

The *Incredible* Prophetic Errors of Herbert W. Armstrong!

Most people in the Worldwide Church of God look upon Herbert Armstrong as a unique man gifted with tremendous understanding of Bible prophecy. But a careful, candid look at this man's actual record on the interpretation of Bible prophecy boggles the mind! Most people over the years became associated with the Church at least to some degree because of its ostensible understanding of prophecy. Here are the unvarnished facts. YOU decide!

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(Please note this article was originally written many years ago soon after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong. Even so this is a very helpful and useful historical account of the well known problems in the Worldwide Church of God. Updated January 2018).

In 1956-57, as a teenage boy, I became awestruck by the prophetic booklets written by Herbert W. Armstrong -- especially two called *1975 in Prophecy*, and *United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy*. The first booklet has not been in print for many years, for obvious reasons -- it predicted the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in 1975! When it became increasingly doubtful that Christ would return by that date, the booklet was quietly withdrawn from circulation in the 1960's. But when I first read it in 1957, I assumed it was probably true. Herbert Armstrong seemed to have everything figured out!

When I began attending the local Church in Tacoma, Washington, in 1957-58, and read the co-worker letters and Church literature, Herbert Armstrong was preaching that the original apostolic Church had two "19 year time cycles" to spread the gospel -- from 31 A.D. to 50 A.D., and from 50 A.D. to 69 A.D., the year the Romans attacked Jerusalem. Herbert Armstrong was fond of drawing an amazing parallel: He pointed out that exactly "100 19-year time cycles later," in 1931 A.D., he was ordained to the ministry by the Church of God, Seventh Day. Because of doctrinal differences, he

separated from them and began a separate, independent work of God in 1934 A.D. Then, he used to tell us, he preached to the United States for 19 years, but expanded the broadcast to Europe in 1953 -- exactly 19 years later. He theorized that the Church would have one more 19-year time cycle to complete its work -- by 1972 -- and then it would be carried to the wilderness to a place of protection during the Great Tribulation, from 1972-1975, culminating in the return of Jesus Christ!

All this seemed reasonable to my youthful, impressionable mind, in 1957-58. I entered an intensive study of Church literature, and found Mr. Armstrong to be correct in many basic doctrines taught nowhere else. So I began attending Ambassador College, founded by Herbert Armstrong, in Pasadena, California, in the fall of 1959. Four years later I graduated and began working full-time in the Letter Answering Department, and subsequently began writing articles for the Church publications.

Needless to say, it was a major disappointment for most of us in the Church when 1972 came around, and instead of the Church fleeing to the wilderness as so powerfully predicted by Herbert Armstrong for decades, nothing happened -- except the temporary disfellowshipment of Garner Ted Armstrong for supposed "spiritual problems," but which actually concerned sexual involvement with young women other than his wife.

Obviously, Jesus Christ did not return in 1975, as so confidently predicted for almost 20 years! Herbert Armstrong's prophetic insight was in error -- his prophetic timetable was shot to pieces! From that time onward, he did not attempt to pinpoint the exact year, or even the approximate time, of Jesus' second coming. But he did keep on believing that it would be "very soon," and preached that we were living in the "time of the end."

The Space Race

Also back in the early 1960's, Herbert Armstrong became very interested in the race for space -- especially after the Russians put their first "sputnik" satellite in orbit around the earth in 1957. He wrote articles, gave sermons, and wrote a booklet entitled "Who Will Rule Space?" In those years, Herbert Armstrong was very impressed with the fact that human beings could not survive in outer space without a self-contained "earth environment" -- a "space suit." To him, this indicated that man's proper habitat was the earth -- not outer space!

Herbert Armstrong sincerely believed that man would never 'conquer space.' In fact, he said several times, and even wrote, that if man attempted to "conquer space," that God would destroy him, even as He destroyed the tower of Babel when mankind attempted to build it to "reach heaven" (Gen.11:4). Even so, Herbert confidently predicted that God would thwart and frustrate man's attempt to rocket into space. He said that if man succeeded in going to the moon,, he would not return alive!

As the major proof text to support this theological idea, Herbert Armstrong turned to Psalm 115, where we read: "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the EARTH hath he given to the children of men" (Psa.115:16).

Of course, after the United States first successfully put men on the moon, in 1969, and several times during the 1970's, this prediction and teaching of Herbert W. Armstrong was again quietly shoved aside and dropped -- forgotten, except by those of us who personally heard his teachings in the late 50's and early 60's.

Herbert Armstrong was supposed to be renowned for his knowledge and perception of Bible prophecy. And I believe that he probably did pick up much basic understanding of prophetic portions of the Bible during his studies -- such as the basic understanding of the book of Revelation, the world kingdoms of Daniel 2, and their correlation with the beasts of Revelation 13 and 17. I also believe that he stumbled across a major Biblical discovery when a woman challenged him whether he knew the locations of the "lost ten tribes" of Israel.

1975 In Prophecy!

In the booklet by the above title, Herbert Armstrong struck fear into readers by proclaiming a German-led European combine would "blast our cities and industrial centers with hydrogen bombs" (p.14), and added, "It's later than you think!" He declared that "these prophecies are as certain as tomorrow's sun," and went on to proclaim confidently, " *MILLIONS* of lukewarm inactive professing Christians will suffer martyrdom -- and that *BEFORE* the anticipated push-button leisure-year of 1975 dawns upon us!" (p.20, emphasis mine).

Herbert Armstrong was so confident of his accuracy that he asserted: "You have been warned! . . . You can take this lightly, let it slip from your mind . . . If you do, you have now read your fate -- and . . . *I SAY TO YOU ON AUTHORITY OF GOD ALMIGHTY THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY SURE!*" (p.31).

Now, that is powerful "authority"! But did Herbert Armstrong *REALLY* have "authority of God Almighty" to make that prediction? Was he the powerful "prophet" of God that he seemed to *THINK* he was?

