

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Those of us who love and are practicing that way of life which was originally proclaimed by Mr. Herbert Armstrong during the twentieth century believe we are living in the very last days. But what do we mean by "last days"? We mean the final time period leading to the end of man's six-thousand-year rule on this earth and the beginning of God's Millennial Reign, otherwise known as the *consummation of the age*. This is the time period which most intrigued Christ's disciples and made them eager to gain greater enlightenment.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the [consummation of the age] (Matthew 24:3)?

The prophet Daniel likewise had a keen desire to understand more specifics about those final days which God had shown to him in part. "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (Daniel 12:8).

Curiosity about last-day prophetic fulfillment is common to all peoples whom God has called. And is it any wonder? After all, once one is called to understand the glorious plan by which God is bringing salvation to the world, once one becomes convinced that Jesus Christ is returning to become King over this earth, and once one comes to love and cherish the hope of that Kingdom, how could one not take an interest in the details of how God will bring these awesome events to pass? It is very natural that God's children would long to know more about when and how these monumental events will unfold, especially those who believe they are living in the very era of their eventual reality.

But herein lies the problem. We easily become obsessed with finding out details of future events, not just out of innocent curiosity, but as part of a plan to protect ourselves from the terrible persecutions which are certain to accompany these culminating days. If we truly believe there will be tribulation upon this earth on a scale never before experienced by humankind (Matthew 24:21), which ones of us would not have an interest in knowing

enough of the specifics so we could maneuver ourselves out of harm's way? Can any of you honestly say that possessing such knowledge would not be very appealing? If Daniel and the Twelve Apostles had a keen desire to know these things, who among us can honestly claim to be indifferent to those same tantalizing details?

## **How Can Prophecy Become Dangerous?**

Why is it a problem to have a strong desire to know the specifics of future prophetic fulfillment? It is because such desires easily lead to obsession and work counter to the *faith* God requires each one of us to manifest. God said plainly, ". . . the just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Faith is the evidence of things *not seen* (Hebrews 11:1). It means we believe and act upon the promises of God, even when those promises are not yet confirmed for us to see. It means we are willing to trust God implicitly for our protection, not demanding to be "tipped-off" in advance in order to have confidence.

Yet nearly a third of the Bible is prophecy, and the Bible was recorded for the Church. Does that not imply God wants His people to spend a lot of time reading and examining prophecy? That has been the rationale of many of God's people who have become obsessed with analyzing long-range prophecies for the purpose of ferreting out new tidbits of enlightenment. But such justification totally misses the point of *why* God put those long-range prophecies in the Bible to begin with. Most assume automatically they were recorded as a puzzle for us to "figure out." This is justified by pointing out that God said these secrets would be made known at the time of the end. "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). Well, many reason, this is now the time of the end, so that means God is now making it possible for the true church to solve the great mysteries which the patriarchs never understood, including who, what, where, when, and how all these final events will take place. All we have to do is keep digging and theorizing enough, and we will eventually put all those pieces together.

## **The True Purpose of Long-range Prophecy**

But is that really true? Our article entitled, *Prophecy—What You Should Know About It!*, explains the true purpose for those long-range prophecies in the Bible, and it is not what most have ever considered. God did not intend even for the last-day Church to figure out the specific details of events to come. As already shown, God said the just shall live by faith, not by having the answers to the tests in advance. Why then were those prophecies recorded? First, they were given so that we would have a *general idea* of the events which

would occur before the return of Christ. This is why Christ gave a synoptic blueprint in Matthew 24. The events leading to the return of Christ will be so intense, so alarming, so provocative, and so overwhelming, that without some forewarning, many of God's people would give up and believe it impossible for this story to have a happy ending. Notice how Christ reveals His true intent and purpose by the admonitions He makes to the hearers:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you (Matthew 24:4).

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: *see that ye be not troubled*: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (Matthew 24:6) [emphasis mine].

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Matthew 24:13).

The backdrop for *all of His statements* about last-day events is the admonition not to allow anything we might experience to shake our confidence. Why did He give the details that He did about the terrifying events to come? To comfort the elect and to prepare them in mind for the fact that horrendous things necessarily would befall them, so that *when they actually transpired*, they would be steeled to endure and not to faint! It was the same reason Christ told His disciples ahead of time that one of them would betray Him. Why did He speak that prophecy at that particular moment? Was He putting a puzzle before them to challenge them to figure out the traitor's identity in advance, so that the one who guessed that it was Judas could be recognized as being something special? Of course not! Christ clarified His purpose very distinctly:

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, *that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he* (John 13:18–19) [emphasis mine].

