

The 1975 Date

Expecting the End to come in 1975, caused the greatest increases in membership that the Watchtower Society had ever known. When the time passed, the resultant disappointment caused its greatest losses. How and why did it happen?

WHY WAS THE DATE SET?

Throughout the 1950s the Watchtower Society enjoyed huge membership increases. But by 1960, the 12% increase they had enjoyed in 1959, was down to 6%. The next year, in 1961, it had dropped again, now to 3.9%. By 1966, it had dropped to the serious low of only 2.4% increase. It was in this year that the 1975 date was presented as the end of 6,000 years of man's existence. Time was running out, there were only a few short years before the expected Millennium!

WHAT EFFECT DID THE SETTING OF THIS DATE HAVE ON THE SOCIETY?

One has only to examine the statistics to see that there was an immediate upsurge in activity. In two years the percentage increase of membership had doubled. In another two years it had almost doubled again!

In 1966, only 58,904 had been baptised, but by 1970 the number had jumped to 164,193. In the two years before the End was expected in late 1975, nearly 600,000 people were baptised!

(See the charts of statistics on the opposite page.)

HOW WAS THE 1975 DATE SET?

It could be said that the date was set by *suggestion*. Years of date-setting and the tragedies these false prophecies had caused, had taught the Society something. In fact after the 1914, 1918 and 1925 dates failed, they resolved to *quit fixing dates*:

"There was.... **disappointment...** concerning the years 1914, 1918 and 1925,and they also learned to **quit fixing dates** for the future..."

—*Vindication*, Vol.1,(1931) pages 33P-9.

However, many years had passed, and with a failing membership increase the temptation became too great! But this time they were careful not to make their prophetic statements too definite. Instead of saying the End *would come* in 1975, they would keep themselves covered by saying it *could come* in 1975. It would gain them the same ends, but be much safer. Notice the following statements:

Life Everlasting - In Freedom of the Sons of God, (1966), page 29:

creation as 4026 B.C.E. According to this trustworthy Bible chronology six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975, and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 C.E.
 "So six thousand years of man's existence on earth will soon be up, yes, within this generation."

The Watchtower, May 1, 1968, pages 270-277:



"Thus, eight years remain to account for a full 6,000 years of the seventh day. Eight years from the autumn of 1967 would bring us to the autumn of 1975, fully 6,000 years into God's seventh day, his rest day. After 6,000 years of misery, toil, trouble, sickness and death under Satan's rule, mankind is indeed in dire need of relief, a rest. The seventh-day of the Jewish week, the sabbath, would well picture the final 1,000 year reign of God's kingdom under Christ when mankind would be uplifted from 6,000 years of sin and death."

This was the first magazine article announcing the 1975 date more were to follow:

The Watchtower, August 15, 1968, pages 494-501:

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO 1975?

From Pages 500-501

"One thing is absolutely certain, Bible chronology reinforced with fulfilled Bible prophecy shows that six thousand years of man's existence will soon be up, yes, within this generation! (Matt. 24:34) This is, therefore, no time to be indifferent and complacent. This is not the time to be toy-

ing with the words of Jesus that "concerning that day and hour *nobody* knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matt. 24:36) To the contrary, it is a time when one should be keenly aware that the end of this system of things is rapidly coming to its violent end. Make no mistake, it is

In this article the Watchtower Society were so sure that they knew the End was coming in 1975, that they told their people this is *not the time to be toying with the words of Jesus that "concerning that day and hour nobody knows."* The *nobody* is in italics because they were sure that they did know!

Awake, October 8, 1968, pages 13-16



6,000 Years Nearing Completion

There is another way that helps confirm the fact that we are living in the final few years of this "time of the end." (Dan. 12:9) The Bible shows that we are nearing the end of a full 6,000 years of human history. What significance does this have?

How fitting it would be for God, following this pattern, to end man's misery after six thousand years of human rule and follow it with His glorious Kingdom rule for a thousand years! This Kingdom

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When Do 6,000 Years End?

How can it be determined when 6,000 years of human history will end?

According to reliable Bible chronology, Adam and Eve were created in 4026 B.C.E.* From the autumn of

4026 B.C.E. to 1 B.C.E. 4,025 years
 1 B.C.E. to 1 C.E. 1 year
 1 C.E. to 1968 C.E. 1,967 years

Total to autumn 1968 5,993 years

This would leave only seven more years from the autumn of 1968 to complete 6,000 full years of human history. That seven-year period will evidently finish in the autumn of the year 1975.

*Note the statement that Eve was also created in 4026 B.C.E.! After the 1975 date failed the Society said it was not known when Eve was created, even though reliable Bible chronology had named the date!