Notice what the Scriptures say about this question. In the book of Deuteronomy, God told Moses: "But if any prophet *DARES* to speak a message *IN MY NAME* when I did *NOT COMMAND HIM TO DO SO*, he must die for it and so must any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods" (Deut.18:20).

This is serious business, with God! He *THUNDERS* rebuke against those who "presume" to speak a message "in His name," when He Himself has *NOT* given them the message! He says the penalty for such a thing is -- *DEATH!* If nothing else, it would at least appear that Herbert Armstrong got carried away with himself, in his predictions, and was very over-zealous in some of his pronouncements, claiming God's inspiration and authority for his interpretations!

Isn't that plain? but notice further! God Almighty Himself goes on, explaining further:

"You may wonder how you can tell when a prophet's message does NOT come from the Lord. If a prophet speaks IN THE NAME OF THE LORD and *what he says does NOT COME TRUE, then it is NOT the Lord's message.* That prophet has spoken on *his OWN authority (NOT GOD'S!)*, and you are not to fear him" (Deut.18:21-22, *Good News Bible*).

If Herbert Armstrong truly feared God, then it seems to me that he would not have been so presumptuous and "positive" in his statements, when he was really only theorizing or speculating! He had no revelation from God, no "Thus saith the Lord," no dreams or visions from the Almighty. His predictions were based entirely on personal Bible Study, as well as his own speculation, based on various appearances. But when he went on to claim "AUTHORITY OF GOD ALMIGHTY" for his erroneous predictions, then he stepped way over the line -- and history has proved him to be in utter error! In being so dogmatic, he misinterpreted God's Word and sinned against God!

Now, it is not a "sin" to speculate, or to make predictions based upon available evidence. We all do that in various aspects of our lives. Stock brokers do it regarding the stock market. Farmers take their "best shot" at predicting the weather, so they can know what crops to plant, and when to plant. Weather forecasters make predictions based on latest available evidence also -- and because of the vagaries and temperamental nature of the weather, they are often forced to "eat their own words."

The "game of prophecy" is likewise a chancy, scary, dangerous business. Many are the bones of false prophets who have incorrectly surmised when Christ would return -- only to be proven wrong. William Miller foretold the coming of Jesus Christ in 1844 -- and was wrong. The Jehovah Witnesses predicted the Second Coming in 1914. When Jesus failed to appear at the appointed hour, they revised their prophecy. Rather than admit they had been mistaken, they claimed that He did return -- "secretly," and was now ruling the world from His secret Headquarters, which was supposed to be New York City!

The Fall of Ancient Tyre

It seems that whenever Herbert Armstrong launched out on his own, and made predictions, he was invariably shown to be in abysmal error. But sometimes he simply "copied" the errors of other Churches, or organizations, or writers, but simply never gave them credit! That is to say, he "plagiarized" their writings and ideas, and never gave them one line of credit, making any reader to think HE was the sole author of the material!

A case in point is one of the booklets which for many years was one of the staple booklets of the Worldwide Church of God. Titled *Proof of the Bible*, in early editions of this booklet Herbert W. Armstrong wrote that one way critics might attempt to "disprove" the Bible would be to REBUILD ANCIENT TYRE! He quoted the Bible prophecies regarding ancient Tyre, claiming that Tyre was prophesied to NEVER BE REBUILT!

In the booklet, Herbert Armstrong boldly challenged skeptics, "Here is how you can DISPROVE

the Bible and the very existence of God. If there is no God, and IF the Bible is not inspired! Just go over and build a small city on the site of New Tyre." Herbert said there is nothing to prevent skeptics from building a city on that site, "except that the Bible they scoff at says they CAN'T" (p.20).

Back in the 1950's I was impressed by these challenging statements, as I read them. But one day, as I was visiting a Church family in Portland, Oregon, in 1958, before I attended Ambassador College, I noticed a small booklet lying on the kitchen table. Curious, I picked it up and began reading it. I was rather shocked! As I read, it sounded like the words of Herbert Armstrong in his booklet on *Proof of the Bible!* Only this particular booklet was written and published by the *Seventh Day Adventist Church!* I was dumfounded! I asked the lady about the booklet and she assured me that she had received it from the Adventist Church. It was word-for-word identical, in most respects, to the booklet Herbert Armstrong published under his own name! Needless to say, Herbert Armstrong had obviously "borrowed" the material, and used it wholesale, without giving any credit to the original author! I thought at the time that this was not good, but I put the matter on the shelf, and decided that this one act did not of itself invalidate any of Mr. Armstrong's other teachings which I had proved from the Bible.

At that point, I didn't know quite what to think. But I assumed the booklet was true, regardless of who really wrote it. I really didn't question it much at the time. It discussed ancient Biblical predictions against Tyre and Babylon, claiming that since neither of these cities had been "rebuilt," as the booklet stated, and the Bible prophesied, that this proved the Bible had to be inspired by God.

In Ezekiel 26 and 27 God did foretell the fate of ancient Tyre. He said the city would be destroyed in an awesome paroxysm: "How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which was strong in the sea" (Ezek.26:17). God said, "thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord" (Ezek.26:21).

As the prophecy said, God did bring Nebuchadnezzar, and later Alexander the Great, against Tyre, and destroyed the city. It did become "a place to spread nets upon" (Ezek.26:14), "like the top of a rock" (same verse). God said ancient Tyre would be "built no more" (v.14).

The Worldbook Encyclopedia points out that Alexander the Great conquered Tyre in 332 B.C., and built a road or causeway from the mainland to the island, creating a peninsula upon which the *present town of Tyre now stands*. Tyre became a part of the Roman, and then the Byzantine Empire. Christian crusaders occupied it from 1124 A.D. until Moslems captured it in 1291 A.D.