Why was this prophecy recorded in advance? So that His followers would not lose faith in Jesus as being the Christ once they found out He had picked a traitor to be one of His disciples! Normally, if someone claimed to be the Son of God but then picked a confidant who manifested defective character, would that not make people question His judgment? If He is truly the Son of God, why did he not know the real heart of Judas? Jesus headed off that potential doubt by telling them *in advance* that the betrayal would take place, so that *when it occurred*, they would still believe and not doubt Him.

Notice the timing. When were those disciples going to understand the full prophecy about Judas? When did it matter for them to understand? *After* it was fulfilled! Yes, Jesus did tell John privately that the traitor would be the one to whom He gave the sop (John 13:25–26), but this was not so that John could publish it to the others. The final betrayal was happening even as He was speaking. The real value to the church of Jesus' prophecy concerning Judas was for the time of the aftermath.

Which brings us to the second major purpose for long-range prophecies: they were recorded by God in advance, so that after they come to pass, *God*—and not any man—will receive the credit for having known the end from the beginning. Why were all of those Old Testament prophecies recorded concerning the Messiah who would be slaughtered as a sacrificial Lamb? Was it a puzzle given to allow the Jews to figure out how to spot the true Christ in advance? Of course not. No one in Israel ever figured out beforehand from Scripture that the Messiah would first come to die, and only later come as a conquering King. They had the Scripture in their possession all those centuries—and knew them backwards and forwards—and yet not one of them ever put the pieces together. The concept of a First and then only later a *Second* Coming was anathema to them, in spite of the fact it had been clearly recorded for thousands of years by Moses, Isaiah, and many other prophets of old. And no one in those days leading to His first arrival was allowed to put those pieces together and proclaim it to the world. No, God intentionally kept that nugget of Truth hidden. For how long? Until Jesus Himself revealed the meaning to His disciples after it was already in the process of being fulfilled!

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Matthew 16:21).

Even then, Peter and the other disciples did not understand, because it was never in their thinking that the Messiah would need to be killed (verse 22). Only after His actual death and resurrection did all these things really sink in. And then, afterwards—only afterwards—did all those prophecies of old make sense. Given that God allowed no man to "figure out" the truth about the Messiah's death before it came to pass, who received the glory when it actually transpired and Jesus fulfilled dozens of long-range prophecies? Not a single man, but God only. Long-range prophecies were recorded in the Bible and brought down through time so that *when they come to pass* just as God said they would, mankind will know that a purposeful God has truly been orchestrating a divine master plan through all the ages.

Such a testament gives all honor and glory to God, and never allows any man to share the stage with Him. What would happen if God allowed someone to ferret out one of these secret meanings in detail in advance? Once it came to pass, that man would be jumping up

and down saying, "See, I told you that is how it was going to happen! I knew it all along. That proves I was something special in God's church!" But brethren, our God is a jealous God, and He does not intend to share His glory with any man. No, when all of these last-day prophecies actually come to pass and match precisely what was foretold, God is going to make sure that *He alone* receives the awesome recognition for that fulfillment. That is why none of us will be allowed to have the details in advance. They were not recorded for that purpose. By reading those prophecies, the church today can be comforted by understanding the *general* blueprint by which God is working, and when we literally see those things begin to occur, rather than becoming fearful—having our faith destroyed—we can instead be fortified, knowing that it is all happening according to a Master Designer's plan.

### **False Prophets in the Last Days**

How many of God's people today understand this true purpose for Bible prophecy? Very few. Most assume that the details of who, what, where, when, and how of the future can be gleaned if we are just smart enough to figure it out. They want to know who is the Beast and the False Prophet, what is the true Mark of the Beast, when and where will the Abomination of Desolation be manifested, when and where will a place of safety be opened, and when will Jesus Christ return. And because so many are obsessed about these specifics—fearful of facing the coming days without some special inside information to lean upon as a crutch—the church is primed to be duped by men coming upon the scene, professing to be able to provide those tantalizing answers. And is it not interesting that one of the key signs Christ gave of the last days is an escalation of the activity of false prophets?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many . . . And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many (Matthew 24:4–5, 11).

These would not be men rising up and actually claiming to be the Christ themselves, but ones who would be claiming a special commission to speak *in the name* of Christ. How would someone claiming himself to be the literal Christ deceive "many" of the children of God? He would not. If many are to be deceived as Christ said they would be, it is because the work of those men will be very subtle. It will be believable. It will appear at first blush to ring true. There will be enough truth included in the message to appear to have some substance. And there will certainly be a strong appeal to the lust of God's people for detailed knowledge. The people *want* someone to come along and be able to tell them what is going to happen, so they will be primed to accept the bold assertions of those who seem to fit their image of a "true" prophet.