PREPARING FOR 1975

The Watchtower Society's publications (see the previous page) announcing 1975, and emphasising the shortness of time before the End *could* come, whipped Jehovah's Witnesses into an excited frenzy of activity. The most sincere, gave up their jobs, sold their homes and went into full time pioneering work for the "few years that remained". The *Kingdom Ministry*, an internal paper just for their own members, in the March 1968, issue, even numbered the time left in months:

"...Just think, brothers, there are only about ninety months left before 6,000 years of man's existence on earth is completed..."

The *Kingdom Ministry*, May 1974, even commended those who had sold up their homes etc...:

"...Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end. - 1 John 2:17..."

THE 1975 CHRONOLOGY PROVED UNRELIABLE!

Unfortunately for the faithful Witnesses who had implicitly believed the Watchtower, *the wicked world did not end* as suggested in 1975. However, the Society was ready to try and soften the blow, by stating they were now not sure what period of time elapsed between the creation of Adam and Eve. Previously they had said that Adam and Eve were created in 4026 B.C.E:

The Watchtower, 5/1/1968, p. 271:

~~from the year of Adam and Eve's creation in 4026 B.C.E. From the autumn of that year to the autumn of 1 B.C.E. there~~

Awake, 10/8/1968, p. 14:

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Also they had said they knew the time when the "evening" of the seventh creative "day" began: - 4026 B.C.E:

God's Eternal Purpose Now Triumphant (1974), p.51:

~~populated with a human family and be a global Paradise?~~

"EVENING" OF SEVENTH CREATIVE "DAY" BEGINS, 4026 B.C.E.

~~is God's purpose with reference to the earth was not~~

Now with 1975 passed, and facing a disappointed and in some places a hostile membership, they now began to make explanations that the time of Eve's creation and the beginning of the seventh creative "rest day" is not known:

The Watchtower, 1/1/1976.

● Why do we not know when God's "rest day" began and when it will end?

Although the time of Adam's creation can be determined, the beginning of God's "rest day" cannot. This is so because there was a time lapse of unspecified length between Adam's creation and the creation of Eve. Not until after the creation of Eve did God's "rest day" begin. The start of that day being unknown, its end is likewise unknown.—P. 579.

So the Watchtower Society's reliable Bible chronology did not prove to be reliable! The above is not an apology for the tragedy, but this was to follow:

THE SOCIETY APOLOGISES FOR 1975

At first the Society tried to place the blame on its people for having "over-reacted" concerning their expectations for 1975. (In the 1975 *Yearbook*, page 146, they put the blame on their people for expecting too much in 1925!) However, this time they could not get away with it. Too many of their loyal people were hurting too much. They were now without their homes, employment, and for some they had given up their opportunities of gaining an education. Throughout the Society was noted a high rate of mental illness, and some even committed suicide. They felt they could no longer trust the Society, yet on the other hand they felt they could not return or go to any of the churches of Babylon the Great! Eventually to gain some credibility, the Society felt it would have to make some sort of an apology. This they did in the 1980 *Yearbook*, pages 30-31, although they were still very reluctant to accept the full responsibility for the disappointment of 1975:

The brothers also appreciated the candor of this same talk, which acknowledged the Society's responsibility for some of the disappointment a number felt regarding 1975.

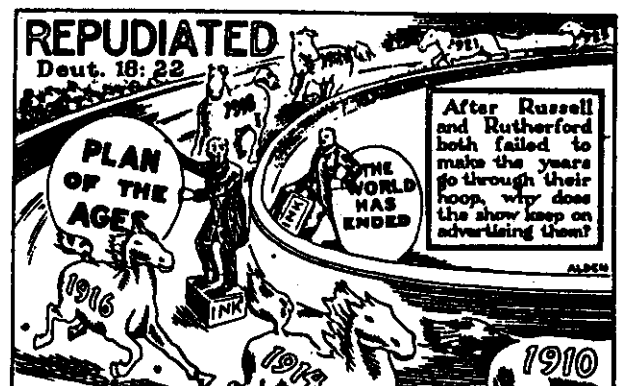
A further apology appeared in *The Watchtower*, on the 15th March, 1980, page 17:

With the appearance of the book *Life Everlasting—in Freedom of the Sons of God*, and its comments as to how appropriate it would be for the millennial reign of Christ to parallel the seventh millennium of man's existence, considerable expectation was aroused regarding the year 1975. There were statements made then, and thereafter, stressing that this was only a possibility. Unfortunately, however, along with such cautionary information, there were other statements published that implied that such realization of hopes by that year was more of a probability than a mere possibility. It is to be regretted that these latter statements apparently overshadowed the cautionary ones and contributed to a buildup of the expectation already initiated.

For thousands such apologies were too little, too late!.... They had already left the Society, but tragically most were now too bewildered and embittered to ever be helped.

THE SOCIETY'S DATE-SETTING PATTERN

In 1928, a Dr. B.H.Shudduck prefaced his book, *The Seven Thunders of Millennial Dawn*, with the following cartoon:



These false prophecies could be amusing if they were not so tragic! The 1975 horse was only one in a long line!