Says the *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary*, the prophecy that Tyre would become like a rock, and "be built no more" (Ezek.26:14), was "fulfilled as to the *mainland Tyre* under Nebuchadnezzar. The insular Tyre recovered partly after seventy years (Isa.23:17-18), but again suffered under Alexander, then under Antigonus, then under the Saracens, at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Now its harbors are all choked with sand, precluding all hope of future restoration: 'Not one entire house is left, and only a few fishermen take shelter in the vaults' (Maundrell). So accurately has God's Word come to pass."

Regarding the phrase, "thou shalt be no more," the Commentary points out, "not that presently there was to be no more a Tyre, but she was no more to be *the* Tyre that *once* she was; her glory and name were to be no more. As to Old Tyre the prophecy was literally fulfilled, not a vestige of it being left."

Adam Clarke in his Commentary quotes Maundrell, who visited the place before 1825 A.D., as follows: "It is a Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, etc., there being not so much as one entire house left! Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harboring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly on fishing; who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, that it should be the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on."

As to the prophecy "yet shalt thou never be found again," Clarke declares: "This is literally true; there is not the smallest vestige of the ancient Tyre, that which was erected on the main land. Even the ground seems to have been washed away; and the new Tyre is in nearly a similar state."

Clarke adds, "Notwithstanding the former destructions, Tyre was a place of some consequence in the time of St. Paul. There was a Church there (see Acts 20:3-4, etc.), which afterwards became famous."

Herbert Armstrong would have done his cause much better service, and God greater service, if he had been much less naive and accepting of Adventist literature, copying their ideas and plagiarizing their material on "Tyre," if he had only done his own research, and used the Commentaries referred to above.

Attempting to use the example of Tyre to "challenge the skeptics" was a foolish device. Skeptics would argue that since there was a city called Tyre which still existed in that area in the time of the apostle Paul, and exists today, that this prophecy does not constitute "proof" of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Certainly not the way Herbert Armstrong claimed!

In 1973 Herbert Armstrong visited modern Tyre, and was forced to admit "there were quite a number of new high-rise buildings." Careless and uncritical exegesis in his research on Tyre caused the Worldwide Church of God a great deal of dismay and consternation, forcing them to withdraw the booklet from circulation in 1972.

Early Predictions that "Bombed"

Herbert Armstrong, like many evangelicals, had a general sense of Bible prophecy. Like them, he saw that the Bible predicts a union of 10 nations which will coalesce in the end time, and fight Christ at His return. This belief, of course, is not original to the Worldwide Church of God. Many evangelical, Sunday-observing Churches also believe it!

However, in his attempt to fit this fact into his own prophetic framework and timetable, Herbert Armstrong often went astray.

In the June-July 1934 issue of *The Plain Truth*, for example, he wrote:

". . . the year 1936 will see the end of the Times of the Gentiles . . . we may expect the present worldwide depression, time of trouble and fear of war to continue until the year 1936! . . . quickly after that time, we may expect to see the heavenly signs of the sun and moon becoming dark, the stars falling . . . which shall be followed by the 'Day of the Lord.'" (page 5).

But 1936 came and went -- and nothing earthshaking happened. Nothing like heavenly signs, stars falling, and the beginning of the "Day of the Lord"!

In the March 1938 *Plain Truth*, page 8, however, Herbert Armstrong was even more bold. He audaciously asserted:

"Mussolini and the pope will hatch up an idea . . . of setting up a world-headquarters at Jerusalem -- and so Mussolini's armies will enter into Palestine (Daniel 11:41), and eventually will capture just half of the city of Jerusalem! (Zech.14:2)."

Notice how clearly and forcefully Herbert Armstrong spells out the exact sequence of future prophesied events! Unfortunately for his dogmatic and unequivocal assertiveness, he was totally wrong! Again, his prophecies failed to come to pass.

Mussolini's armies never got near Palestine -- much less to Jerusalem! And suffice it to say, he and the pope never got a chance to capture half of Jerusalem!

Herbert Armstrong continued to make these kinds of predictions. In the January 1939 *Plain Truth*, page 4, he dogmatically prophesied,

"MUSSOLINI WILL FIGHT CHRIST!"

Was he right in his prediction? Let history judge. As everyone knows, Mussolini, far from fighting Christ, was killed by partisans, and hanged, toward the end of World War II. He was not the prophesied "beast" of Revelation that Herbert Armstrong thought he was!

Herbert Armstrong wrote in the August-September 1939 *Plain Truth*, page 6,

"Once world war is resumed, it must continue on through the Great Tribulation, the heavenly signs, the plagues of the Day of the Lord, and to the Second Coming of Christ, at the last battle, at Armageddon! . . . But this you may KNOW! THIS WAR WILL BE ENDED BY CHRIST'S RETURN! . . . WE ARE JUST THAT NEAR CHRIST'S COMING!" (Emphasis mine).

Notice again how dogmatic Herbert Armstrong was! Did GOD ALMIGHTY inspire him to predict those errors? Did God miscommunicate His intentions to His "servant"? Did God get His signals crossed? Or was it Herbert Armstrong who presumed to speak when God had not spoken?

Truly Amos the prophet was inspired of God to write, *"The Sovereign Lord NEVER DOES ANYTHING without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets"* (Amos 6:7). Obviously, therefore, Herbert Armstrong did NOT understand the prophetic plan of God, did not have God's plan REVEALED to him -- and therefore was not inspired of God when he made these self-proclaimed, dogmatic prophecies during the 1930s! In retrospect, his prophecies seem utterly foolish and uninspired.

During World War II, Herbert Armstrong *continued* making false prophecies and predictions based on his understanding of Scripture. In the August-September 1940 *Plain Truth* he boldly asseverated,

"The Italians will capture both Palestine and Egypt."

Less true words were never misspoken!

In the November-December 1940 issue (which, ironically, was one month before my birth), Herbert Armstrong continued his bold foray into Bible prophecy and its interpretation. He unerringly predicted,

"God has decreed that Joseph -- Great Britain and the United States -- are to utterly consume and annihilate the Turks from off the earth!" (p.7).