Today there are many men who came out of the true Church of God in decades past vying for preeminence among the scattered peoples of God. Hundreds of groups have formed out of the implosion of the Worldwide Church of God, and many of these self-appointed group leaders are now claiming prophetic titles to themselves, promising to provide the people with details about how and when last-day events will transpire, and promising them protection from the evil to come if they will only believe and follow them. Literally dozens of them are claiming to be the ones chosen by God to fulfill last-day commissions. They ascribe to themselves specific titles like Elijah, Elisha, Zerubbabel, The Watchman, That Prophet, and many others. But what true servant of God ever came in such manner, vainly laying emphasis upon who he is in Bible prophecy? They did not. The true servants of God simply went where they were told and delivered the message they were given by God, and never attempted to assign titles to themselves. God is the One who always clarified who they were in prophecy later on. Even John the Baptist, though actually fulfilling an Elijah commission, either did not know who he was in prophecy, or at least did not deem it important to emphasize it (John 1:21). But these others are a whole different story.

The most popular claim today involves a prophetic work to be completed with great power right before the return of Christ—that of the Two Witnesses.

### **Fascination With Two Witnesses**

One of those long-range prophecies which God gave to us relates to a grand work that will be done immediately before and leading into the return of Jesus Christ:

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that

dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them (Revelation 11:3–12).

No prophecy seems to have mesmerized members of God's true church in this age more than this particular one. Who will be these two witnesses? When will they come on the scene to do this great work? If we had the answers to these questions, we would be able to pinpoint very nearly when Jesus Christ will return, because their three-and-one-half-year work will likely culminate in the first resurrection and His glorious appearance. Because of this fact, not only do church members clamor to have these specific answers, but there seems to be no end of charlatans stepping forward and claiming to have the answers. These men are merely taking advantage of *market demand* within the church for prophetic enlightenment, and offering a product that many are eager to buy, even if it is counterfeit. This phenomenon was likewise prophesied to occur before the end of the age:

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (2 Peter 2:3).

God's people are coveting prophetic details, so many "entrepreneurs" are out there claiming to be prophets to satisfy that growing demand.

At this time there are dozens of former members and/or ministers of God's true church who are now claiming to be one of the Two Witnesses (this is not even counting the ones who are mentally ill and write to us from institutions making the same claim). Some ministers make the claim that God has revealed that they are one of the prophesied witnesses, while at least one other minister says he is not himself one of those prophets, but that the Two Witnesses will report to him and be under his authority. How do they know this? How is it that God communicated such a commission to them? By dreams? By visions? Through personal Bible study? Who knows? But it is certain there will be only *two* individuals to fulfill the prophecy of Revelation 11, so most of today's claimants must indeed be false prophets. That is a fact.

Is it possible that one or two of them might actually be legitimate, even if all the others are frauds? Is that not one of Satan's clever ploys, to raise up so many counterfeits that God's people cannot see the true trees for the forest of imposters around them? Perhaps. Is it more

likely, however, that *none* of these claimants today are legitimate? That is the real truth. How do we know? Because God gave very specific criteria by which God's people can evaluate the claims of all such prophets and determine for certain if they are legitimate or not. None of us need ever to stand in doubt.

### **Case Study of a False Prophet**

One particular one of these claimed "witnesses" will be the focus here of a case study, to demonstrate the simple yet ingenious means which God has provided for us to know and to be sure. This man's name and organizational affiliation will not be revealed, but the context of his orientation and claims will be an eye-opener.

The man in question is a minister who came out of the Worldwide Church of God in the 1990s and affiliated with one of the major splinter groups until he deemed he had been set apart by God as a prophet and then broke away to begin his own separate group. This man has written a couple of books freely available on the Internet in which he claims to understand details about the return of Christ and the specifics of events that will transpire soon beforehand. He has claimed for some time to be one of the Two Witnesses, but has just recently announced that the second of those Witnesses is his own wife. As absurd as this may already sound to some of you, a number of people are taking notice of him because we are getting questions concerning his claims. There has been enough small media exposure for this man to get his name out there, and he is trying to make the most of it. We are being asked, what do you think of him? Might his prophetic interpretations come true? In his latest book, he claims that some of the final cataclysmic events will begin this year—in 2008—and that he knows basically when Jesus Christ will return. Here is a sample of his claims:

When this book is published at the end of summer of 2006, (with distribution in full swing in the fall), there will be a maximum time of two years remaining before the world will be plunged into the worst time of all human history. By the fall of 2008, the United States will have collapsed as a world power, or it will have begun its collapse and no longer exist as an independent nation within six months after that time. There is a marginal, six-month window of time that God has not yet revealed concerning this specific moment of time. This will be revealed some time soon after the distribution of this book begins.

