

Give me that old time religion. Dates we never hear anymore. 1878

1878

In the years prior to 1878, Russell worked with Nelson Barbour, an Adventist publisher. Russell and Barbour had reasoned that Jesus must return to rapture the church in 1878.<sup>1</sup> They reached that conclusion because they believed Jesus had returned invisibly to earth in 1874. They had made the calculations utilizing reasoning common to premillennialism in that era.<sup>2</sup> Mirroring was common in prophetic teaching. Some believed significant events were going to be mirrored in the coming prophetic events. As an example, after Jesus' first advent occurred, he began his ministry. This ministry took three and a half years. A mirroring of that time would mean that Jesus would return to heaven with his 144,000 saints three and a half years after his invisible return. At that point he would be installed as the ruling king.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Russell believed the rapture of the church would occur in 1878. Based on this, both Barbour and Russell began to teach and preach that the time was short for the church. When 1878 came and went, many were disheartened. Nelson Barbour struggled to understand how they could have been wrong. However, Russell was not discouraged. After considering the matter, Russell decided that he was not mistaken about the date. The problem was that he had been mistaken about what would transpire. Though there was no change in the visible church, there was a change in spiritual realms. The Adventist had expected a fleshly manifestation, not a spiritual manifestation. This did not occur, and Russell determined that what had actually happened was that those of the anointed class (144,000) who had previously died were in fact resurrected to be with Jesus, and from that point on all those who were anointed would go directly to be with Jesus when they died.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Jehovah installed Jesus as King in 1878. This was a spiritual event and Jehovah was in the process of establishing his kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Wright, "C. T. Russell and the date 1878," *Watchtower Investigated UK* (June 17, 2014), accessed May 5, 2018, <https://watchtowerinvestigated.wordpress.com/2014/06/17/c-t-russell-and-the-date-1878-by-jason-wright/>. "Hence Barbour proclaimed a three and a-half year period was already underway, starting in 1874 (Jesus invisible return/Parousia) and ending in the spring of 1878, it was what he called the anti-typical harvest period (parallel dispensation). This period ended with the translation of the Elijah class (little flock) and Jesus taking up his throne and became king in heaven. So there we have it! In 1877 Russell and Barbour were absolutely sure the translation of the little flock (true church) would occur at latest April 6th 1878."

<sup>2</sup> Russell, *The Time Is at Hand* (1889), 218. "As shown in the accompanying diagram, the period of their favor, from the commencement of their national existence at the death of Jacob, down to the end of that favor at the death of Christ, A.D. 33, was eighteen hundred and forty-five (1845) years."

<sup>3</sup> Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 632. "Based on the premise that events of the first century might find parallels in related events later, they also concluded that if Jesus' baptism and anointing in the autumn of 29 C.E. paralleled the beginning of an invisible presence in 1874, then his ride into Jerusalem as King in the spring of 33 C.E. would point to the spring of 1878 as the time when he would assume his power as heavenly King."

<sup>4</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 632. "They also thought they would be given their heavenly reward at that time. When that did not occur, they concluded that since Jesus' anointed followers were to share with him in the Kingdom, the resurrection to spirit life of those already sleeping in death began then."

Since Rutherford moved the date of the invisible return of Jesus forward to 1914, the year 1874 was vacated. Therefore, the dates of 1878 and the date of 1881 were also vacated, as they were dependent on 1874.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. “They also thought they would be given their heavenly reward at that time. When that did not occur, they concluded that since Jesus' anointed followers were to share with him in the Kingdom, the resurrection to spirit life of those already sleeping in death began then. It was also reasoned that the end of God's special favor to natural Israel down to 36 C.E. might point to 1881 as the time when the special opportunity to become part of spiritual Israel would close.”