Although the Turkish Empire was ended by the victory of the Allies during World War I, in 1917, the nation of Turkey continued to exist, and still exists, today! This "blazing prophecy" of the heralded "spokesman for God" also has failed to come to pass. In actual fact, there is NO prophecy of the Bible that predicts the "annihilation" of the Turkish people from : "off the earth," as Armstrong claimed.

At the beginning of World War II, when Britain was suffering its darkest hour, and Nazi invasion seemed imminent, it is interesting to note that Herbert Armstrong quickly got on the bandwagon of the pessimistic, and he joined in the chorus of nay-sayers and doom-predictors. With seemingly unshakable confidence and unflappable insistence, Herbert predicted:

"It is part of God's prophesied plan that Britain shall be invaded and conquered" (Nov-Dec 1940, *Plain Truth*).

Herbert certainly did not foresee the glorious "Battle of Britain," or the stout-hearted courage and tenacity of the British people, led by Winston Churchill! Rather, he thought the Nazis would overrun England and Scotland, and conquer all the British isles.

When Hitler then launched his blitzkrieg against the Soviet Union, Herbert Armstrong again was not found wanting for words, to interpret the invasion in the light of Bible prophecy. Seeing Hitler's troops initially cut through the Russians like a knife through hot butter, he proclaimed "God's truth" on the invasion. Apparently he had learned nothing from his dismal record of continuous mistakes. He tried his hand at prophecy once again. He asserted:

"Bible prophecy does indicate that HITLER MUST BE THE VICTOR IN THE PRESENT RUSSIAN INVASION! . . . Hitler will emerge from the Russian campaign stronger than ever, free to turn the entire might of his forces against Britain -- and America" (Sept-Oct. 1941 *Plain Truth*, p.7).

As history shows, far from winning his Russian winter campaign, Hitler's armies were defeated by the Russian winter at Stalingrad. Germany lost over a million soldiers in the Russian invasion. The German army was mired in the snow, ice, and mud at Stalingrad, and was forced to retreat in bitter defeat.

Again, Herbert Armstrong was diametrically in error -- 180 degrees from the truth! But at least he was persistent -- and consistently wrong!

As late as 1943, Herbert Armstrong was still whipping a dead horse. He wrote in the March-April 1943 *Plain Truth*, page 6,

"But Hitler (or his successor if there is one), and the False Prophet shall fight against Christ!"

Talk about "false prophets," Herbert Armstrong's batting average, during the late 1930's and early 1940's was on a scale of one to ten, *hovering at absolute ZERO!* He was wrong every time! Hitler did not "fight against Christ". His successor? There was none. Hitler died in a Berlin bunker, as the Russians invaded the city, thus ending the "Third Reich" in flaming ruins.

Why Was Herbert Armstrong So Wrong, So Often?

It seems incredible that any man could have been so wrong about Bible prophecy -- and yet so insistent on proclaiming his own ideas and interpretations. What possessed him to do it? Why was he so smug and overconfident? Why didn't he have more humility, and willingness to admit that he could be wrong?

For some reason, during the 1930s and 1940s, God had blinded the mind of Herbert Armstrong from rightly understanding Bible prophecy. He allowed him to make a "fool" of himself. Although Herbert's booming voice on radio may have sounded like the resonant tones of a Walter Winchell or Gabriel Heater, or a Lowell Thomas, his prophetic words turned to mush. Nothing came to pass that he so officiously and dogmatically foretold.

Why would God leave him so completely in the dark?

I believe that God did use Herbert Armstrong in the very early 1930s on through the 1960s and 1970s to reveal much Biblical truth concerning the Sabbath, Holy Days, Plan of God, and some aspects of Biblical prophecy. God did use him, in a strong manner, to lay the foundation for the End-time Work of God. But why did God allow Herbert Armstrong during the explosive 30s and 40s, and even into the 50s and 60s, to make such flagrant prophetic blunders?

Notice what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But YOUR INIQUITIES have separated you from your God; your SINS have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

As author David Robinson explains in his book *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web*, during the latter part of the 1930's and early 1940's, Herbert Armstrong was carrying on with an illicit incestuous affair with his daughter Dorothy -- over a period of *ten years!* Robinson wrote:

"Incest is a terrible and unnatural crime, an extreme perversity. That is why I was shocked beyond measure to hear that Herbert Armstrong was, himself, guilty of this vile sin. I learned of this in the summer of 1979 from members of his own family. The story, sordid beyond imagination, was told in awful detail.

"One family source was Garner Ted Armstrong. Last summer, as HWA attacked his own son in such savage fury, his son was in the depths of despair. His emotional mix included anger and deep hurt. In such a state he told family secrets that otherwise would have been locked within him forever. He said

that he had learned in 1971 of his father's incredible conduct during the '30s and '40s. The story came directly to him in lurid detail, but he kept it sealed in his own consciousness for all those years. But in the spring of 1978 while in his father's house for the last time, his father had threatened to 'destroy him.' Ted, in response, replied, 'Dad, I will destroy *you*. I know about you and ----- (He was speaking of the younger of his two sisters.

"His father had been on a high-handed autocratic binge. But at that comment he sat down quietly and responded, 'Well, Ted, there have been times when *I have* been very far away from God!' (*Tangled Web*, p.266, emphasis his).

What does this tell us about Herbert Armstrong's relationship to the Almighty, the "revealer of secrets" (Dan.2:2-22), from the mid-1930s to the middle 1940s? God revealed "secrets" to Daniel because he was a righteous man (see Dan. 10:12) -- but not to Herbert W. Armstrong! Why? The answer is now obvious. God will never reveal the future, or what He plans to do, to the WICKED. Sin cuts men off from God. Herbert Armstrong's prophetic embarrassments during the 1930s and '40s may well be directly due to his being "far off from God" at that time!