This additional "revelation" to him marks April, 2008 as the beginning of the end for the United States. Might he be correct? How can we be sure if God is truly inspiring him or not? Here are two quotations which show how he sees the proof of his own words:

Either I am an eloquent, rationally-sounding lunatic or I am sent from God. The clarity, orderliness and rationale of what you are reading is testimony in itself that this is from God. And if all of this is indeed from God, would it be wise to ignore it?

In the past 1900 years, have you ever read or heard of a publication from any religious leader who has made such claims, laying out such a precise pattern for the near future with such precise timelines? You have not! This is the evidence (witness, testimony) of the true God of Abraham!

So he is saying that because he has written a book which is orderly and "rational" in lay-out, and contains bold claims of precise predictions, this is proof that his message is from God. But is that what God Himself says is the certification of a true prophet? Here is the first of two tests God gave to His people so that we can be sure:

And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him (Deuteronomy 18:21–22).

At this point in time—June, 2008—it is already apparent that great catastrophe has *not* stuck within the United States to destroy or cause us to cease from being a nation. Oh, but what if it might still occur later this year? After all, we have had some minor earthquakes recently and tornados which have killed people in the Midwest and the South. The death toll is still being counted from many thousands who have been killed by a cyclone in Myanmar (Burma) and by a tremendous earthquake in China last month. Maybe this is only a foreshadowing of the impending doom which is soon to engulf us here.

Our "prophet" claims to know what are the "seven thunders" which the Apostle John was prevented from revealing at the time (Revelation 10:3–4). He claims God has shown him the specific events including wars, natural catastrophes, economic upheavals, and deaths within the leadership of the splinter groups of God's church which will unfold to prove that he is indeed a true prophet. To give him credit, he at least understands that he is putting his entire reputation on the line, because he says:

It will be revealed in a very short time whether I am God's prophet or not, as well as whether scattered Church leaders are God's ministers any longer or not [because he is prophesying they will soon be killed]. . . . How much more specific can one be to show that he is either of God, and indeed His prophet,

or someone who has clearly stepped over the line to be dealt with by God in a speedy manner. Time will tell! And, you don't have long to wait!

Yes indeed. As God says, if a man claims to be sent by God but his prophecies do not come to pass, it is concrete evidence that he was presumptuous, and was never sent by God at all. But once again, what if all or many of the things he has asserted actually do come true? What if the recent economic woes of the United States actually catapult us into chaos this year which undermines our national sovereignty? What if plagues of death and terror attacks actually begin to destroy our country before 2008 is over? Would that prove that this man is indeed a legitimate prophet of God? That is what he is claiming! But is that claim sound by the criteria God gave to us?

Notice from Deuteronomy 18 above, God did not say that if any prophet's predictions come true, that is proof it came from God. No, He said only that if they *fail to come to pass* [the thing follow not], you can be sure that prophet was *not* sent by God. The antithesis, however, is not true automatically. There is yet a second criteria which allows us to *further test* the validity of any man or woman claiming to bring a special message from God. What is that test?

### **The Faith Once Delivered**

God actually gave another criteria—the most important one—which addresses an instance in which someone claims to be a prophet, his predictions actually come true, but yet he is still very much a fraud! Here it is:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And *the sign or the wonder come to pass*, whereof he spake unto thee, . . . Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams (Deuteronomy 13:1–3) [emphasis mine].

This would be an example of a *lying* sign or wonder—seeming miracles which derive not from God but from Satan! This is also what is prophesied to occur in those very last days:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, *and shall show great*

*signs and wonders*, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before (Matthew 24:23–25) [emphasis mine].

Someone in these last days is going to demonstrate the power to show incredible signs, perhaps like successfully predicting great catastrophes. Will you be deceived by such demonstration, just because a supernatural event takes place?

What is the criteria God gave us for recognizing whether that sign is truly from God or whether it is a *lying* sign? Go back to Deuteronomy 13 and examine what it was specifically that this false prophet did which gave evidence of his fraud:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, *whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them*; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet . . . (Deuteronomy 13:1–3) [emphasis mine].

