references, this belief now is also considered false doctrine. The Jan. 15, 1969, *Watchtower* magazine (pg. 51) presents the current Watchtower view on this subject.

"Jesus foretold that among his people there would be a 'faithful and discreet slave class.'" Watchtower doctrine no longer supports the idea that the office of faithful and discreet slave be held by one man, but rather a group. The importance given to this "servant" title that Russell held was taken to the point where he was virtually worshipped by his early followers, as the Society admitted in the 1975 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (pg. 88).

Also, it is interesting to note an apparent cover-up by the Society regarding Russell. In the Society's history book, *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (pg. 63) it is claimed that there was never a biography of Russell published because if the Jehovah's Witnesses were "to give the honor and

credit to Pastor Russell, we would be saying that the works and success were his."

However a check into Russell's Scripture Studies series disproves this assertion. In the 1925, 1926 and 1927 editions of *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, Vol. I of Russell's series, we find a biography of Russell. This biography contained the now-embarrassing teaching — believed by thousands of Watchtower readers at that time — that Russell filled the office of the faithful and wise servant. Watchtower writers continue trying to hide the facts from current members.

### 3) CHRISTMAS WAS A PART OF CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION

Anyone confronted by a Jehovah's Witness today will find the Witness adamantly opposed to the celebration of Christ's birth. The Dec. 15, 1978, *Watchtower* magazine (pg. 5) says: "Jesus was not born on December 25, but in the fall when shepherds were with their flocks out in the open field." It further states that "Christmas has nothing to do with Christ. It is saturated with demonism. Neither of these facts will cause its demise. It survives and spreads because it is commercial. More and more, Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas are becoming 'Saint Gimme.'" But here again we find Russell's "truths from God" differing from the Watchtower Society's "divine truth" of today.

Formerly it was said concerning Christmas: "The event is so important that it is always appropriate to call it to the minds of the people regardless of the date." (*Watchtower*, Dec. 15, 1926, p. 371) Further, Russell used Christmas as a time to promote and sell his *Studies in the Scriptures* series as Christmas gifts, which in essence is commercializing our Savior's birth.

### 4) MILITARY SERVICE WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE LORD

Jehovah's Witnesses today are also quick to condemn anyone who serves in the military. But they are unaware that their founder taught his followers: "Obedience to the laws of the land might at some time oblige us to bear arms, and in such an event it

would be our duty to go into the army, if unable in any legal and proper manner to obtain exception. But it would not be our duty to volunteer ... There could be nothing against our conscience in going into the army. Wherever we would go we could take the Lord with us, the Captain of our Salvation, and wherever we would go we would find opportunities to serve Him and His cause ... All the Army service would come under this heading, 'Render to all their dues.'" (Watchtower 4/15/03 (reprints) pp. 3179-80).

## 5) CHRIST DIED ON A CROSS

Jehovah's Witnesses also attack the Christian symbol of the cross. Watchtower publications currently ridicule Christians for believing that Christ died on a cross, and say that he was nailed to a "torture stake." The Witnesses provide their readers with graphic illustrations of the event as they say it took place on Calvary. However, here again Russell is guilty of "apostasy," as he not only believed Jesus died on a cross, but even chose this so-called "pagan symbol" as a logo for the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

As with Russell's teaching on the date of the Christ's return, this belief continued well past Russell's death. Many publications that appeared after Russell's passing contain references — with illustrations — to Christ's death on a cross at Calvary. (See *Harp of God, and Life*).

Further, a monument at the site of Russell's grave in Rosemont United Cemetery in Pittsburgh, Pa., bears the aforementioned original symbol of the organization — the cross and a crown — leaving in stone a remembrance to Russell (and his organization's) belief in a "pagan symbol."

## 6) RUSSELL, THROUGHOUT HIS PRESIDENCY, HAD A BEARD

The Watchtower Society has in the past several years disfellowshipped members for growing beards. Beards are strongly discouraged, allegedly because they draw attention to the wearer.

The Witnesses feel so strongly about this that they

have in the past attempted to suggest that Jesus himself had no facial hair. Drawings of Christ have appeared in several Watchtower publications, depicting Christ without a beard (for example, *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, Life Everlasting in the Freedom of the Sons of God* and *Things in Which It is Impossible for God to Lie*).

More recent Watchtower publications correctly say that Jesus did have a beard, but attempt to reinforce their current teachings by stating that he wore a beard only because of His Jewish customs.

Once again we find the Watchtower Society's founder in opposition to current Watchtower doctrines. There are irreconcilable differences between Russell's teachings and present Watchtower beliefs. If Russell were alive today, he undoubtedly would be disfellowshipped.

In the past few years, the Watchtower Society has been under tremendous pressure and has had to excommunicate many members. Some have been from the top ranks of the organization, including key writers and editors of Watchtower doctrinal material.

The Watchtower Society has, throughout its history, claimed to reveal God's truth to the world, but has failed to make good on this claim by its many contradictions and changes in theology. If you are a Jehovah's Witness who has realized the vast gap between the Society's teachings today and those of its founder, and would like more information on this subject and on the Biblical plan of salvation, write to:

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