The archangel Gabriel told Daniel,

"Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and SEALED until the TIME OF THE END. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. *None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are WISE will understand*" (Dan.12:9-10).

It was the gross sins of Herbert Armstrong during the '30s and '40s which cut him off from God, and which caused God to give him the spirit of error and misunderstanding of Bible end-time prophecies, at that time. He was so sure he was right -- yet he was dead wrong!

If you have not read it, be sure to write for the article, "HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN!" It will open your eyes in this respect. God surely would not reveal His prophetic secrets to a man living in sin, and committing continual, habitual incest, for years, with his own daughter! Even though Herbert Armstrong may have repented of this sin in later years, God severely punished him and allowed him to make a fool of himself prophetically, during the years this relationship continued.

The Track Record of the 1950s

It was in the late 1950s that I first came in contact with the Worldwide Church of God, then called the Radio Church of God. At that time the whole Church was focused on 1975 in prophecy, and

predicting Christ's return that year.

In the October 1955 *Plain Truth* Herman L. Hoeh, a man for whom I directly worked as a member of the *Plain Truth* staff from 1972-1974, wrote that

"God Almighty has spoken through His servants the prophets that He will punish our people for their sins . . . we will be totally consumed and carried away captive to other nations as slaves WITHIN TWENTY YEARS" (p.16).

Another prophecy gone awry! Another false prophet begins to prophesy!

Not to be content, Herman L. Hoeh wrote in the April 1956 *Plain Truth*,

"Plagues are coming -- and, according to this prophetic warning, in about TWO YEARS FROM NOW!" (p.22).

Herman Hoeh saw the times of America's national troubles and tribulation as extending onward from that point to 1972. Of course, his time scale for this prophesy was based on Herbert Armstrong's prediction that Christ would return in 1975!

Not to be outdone by the likes of Herman Hoeh, , in the December 1957 *Plain Truth*, Garner Ted Armstrong, illustrious son of Herbert Armstrong, tried his hand at the prophecy game. Not to be out-prophesied by someone of inferior position in the Church, he wrote the following blistering prophetic scenario:

"Two years ago, Mr. Herman Hoeh showed in this magazine how God's word prophesied disease epidemics would strike the United States in two short years! Those epidemics are BEGINNING NOW! And they will grow much worse! GOD PROPHESES THAT FINALLY, WITHIN THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS, FULLY ONE THIRD OF OUR POPULATION WILL DIE of disease and famine!" (p.23).

Thus another illustrious modern-day "prophet" went out on a limb, and had it sawn off behind him! Another false prophet met his "prophetic Armageddon"! Fifteen years from 1957 brings us to 1972. During that time none of Garner Ted Armstrong's plagues or disease epidemics came to pass, as prophesied! One third of our national population did NOT "die"! What remarkable balderdash!

As late as 1962 Herbert Armstrong was still insisting that Bible prophecies foretold

"a revolution in the weather -- leading to unprecedented famine BY AROUND 1970-72 . . . In its wake is prophesied frightful disease epidemics! A third of the people of the U.S. and British Commonwealth nations will die of this scourge" (February 1962 *Plain Truth*).

In May 1965, three years later, Roderick C. Meredith, evangelist in the Worldwide Church of God, convinced of the same scenario, still proclaimed that

"the final attack on the U.S. and Britain by this coming 'Beast' power could easily be launched perhaps as early as the spring of 1972 -- or earlier" (May 1965 *Plain Truth*, p.45).

In February 1967 Herbert W. Armstrong himself was still loudly and dogmatically making similar predictions. He asserted:

"The 'Day of the Eternal -- a time foretold in more than thirty prophecies -- is going to start BETWEEN 5 AND 10 YEARS FROM NOW! . . . I am not writing foolishly, but very soberly, ON AUTHORITY OF THE LIVING CHRIST!" (February 1967 *Plain Truth*, p-47).

Was he writing "foolishly"? Yes he was! Could he himself see it? No, he couldn't . Did he really have "authority of the living Christ" to back up his prediction? No he did not. But his claim to the authority of the living Christ to back up his erroneous pronouncements was, unfortunately, typical of his on-going personal style. His ego could stand for no less "authority." He refused to admit he was really only speculating, or guessing. In his vanity and self-importance, he made matters worse. But the more unreasonable his claims became, the more dogmatic and dictatorial style, he was overwhelmingly confident -- but he was DEAD WRONG!

Eventually, in his own mind, he had become the end-time "Elijah," who would restore all things! How he could begin to believe this, in view of his prophetic errors and blunders, over many decades, blows my mind! Yet for years he was the only one teaching obedience to God's Sabbaths AND annual Holy Days. He DID restore much truth. Apparently, God will use a person, in many respects, even though he also ALLOWS them to make egregious errors from time to time!

But let's face it: Would an end-time "Elijah," or one coming in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, have stubbed his toe so consistently and persistently in terms of Bible prophecy?

What do *you think*?

"Beware of False Prophets"

Some lessons appear to be hard to learn. For forty years Herbert Armstrong never seemed to learn from his past mistakes. When one prophetic prediction failed, he just offered up another one. An endless stream of prophetic errors thus were paraded before the public. Old errors were quickly forgotten, and swept under the rug. New errors sprung up like dandelions, spreading their pernicious seeds around the world. But to the very end, it would seem, Herbert W. Armstrong still insisted it was "BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LIVING CHRIST" that he made his predictions and prophetic interpretations!

The day is coming, of course, when he will "eat" those words -- he will have to give account for them before the very judgment seat of Christ Himself!

However, Jesus Himself said, "Beware of men" (Matt.10:17). He added that in the end times, "Many false prophets shall rise, AND DECEIVE MANY" (Matt.24:11). He also pointed out "But I say unto you, That *every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall *give account thereof in the day of judgment*. For by thy *words* thou shalt be justified, and by *thy words* thou shalt be condemned" (Matt.12:36-37).

