

Palestine. He had a ten room Spanish mansion called Beth-Sarim (House of Princes) built in San Diego to house the patriarchs (with a two-car garage) and actually had it deeded to them. Rather than leaving the mansion vacant, Rutherford lived there himself.

Rutherford was an alcoholic and during the prohibition days had booze smuggled in from Canada. He died at Beth-Sarim in 1942 of bowel cancer. His wish was that he be buried at Beth-Sarim. Officially, he was buried in on Staten Island New York, but many believe he was buried at Beth-Sarim. Eventually, the property was sold in 1948, as it had become an embarrassment to the organization.

Rutherford was succeeded by Nathan Homer Knorr (b. 1905 - d. 1977) Knorr did away with the phonographs and began to train members in serious door-to-door techniques.

Frederick (Freddy) Franz succeeded Knorr in 1977. Franz was in his late nineties and had 3 years of college. Knorr was the Society's Bible scholar, lead theologian, and principal Bible translator of the NWT. Other members of the Committee were Nathan Knorr, Albert Schroeder and George Gangas; Fred Franz, however was the only one with sufficient knowledge of Bible languages to attempt a translation of this kind. He had studied Greek for two years in the University of Cincinnati but he was only self-taught in Hebrew.

In 1966 Jehovah's Witnesses literature once again predicted Armageddon (You would think they would have learned by then) in 1975.

Franz explained that Adam had been created in the year 4,026. Man had been allotted 6,000 years.  $6,000 \text{ minus } 4,026 = 1975$ . When this prediction failed as well, Franz explained that the time should have been reckoned with the creation of Eve rather than Adam and since we do not have any accurate knowledge of when she was created we'll just have to wait; but it's just around the corner. Remember that it must happen before the year 2014. As a

result of the failed prophecy 390,000 members left between 1976 and 1978.

Watchtower members are not encouraged to read the writings of Russell or Rutherford. All materials are now published anonymously.

Franz was succeeded by Milton Henshell in 1992 and is the current president. Today's Watchtower Society is a very strict organization. A person can be excommunicated for being an unrepentant sinner, a smoker, for working in the Dept. of Defense, for entering churches, for being employed by a religious organization, receiving a blood transfusion, for saluting the flag of one's country, for patriotism, for celebrating birthdays or holidays, for speaking to a person who has been disfellowshipped (including relatives) or for disagreeing with doctrine. As of July 1984 disfellowshipping is now called voluntary disassociation, but it still amount to the same thing.

Approximately one million persons have left the Watchtower Society in the past ten years either voluntarily or by being disfellowshipped. The organization disfellowships an average of 28 people each day.

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## **Brief History of the Watchtower Society**

Victor R. Claveau, MJ

The Watchtower Society was founded by Charles Taze Russell (b.1852). Russell called himself God's mouthpiece. He made his living at the time as a haberdasher. He had been raised as a Presbyterian and then became a Congregationalist. The false doctrine of pre-destination and the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell troubled him. In 1870 he found Second Adventism in a basement church in Allegheny, PA. He was 18 years old at the time.

A farmer named William Miller founded Second Adventism. Miller predicted that Jesus would come again and the end of the world would occur in April of 1843. Then that date came and went, he recalculated and the predicted that this would happen in November of the same year. When his predictions failed to come to pass, he apologized and resigned from the movement in disgrace.

A remnant of this group eventually became the Seventh Day Adventists founded by Ellen G. White. But, that's another story.

Russell's encounter with the Adventists aroused his interest in Bible study and although he had no formal training in theology began to call himself "Pastor". As a matter of fact, he never completed High School.

In 1879, at the age of 27, Russell started publishing "Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence".

By 1880 there were 30 Russellite congregations in 7 States.

In 1881 he moved his organization to Brooklyn, NY where it is still headquartered.

Russell was a person of dubious past. He promoted a "Miracle Wheat" which he falsely claimed was five times better than other existing

wheat. He promoted bogus cures for skin cancer, pneumonia, grippe, and typhoid.

His wife divorced him on the charge of infidelity and "having an inflated ego" after 18 years of marriage.

Russell offered himself as a prophet and the founder of a new religion. His life should be an open book. One must ask the question, "Is this the type of individual God would have chosen to renew His Church?"

In 1910 Russell predicted that the return of Jesus and the end of the world would occur in 1914.