What then is the key test? If anyone who claims to represent God brings to you a doctrinal teaching which is contrary to what God originally taught us from the beginning (the real meaning of going after other gods), you know he is a fraud—a false prophet. It is the very same principle confirmed by the Apostle Paul.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8).

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed (2 John 1:9–10).

The test of legitimacy is never being able to perform a miracle or have a prediction come true. Otherwise, there could be no such thing as lying signs and wonders. The only true test of a prophet's legitimacy is whether he is proclaiming *exactly the same message* which was confirmed to the Church at the beginning—Jesus Christ being the Cornerstone of that foundation, and revealing Himself in the form of true doctrine. As John said, anyone coming along later and making a claim, but telling you that the original teaching of the church was in error, is providing you with ironclad proof that he is a false witness.

But why would God create a plan to allow false prophets the ability to perform miracles? Does that not seem somewhat unfair? God answers that very plainly in the remainder of His instruction concerning the testing of prophets:

Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for *the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul*. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him (Deuteronomy 13:3–4) [emphasis mine].

Why then will God allow false prophets to do miracles in the last days? Because men always love to see miracles and are taken in by grand shows of spiritual power. But God wants to know which ones of His called have really come to love The Truth which He revealed through a chosen servant in these last days. It is *His revealed doctrines* which are sacred, because they are truly the teachings of God. Those who possess those truths and hold fast to them are the ones who prove they love God. All others who are willing to abandon that revelation for the corrupt interpretations of men show that they do not really love God. In the end, God created this last-day scenario for the church, to prove who really recognizes what is most vital. If we run after a man who has an appealing image—perhaps one who can even predict major events or perform other miracles—that will be proof to God that we really do not value what He values most—true doctrine.

### **Applying the True Test**

Now then, how do we apply God's most important test to this man claiming (along with his wife) to be one of the Two Witnesses? To do that, we have to find out what he believes and teaches doctrinally. Forget the claims of prophetic insight! Is he holding fast to the original teachings which Jesus Christ revealed to the true Church in these last days?

Interestingly enough, the answer to that question is easy to find. One only has to read the final chapter of his book, which claims great calamity coming for the year 2008. And what do we find? The seventh and final chapter of his book is entitled, *The Mystery of God Revealed*. And what is this mystery which he is now making known to the church for the first time? Here are some excerpts from that final chapter:

God's end-time apostle, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, was given understanding that the Trinity was a false teaching. He learned that the holy spirit is not a being, but that it is the very power of God. He also learned that God's purpose

for mankind is for them to become members of the God Family (Elohim) and that God's Family is not a closed trinity, but instead, it can grow into the billions. But there is only one eternally-existing member of Elohim and that is the ETERNAL ONE (Yahweh). Mr. Armstrong was never able to come to understand this about God. He was not completely able to break free from the pollution of the Trinity doctrine because he believed that Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament. God never revealed to him the entire truth of the matter. No one on earth understands the true depth of this matter. . . . Mr. Armstrong fully believed that the Yahweh of the Old Testament writings was Jesus Christ, who would later divest Himself of His Godly power in order to be born human of His mother, Mary. However, this is not the case. The full story of the birth of Jesus Christ and the understanding of how such a thing came to be is a most awesome story indeed. . . . The Bible is quite clear about the fact that the ETERNAL [Yahweh] God [Elohim] is the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was begotten directly of the Father, and He (Jesus) had no life until His beginning when He was born of His mother Mary.

So now all is made clear. This man repudiates the Truth which God revealed through Mr. Armstrong concerning the nature of God and Jesus Christ. He acknowledges Mr. Armstrong as the chosen servant through whom God worked in this era, and yet then undermines foundational teachings by claiming he never actually received revealed Truth from God. Well, which is it? If he was truly used by God as an apostle, then what he taught us from the beginning was not from his own mind, but from God!

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12).

A true apostle delivers the truth of God, not his own defective interpretations. There is no example in all the Bible that a true servant of God—though fallible humanly—was ever allowed by God to misunderstand and deliver a defective doctrinal message to God's people. We have many other articles and recorded sermons to prove this. Our so-called prophet cannot have it both ways. He cannot claim to respect the office of apostleship which Mr. Armstrong held as a messenger from God, and at the same time claim that messenger never understood the most fundamental truth given to the church—the nature of God. How absurd!