Jesus told us how to recognize false prophets. He said: "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in SHEEP'S CLOTHING, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. YE SHALL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM" (Matt.7:15-20).

I know that many people, today, virtually worship the memory of Herbert W. Armstrong. In one way, I hate to have to disillusion them. But truth is better than error, no matter how much it hurts. Bitter medicine is good, if it cures the patient's disease.

No doubt many of the basic teachings of Herbert Armstrong were scripturally sound and valid. Some of his prophetic insights in a general way were valid. But for some reason he did go to excesses often when it came to Bible prophecy, and sometimes made a "fool" or "laughing stock" of himself -- and became an embarrassment to God and to Christ! And to the Church!

I do not write these things to "expose" the man, or to ridicule him. In many ways, God did use him to restore much truth during the past fifty years. Were it not for his ministry, how many of us would have known about the Sabbath, holy days, what it means to be "born again," the purpose of human life, the truth about heaven and hell, the immortal soul doctrine, and many other truths?

But let's be honest, and not ignore the truth. Herbert Armstrong was *very* human. And he was *very* fallible. He made *many* mistakes. I write these things, therefore, as the apostle Paul said,

". . . that ye might learn . . . not to think of men above that which is written"

(I Cor.4:6).

Let's not put men on a pedestal, and worship them, or think of them more highly than we ought!
Don't worship mere men -- worship God!

HERBERT ARMSTRONG'S VAIN ATTEMPT TO FULFILL BIBLE PROPHECY!

Herbert Armstrong wanted to be "Elijah" -- at times in his ministry he even said that he was "Zerubbabel" and the "Elijah" to come. But few know to what lengths he strove to make Bible prophecy come to pass so he himself could fulfill such a role -- and the way God Almighty thwarted his attempt in a completely humiliating manner!

William F. Dankenbring

(Please note this article was originally written many years ago soon after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong. Even so this is a very helpful and useful historical account of the well known problems in the Worldwide Church of God. Updated January 2018).

Everybody knows that Herbert Armstrong was a very strong-willed and dogmatic individual. He seemed to have had a very high opinion of himself and his place in God's scheme of things.. Anyone reading his co-worker letters over the years could not help but be impressed with his sense of the dramatic, and of the importance of his "high office." He referred to himself as the "Apostle General" of God's Church. Many times he spoke, dramatically claiming the "*authority of Jesus Christ*," as if he himself invented the expression, and had a copyright on it!

Herbert Armstrong may have believed he was the end-time "Elijah." I do not know his own inner belief. I do believe that he truly thought of himself as God's end-time servant. Did not God reveal many Biblical truths to him? If he was right on these truths, then he understood things *no other man was preaching at the time!*

However, this does not prove he was a "prophet," nor does it prove he was the final "Elijah to come," mentioned in the book of Malachi in the Old Testament!

Nevertheless, because he may well have *believed* it was his duty to be the final "Elijah," and to bear witness to the world, that may explain certain things that he strove to accomplish in the year 1967.

In that year I was transferred from working in the Editorial Department of the Worldwide Church of God, or "The Work" as we called it, to assist Dennis Luker, the field minister in the San Francisco Bay area.

In that fateful year, Herbert Armstrong was laying plans to fulfill Bible prophecy. In the book of Isaiah we read the striking prophecy, where God Almighty says , "O Zion, that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringeth good tidings, LIFT UP THY VOICE WITH STRENGTH; lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isa.40:9).

James Moffatt translates this verse, "Up to the high hills, O herald of happiness to Sion! Raise your voice loudly, O herald of happiness to Jerusalem, raise it fearlessly, and tell the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God! Here is the Eternal coming in power, maintaining mightily his cause! Here he is bringing what he has won, bringing what he has gained! For he feeds his flock like a shepherd, and gathers them in his arms, he is carrying the lambs in his bosom, and leading them ever so gently'" (Moffatt Isa.40:9-11).

In the spring of 1967 the stage was set. Suddenly it seemed as if the door had opened for Herbert Armstrong to BE that voice, proclaiming God's message directly to the children of Judah in the Middle East! The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was opening to the Worldwide Church of God the use of a new superpowerful *one million watt radio transmitter* in the city of Jerusalem, then occupied by the Kingdom of Jordan -- Radio Jerusalem!

Herbert Armstrong was thrilled -- elated. 1967 was only a few years before 1972, the year the Church was supposed to flee to a "place of safety" in the wilderness, then believed to be Petra in Jordan. (The Philadelphia Church of God, today, led by Gerald Flurry, still believes this doctrine as an article of faith!).

Herbert Armstrong wrote in the April 17, 1967 co-worker letter, sent out to all members and co-workers of the Worldwide Church of God,

"Right now, just prior by not more than FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS, to the coming terrible day of the Lord, the living Christ has moved swiftly to OPEN THE ALL-IMPORTANT DOOR THAT HAS BEEN CLOSED *since the days of the original apostles!*

'... Almighty God has opened to the World Tomorrow (program), exclusively, the GIGANTIC DOOR OF SUPERPOWER RADIO FROM JERUSALEM!"

Armstrong went on, enthusiastically, "We have signed with the Hashemite Government of Jordan, a FIVE-YEAR BINDING CONTRACT" (emphasis mine throughout).

To Herbert Armstrong's mind, this was proof positive that God was calling him and using him as His chief witness in these end times. He went on excitedly in his letter to all co-workers:

"And when this time came, TO WHOM DID GOD OPEN UP THESE PRECIOUS RADIO FACILITIES? Not to Roman Catholics . . . nor the Protestants! Nor the Coptics. "

"No, He has opened it exclusively, by binding CONTRACT with the Government of Jordan, TO HIS WORK."

