

## Brief outline of the Watchtower's History

### Charles Taze Russell

- Born in 1852
- Influenced at age eighteen by famous Adventist preacher Jonas Wendell and adopted many adventist and Millerite beliefs concerning doctrine and prophecy.
- Began working with Nelson H. Barbour and promoted 1878 as the date of the Rapture. When this prophecy failed to materialize, Barbour and Russell parted ways.
- Russell began publishing his own journal “Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence” His followers were simply known as the Bible Students.
- Russell began promoting the idea that Christ returned invisibly in 1874, was enthroned in 1878 and that 1914 would bring the Armageddon. These ideas were supported by Scripture and Pyramidology
- Viewed as the “Faithful and Wise Servant.”
- Died in 1916. Established an editorial committee of five to continue the magazine.

### Joseph Franklin Rutherford

- Elected president by committee, passed by-laws strengthening presidency
- Power struggle between Rutherford and the committee over various issues including publishing Russell's The Finished Mystery led to the committee's dismissal and the election of Rutherford by the Bible Student community.
- Prosecution by U.S. Gov't under espionage act due to writings. Charges dropped.
- Began emphasizing door to door preaching in 1922
- Major predictions 1918, 1920 and 1925 all failed.
- Began making major changes, 1914 became the new date for Christ's invisible return, 1918 became Christ's enthronement. The generation of 1914 would see Armageddon
- Splinter groups of Bible Student's formed.
- July 26, 1931 renamed group Jehovah's Witnesses
- 1935 ends calling of anointed, rest have Earthly hope
- Introduced teachings against saluting the Flag and won a major court decision
- Died 1942

### Nathan Knorr

- Succeeded Rutherford
- Stressed organization
- Founded Gilead school to train missionaries and the Theocratic Ministry Schools at the local congregations
- Commissioned the New World Translation
- Established the offices of Elders and Ministerial Servants in local congregations
- Membership rose from 115,000 to 2 million
- 1975 was seen as a likely date for Armageddon

### 1976-present

- Power passed to the Governing Body in 1976 after reorganization
- Purge in early 1980's over dissension over doctrine in Governing Body's ranks
- 1995 saw major change in 1914 generation doctrine
- 2007 saw change in 1935 anointed calling doctrine
- Apprx 6-7 million Witnesses