The man in our case study utterly fails the test God gave to us by which we are to measure all so-called prophets. Therefore, it matters not whether some or all of his predictions come to pass this year. We do not have to wait to find out if he is a true prophet or not. The fact he has rejected the divine revelation of Truth concerning Jesus Christ as God which we were given from the beginning is overwhelming evidence of his fraud.

## What Must We Do With False Prophets?

Once we have put a prophet to the test and prove that he fails, what are we to do then?

And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee (Deuteronomy 13:5).

What is the spiritual application for us today in the New Testament Church? We are to reject the admonition of such false prophets and have nothing to do with them. In essence, they become dead to us:

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 1:10–11).

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: *from such withdraw thyself* (1 Timothy 6:3–5) [emphasis mine].

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, *boasters, proud, blasphemers*, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, *heady, highminded*, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:1–7) [emphasis mine].

Dear friends, if we are to avoid being among those compared to silly women—gullibly being led astray by self-professing prophets destitute of God's inspiration—we have to be able to distinguish the few legitimate servants of God from the increasing armies of imposters. How will you discern the difference? So far, all of the ones to date who have

made far-reaching claims of prophetic insight have been proven to be frauds by the failures of their prophecies. That makes it easy. But what about someone in the future who will come along with the ability actually to do what he says? If you think the performance of miracles or the successful prediction of calamity is the proof of God's work, you are ripe for deception. If you are enamored with someone's appearance, smooth words, or professional packaging, you are asking to be deceived.

Only if you recognize and are using the single tool God gave as the measure of a true servant will you be in a position to sift the legitimate from the pretenders. It is not enough just to condemn all of them as frauds. One of these days, God's words will indeed come true, and two men with legitimate authority are going to come on the scene and literally fulfill everything God has decreed. They too will be doing awesome signs and wonders as part of that final work to prepare the way for Christ's arrival. But even as the miracles which God gave for Moses to perform in the court of Pharaoh were counterfeited by pagan magicians (Exodus 7:10–12), so will the miracles of God be counterfeited in our own generation. Looking to signs will never lead you to the real truth. The only sign you can trust is the faith once delivered. That truth—God's revealed doctrine—will not be taught, confirmed, or preserved by any except those truly being led and inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the only light God has offered to you, but it is the only light you will ever need.

Those who are confused about what is real doctrinal truth are in very grave danger. They likewise are ripe for deception when truly powerful imposters come upon the scene. The faithful children of God know the Truth without doubt, and will be in perfect position to spot any of the frauds.

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.* If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and *even as it hath taught you*, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, *abide in him*; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming (1 John 2:21–28) [emphasis mine].

Yes, brethren, abide in Him. Hold fast to the very doctrines Christ put into His Church from its inception. Stop becoming enamored with all of these man-made teachings

which have their roots in human arrogance and deception. The majority are prophesied to fall for the wiles of these deceivers. Why should you be one of them?

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:14–15).

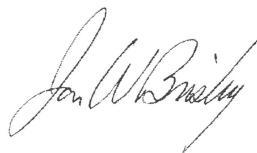
If you recognize the correct use of Bible prophecy—based upon the true reasons God recorded those prophecies to begin with—you can avoid the obsessive trap which controls so many of our dear brethren today in the scattered church at large. Likewise, if you understand and know how to measure the mettle of a true prophet, you will never have to stand in doubt no matter who comes on the scene in the future. With these powerful tools at your disposal, you can be sure to avoid being deceived by any one of the many pretenders, and you can also be assured of never dismissing the true servants of God in the day when He honors His word to send them with power and great authority.

Who will be those Two Witnesses? When will they appear? How will the Beast and False Prophet actually manifest to fulfill prophecy? What will be the reality of the Mark of the Beast? Where and when will the place of safety be established? And most of all, when will Jesus Christ appear to take possession of this earth?

We do not know. God has not given it for any of us to know. We will not speculate. Giving us that knowledge in advance would defeat the very purpose of walking in faith. God has given us all that we need. He revealed His divine Truth to us so that we know right from wrong. We know exactly what is required of us to be pleasing in His sight. He has also given us a *general* understanding of key events which will transpire in the run-up to the very end. Therefore, *when we actually see those terrible things begin to transpire*, rather than becoming perplexed and devastated in spirit, we instead can take heart and actually become confirmed in our faith.

What a glorious blessing God has given to us. All that we need to face the future, He has placed into our hands. May we all take these principles to heart, and may we practice now the substance of those blessings to help us not only spot the imposters of today, but also to recognize the even more sinister ones who will certainly arise in the times to come.

Your devoted and determined servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jon W. Brisby