Armstrong went on, saying,

"THIS PROVES WHICH VOICE ON EARTH TODAY IS GOD'S OWN VOICE" -- *If you ever had any doubts whatever about where the real Work of God is, you ought to be sure now!*" (same letter).

At that time Herbert Armstrong was in England, en route to the Kingdom of Jordan. He was actually en route to Cyprus when suddenly the Six Day War broke out in the Middle East, forcing him to cancel his flight to Jordan.

What happened?

Apparently Almighty GOD had other ideas than those of Herbert W. Armstrong, who thought he was "Gods own voice on earth"!

The Incredible "Six Day War"

In six days, the incredible happened. The Israelis fought with fury, and destroyed the air forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the ground. They launched a blitzkrieg strike through the Negev and Sinai and routed the Egyptian armies blocking their way. In a mere six days they rewrote the map of the Middle East, recaptured the Golan Heights overlooking the Sea of Galilee in the north, and had troops on the outskirts of Damascus, Syria. The West Bank of the Jordan fell to their forces quickly, and they soundly defeated the armed forces of the Jordanians.

At the same time, Israel captured the Old City of Jerusalem, which had been in Jordanian hands, including the sacred precincts of the Temple Mount -- the first time that particular piece of geography had been in Jewish hands since the time of the Roman Empire, 2000 years ago!

What did this mean?

To understand the amazing Biblical prophetic significance of this tremendous Six Day War, and its outcome, be sure to read my article entitled "Daniel's 2300 Day Prophecy Revealed!"

Insofar as Herbert Armstrong's plans to preach the gospel to the people of Judah, in the towns of Israel, to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40, they were completely undone -- dashed to the ground. Apparently it was NOT God's intent for him to fulfill this final "commission," or to be the final

"Watchman"! Apparently, he was not to be the true "end-time" Elijah, the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" of Judea!

Herbert Armstrong probably truly believed God was in the process of opening the door of Radio Jerusalem to HIM to fulfill this final WARNING message to the Jews, thereby showing just who was His "voice on earth." But God canceled the arrangement and blew the whole deal! The "firm and binding contract" with the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was *rendered NULL AND VOID!* Who could have foreseen it? God, of course. He knew what He was going to do all along. Why didn't He inform Herbert Armstrong? Apparently, He didn't think Herbert Armstrong needed to know His plans! (Amos 3:7).

Supposedly, Herbert Armstrong was going to broadcast the gospel from Radio Jerusalem, which was to be boosted to over 1,000,000 watts of power -- truly a superpowerful radio station. But it never happened. The plans of men came to naught.

Why?

God was working in the Middle East all right, but not with Herbert W. Armstrong. God had other plans in mind.

Almighty God was in the process of fulfilling, in a dramatic fashion, the amazing prophecy of Daniel 8 and the 2300 "days" of the desolation of the Temple! He was in the process of bringing the Temple Mount area back under the control of His people, the Jews. He was making ready the fulfillment of the prophecies of the END-TIME! But none of these plans included the work or ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong to preach from Radio Jerusalem!

End of an Era

In total humiliation, Herbert Armstrong had to see his plans go up in smoke, ascending to oblivion. Alas, it was not to be! His co-worker letter turned out to be sadly mistaken, and he never got on radio in the Middle East -- in Israel or Jordan!

Instead of fulfilling Bible prophecy, by his own efforts, he saw them smashed on the rocks and brought to naught. Instead of proclaiming the gospel via Radio Jerusalem to the entire Middle East with one million watts of broadcasting power, he had to eat crow. His silence spoke volumes. Instead of ushering in the coming of Jesus Christ in "not more than five to seven years," he had to experience the death of his wife, who died that very same year, thus closing the history of the "Philadelphia Era" of the Church of God.

Instead of going out to finish the Work of God, Herbert Armstrong began to lose his way, and didn't quite know what to do. He began to lose his bearings, spiritually, and increasing troubles began to pummel and strike the Church. His own son had to be exiled for adultery and rampant sexual misadventures, though it was covered up and called "spiritual problems." Scores of ministers in the Church began to defect and the Church was torn apart with doctrinal strife by 1972-1974.

Instead of Jesus Christ returning by the proffered date set by Herbert Armstrong in repeated articles, sermons, and co-worker letters, He stayed in heaven, and left Herbert Armstrong to fend for himself and to suffer the consequences of his own mistakes.

In the following years, Herbert began making even greater blunders and errors, marrying a woman less than half his age, Ramona Martin, and divorcing her seven years later. Exercising poor judgment of character, he began entrusting the Work to undeserving and unqualified hands. Rather than deal with his son's sins in a manner befitting the office of an apostle, he whitewashed them, and brought his son back into the Church with a minor "slap on the wrist" and restored him to office and high authority, putting him in charge of the day-to-day operations of the Work! Later, before his death, he made the most serious error of all by appointing one Joseph Tkach, as his successor over the entire Church and Work! History shows that Tkach, instead of being loyal to Herbert Armstrong's teachings and memory, began dismantling and destroying every major doctrine of the Church -- and even introduced pagan customs and ceremonies into the Church!

From 1967 onward -- the history of the Worldwide Church of God has been one of checkered mistakes, querulous errors, infighting at the top, church politics, adultery, misappropriation of finances, allegations of massive theft, and even the intrusion of the state of California which for a while put the Church and Work into Receivership!

During that time, as further proof that the Church had lost its way, spiritually, millions of dollars were spent to promote and publish a glitzy, glossy SECULAR magazine called *Quest*, and other millions were poured into the creation of a SECULAR publishing house in New York City, called "Everest House." Both of these publishing vehicles produced smut, obscenity, and printed foul, ungodly language in books and magazine articles! Yet during his later years, Herbert Armstrong seemed not to be fazed in the least at these ill-conceived ventures and their abominations!

For the record, the first issue of *Quest* contained articles which were littered with profanity and "cuss words," articles where the name of God and Christ were used in vain, as well as articles containing four-letter filthy words concerning sex and excrement!