Russell originally taught that Jesus had become present invisibly in 1874, the harvest had begun, the saints would be raptured, and the world would experience a time of trouble and woe such as it had never seen before. All this was to culminate in the battle of Armageddon in 1914, when Christ's kingdom would have full sway.

A major teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses is that Bible prophecy had pointed to the year 1914 as the end of the "Gentile Times" of Luke chapter 21, verse 24, and that in that year Christ Jesus actively took up his Kingdom power and began to rule invisibly to human eyes. In Daniel chapter four, references to a period of "seven times" were the foundation for the calculations leading to that date and, by use of other texts, these "seven times" were translated into a period of 2,520 years beginning in 606 BCE, was held to be the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian conqueror Nebuchadnezzar.

When 1914 came and went Russell changed the date to 1915. Russell died in 1916, so it is safe to assume that Jesus did come to judge him.

The Watchtower has predicted that the end would occur in 1918, and again in 1925, and finally in 1975.

"Judge" Joseph R. Rutherford, the son of a farmer, (b. 1869), succeeded Russell in 1917. Rutherford had joined the movement in 1906. He had been reader as a Baptist and became the Society's legal advisor and frequently appeared in

court in Russell's defense when he was charged with blasphemy or inciting civil disobedience.

Rutherford was a court reporter and had no formal training in the law. Actually, he was not a real judge. He simply took on the title after he was asked to be a judge pro-tem. In other words he substituted for a real judge on four occasions.

In 1917 Rutherford wrote "The Finished Mystery" and other works that contained virulent attacks on the clergy (who Rutherford labeled "The Swine Class") and military service. As a result he was arrested and charged with sedition. Rutherford and six of his Directors were tried, convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison. They were released on bail after serving only nine months and a year later the government dropped the charges. Rutherford came out of prison an angry man, even more determined to wage war on the clergy, politics, and big business.

In 1920 Rutherford published a booklet entitled "Millions Now Living Will Never Die" This booklet predicted that the generation alive in 1914 would still be alive when Armageddon comes and the earth would become a paradise.

In 1921, Rutherford published his first full-sized book. "The Harp of God." It reaffirmed the Society's confidence and faith in 1799 as the start of the "last days" and 1874 as the time Christ began his "invisible presence."

In a steady stream of Watchtower articles during 1922 and 1923, the Society repeatedly used such terms as "indisputable," "correct beyond a doubt," "divinely corroborated," "absolutely and unqualifiedly correct," "incontestable established," "proven certainty," "of divine origin" – terms applied to the whole chronological scheme including 1799, 1874, 1878 (the start of the resurrection of the anointed), 1881 (the time when Russell was fully appointed as the Lord's steward), as well as 1914, 1918 and the most recent prophetic date of 1925, said to have "as much scriptural support as 1914."

During the 1925 prediction his followers sold their homes and lands, quit their jobs and became pioneers for Rutherford.

How did the Watchtower handle the situation when Jesus did not return in 1925? Members were warned not to be easily swayed in favor of evidence from secular history that contradicted the Society's chronology. The Watchtower wrote: "The fact that all the things that some looked for in 1914 did not materialize does not alter the chronology one whit. Noting the date marked so prominently, it is very easy for the finite mind to conclude that all the work to be done must center about it, and thus many are inclined to anticipate more than has really been foretold. Thus it was in 1844, in 1874, in 1878 as well as 1914 and 1918. Looking back we can now easily see that those dates were clearly indicated in Scripture and doubtless intended by the Lord to encourage his people, as they did, as well as to be a means of testing and sifting when all that some expected did not come to pass. That all that some expected to see in 1925 may not transpire that year will not alter the date one whit more than in the other cases."

Nothing strange is seen in this concept that God and Christ would use falsehood as a means of encouragement for their servants.

In 1931, the organization changed its name to the Jehovah's Witnesses.

In 1934 phonographs were introduced in door-to-door evangelization, although Rutherford never went door-to-door himself.

Rutherford hated Catholics. He broadcasted on 403 radio stations and much of the literature produced was an attack on Catholicism. Eventually, he was not allowed to broadcast on the radio because of his hate filled diatribes. He claimed that all organized religion was a snare and a racket. Much of this anti-Catholic attitude still persists today.

In 1925 Rutherford predicted the return of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, King David, Gedeon, Samson, Samuel and other mighties of ancient