Jehovah’s Witnesses on the Kingdom of God

C. T. Russell Predicts 1914 to be the year when Christ’s Kingdom will Begin

Charles T. Russell wrote an article titled, “Gentile Times: When Do They End?” October 1876 in The Bible Examiner Vol. XXI. No. 1 Whole No. 313. Russell began the article by quoting from Luke 21:24 which states, “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Russell took Leviticus 26:27, 33 and Ezek. 21:27 and supposedly proved that what Jesus was talking about in Luke 21 was the end of all Gentile governments and the beginnings of the kingdom of God. Russell then made an incoherent connection between Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 and the king’s having spent “seven times” as an animal “till thou know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:25, 32) with the time in which the end of Gentile governments would exist (i.e., after “the seven times”). Russell concludes that if three and one half times in Revelation 12:14 equals 1260 years, then twice that (i.e., seven times) would equal 2520 years. Russell’s final calculation was that from the beginning of the “Christian era” until 2520 years past must be the date at which Jesus referred to at Luke 21:24. His prophetic date when all Gentile governments would be destroyed and Christ would begin His 1000 year reign on earth was the year 1914.

When 1914 had come and gone, no kingdom of Christ was established upon the earth (i.e., Gentile governments continued to reign). World War I began and ended with “Gentile governments” continuing in power. A 1986 Watchtower publication explained that what happened was that the devil was hurled down to the earth during the year 1914 to wreak havoc knowing that he only had a short time until Christ kingdom truly begins (Rev. 12:7-9, 12). After this period of time, the battle of Armageddon will commence and only the righteous will survive to remain on earth in paradise (Rev. 16:14-16). May 1, 1995 an article appeared in the Watchtower publication stating, “The Kingdom is a real government, established in the heavens with Jesus Christ as Ruler. Soon, that Kingdom will replace human governments in the administration of human affairs (Dan. 2:44)” (www.watchtower.org). Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that during the year 1914 God’s kingdom was established in the heavens with Christ as its king. After Armageddon, God’s kingdom will come to the earth with Christ reigning 1000 years in peace. At the end of the 1000 years, Christ will hand over the kingdom to God and return to heaven (they cite I Cor. 15:20-28).

Failed Prophecy

The word of God tells us what to think about those who spread false prophecy and then try to explain it away when the word fails. The Watchtower organization is guilty of doing this with Russell’s 1914 theory. Said men speak “presumptuously” and are not to be heard, followed, or feared (Deut. 18:22). The apostle John tells us not to believe the words of false prophets but rather put every word under a scrutinizing test (cf. I Jn. 4:1-6). Let us now test Russell’s theory of the establishment of God’s kingdom in 1914. Will God establish a future kingdom upon the earth?

The Bible on when the kingdom of God was Established

Yes, Daniel did tell of a future kingdom that would be everlasting. The prophet tells us that this kingdom would come during the fourth world empire which is Rome (cf. Dan. 2:44). Jesus therefore came during the days of the Roman Empire and preached the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; Lk.
Jesus told his listeners that some would be alive when His kingdom came to be (Mk. 9:1). His
kingdom would come with power (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:6-8). The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42) illustrates the fulfillment of God’s promise of the establishment of an everlasting kingdom. God’s kingdom can be none other than the church because the church is spoken of as already in existence after Acts 2 (cf. Acts 5:11; 8:1 etc.). Furthermore, Jesus is now head over this kingdom (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:13). Individuals get into this kingdom / church by God’s “call” (I Thess. 2:12) which is the gospel message (II Thess. 3:12-13). The kingdom of God is not to be looked for in a 1914 prophecy, and neither is it to be found in the future on this earth. The kingdom of God has been established and its government is a spiritual one (cf. Jn. 18:36, Rom. 14:17). Note that God’s word will never lead us astray but men’s doctrines always will.