Also, for the record, Everest House Publishing Company began to publish hardcover books which told homosexuals how to live together more cheaply, books on the occult, and a book entitled *Danse Macabre* by horror author Stephen King, which itself was filled to overflowing with sexual dirty words, and repeatedly used the names of Almighty God and Jesus Christ in loud, screaming profanity and searing white hot BLASPHEMY!

How the devil must have chortled and snickered, as he contemplated his "victory." He had pulled a "fast one" over the "true Church of God," and God's "chief apostle" and supposed "only voice on earth," Herbert W. Armstrong!

As I look back over the years since 1967, I am aghast and amazed at what happened during those fateful years. I stand appalled at the circuitous direction taken by the Church, which drifted like a ship which had lost its rudder and its compass, going around in circles, heading for the rocks of destruction. And, as I foresaw in the late 1980s, the Worldwide Church of God has indeed gone into perdition!.

How God Began to Work More in My Life

Bu, while such terrible things were happening to the Church, and to the Armstrong family, for me personally 1967 was a bellwether year. For when I returned to Pasadena, after completing my assignment in the field ministry, I married the former Capitola Callihan, originally from North Carolina. Our wedding was held in the Lower Gardens, at Ambassador College, on September 24. Her name "Capitola" means "head of the people," and she is an outstanding woman in every respect, and the finest wife a man could ever hope for -- truly God blessed me far above most men, and far more than I remotely deserved or imagined!

So while the "house of Armstrong" in 1967 was in the process of being broken, and destroyed, my own family, my own "house," was just beginning!

While Herbert W. Armstrong was being cursed, with the destruction of his planned fulfillment of prophecy, and his lofty goals were smashed by divine intervention, and the sudden death of his wife of 49 years, I was beginning to be blessed beyond compare, beyond measure.

I have never thought of it this way before, but that is precisely what happened -- *the very same year!*

Exactly seven years later, God set me free from working in a degenerating, compromising, apostatizing environment in the editorial department of the Worldwide Church of God, and led me to begin Triumph Publishing. That was in July of 1974. In the following 12 years, I published books such as *The First Genesis: A New Case for Creation*, *The Keys to Radiant Health*, *Beyond Star Wars*, *Ascent To Greatness*, *The Last Days of Planet Earth: A Survival Guide to the End of the World*, *Overcoming Satan*, *Satan's Fate*, *Escape from Armageddon*. While the Church was slipping into greater error, God was using me to preserve and maintain His truth!

Twelve years later Herbert Armstrong died, in January 1986, the year that Halley's Comet passed through the heavens. That same year Kurt Waldheim was elected President of Austria.

That same year I laid the groundwork for publishing *Prophecy Flash*, published two vitally new booklets on Bible prophecy entitled "Never Before Understood -- Daniel's 2300 Day Prophecy Revealed for the Very First Time!" and "A New Countdown to Armageddon -- the Jubilee Time Cycles Predict the Second Coming of Christ!"

Thus the passing of Halley's Comet marked the passing of the old guard, and the coming of the new. Herbert Armstrong passed the baton of a suffocating, dying Church to Joseph Tkach, and the Laodicean Church began to grow in our midst. And that was the year *Prophecy Flash* magazine was born!

When I published the new prophetic truth and revelation about Daniel's 2300 day prophecy, in December 1986, and sent out an advertising brochure to my mailing list in January 1987, the new powers in the Church rejected the truth, and disfellowshipped me without a hearing or recourse. So God began a NEW WORK, using me as His instrument and servant, in a prophecy-oriented "end-time" ministry. Thus "Triumph Prophetic Ministries" was born!

A Lesson from the Life of Herbert Armstrong

Herbert Armstrong is now dead and buried. His successor, Joseph Tkach, has led the Worldwide Church of God into increasing apostasy and error. But as we reflect back on the life and errors of Herbert Armstrong, what lessons can we learn? What does God Almighty want us to learn from this experience?

The Word of God says to those who disobey His commandments, and do not rule their family according to the ways of God, "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind . . ." (Prov.11:29).

Let us all take a lesson from the example of Herbert Armstrong. He wrote a vital lesson in his life - a lesson on "How Not To Fulfill Bible Prophecy."

He also showed us the importance of OBEYING GOD, keeping CLOSE to Him, and walking in His commandments -- something, unfortunately, Herbert Armstrong often failed to do. If he had been obeying God, God would not have embarrassed him with the failure of his attempted prophetic fulfillment in 1967. If he had been walking in humility, instead of pride, he would never have "counted his chickens before they hatched." He would have simply let his works speak for themselves.

Jesus said, "By their fruits you know them," not by their words of self-admiration!

Finally, we should learn from the life of Herbert Armstrong how not to become lifted up with pride, egotism, and self-importance. Such attitudes bring trouble in their wake, and lead to sure, certain destruction.

God's Word warns us repeatedly, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov.16:18). The wise man Elihu told the patriarch Job, "Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it" (Job 35:13). Solomon in his wisdom wrote, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov.8:13).

Solomon added, "When pride cometh, *then cometh shame*, but with the lowly is wisdom" (Prov.11:2). God warns, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit" (Prov.29:23). Ancient king Nebuchadnezzar also had to learn the lesson that "those who walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan.4:37).

God hates pride. But His joy is with the humble in heart, who don't puff themselves up, who don't act pompous or self-important. Do we so soon forget? God says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa.66:2).

The prophet Micah declared, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to *WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD?*" (Micah 6:8).

David set us an example of true humility. He wrote in Psalm 131, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I

have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:1-2). David also wrote, "The sacrifices of God are a **BROKEN SPIRIT**: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psa.51:17).

The apostle James wrote, ". . . *be CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY*: for God *resisteth the proud* and giveth grace unto the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Peter 5:5-6).

Have we learned these lessons?