

## Announcement Letter December 2011

Dear Brethren:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you in this special letter which we send each month to all of those expressing a regard for the authentic Truth of God. Knowing that there are sincere members of the Body of Christ scattered about the globe holding firm to those original principles we first learned through the ministry of Mr. Armstrong is an inspiration to those of us committed to your special service.

We certainly live in a volatile time, and the daily news reports continue to highlight that instability in all areas of life around this world. Especially with turmoil in the Middle East, not to mention the recent financial crises which have affected the United States and Europe. Many who have a history in God's church are busy "watching" for signs that the very end may be near—after all, Mr. Armstrong emphasized repeatedly the necessity for us to watch, even as Jesus Christ admonished His disciples to do.

*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke 21:36) [emphasis mine throughout].*

So how were we all conditioned to watch? By keeping abreast of the world news, especially things going on in Europe. But why Europe? Because we were assured that a "United States of Europe" would be the fulfillment of prophecy for a great beast power to emerge at the very end. Likewise, the Catholic Church (as the mother of harlots) would be the Great False Church prophesied to form a league with German-led Europe, and the Pope would be the False Prophet. With these conclusions firmly entrenched in our thinking, we fulfilled our obligation to "watch" by identifying every new movement occurring in Europe and the Catholic Church. There is no greater excitement among former members of the Worldwide Church of God than when a pope dies and a new one is selected. Might this one be "the one"? And when the European Economic Union formed, later adopting a single currency (the Euro), this was seen as the prophesied amalgamation of ten nations (heads) of the beast power.

The fact that up to twenty-five nations eventually became part of the EU was a little troubling, but the debt crisis with Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy is now threatening to destroy that configuration. Much talk in the news recently about the EU being restructured

with fewer (more stable) countries has now sparked a new giddiness among many Church of God members in varying splinter groups, as they anticipate the new *ten-nation beast power* to be fulfilled "for real" this time.

The problem with all of this is that these theories are not part of *the faith once delivered*. As we learned from Mr. Raymond Cole after the apostasy of 1974, there is a difference between doctrine, administration, and prophecy. What God revealed with authority through Mr. Armstrong was *the doctrine*. Doctrine includes the knowledge of right vs. wrong (the Commandments), the rules for proper worship of God, and the general plan of salvation God is working out on this earth. In short, doctrine includes *those things upon which you will be judged* when you stand before Jesus Christ. Therefore, above all else, you had better know what that doctrine is, and be using that yardstick daily to make changes in your lives to become more like Jesus Christ. You *will not* be judged upon whether you knew *in advance* who the Beast was. That is not doctrine.

*Administration* includes the *judgments* made by the ministry in carrying out their duties as shepherds of the flock. The basis of that administrative philosophy changed much over the years as the church grew, and many very faulty concepts became ingrained within that ministry. Many members who became victims of unwise and even harsh ministerial behaviors (administration) allowed bitterness to turn them against *the doctrine*, which was a totally separate matter. Because they did not recognize the difference, they threw the baby out with the bathwater. Thanks to the ministry of Raymond Cole, we understand the difference and have repudiated that faulty administrative philosophy.

But the third "leg of the stool," as Mr. Cole called it, is prophecy. The whole area of *prophetic speculation and interpretation* is likewise totally distinct from doctrine. Mr. Herbert Armstrong acknowledged to the whole church in 1972 that he was not a prophet, meaning one given special powers by God to confirm the way long-range prophecies would be fulfilled *specifically*. An authoritative prophet of God can tell you not only what will happen in the future, but when, where, how and who will fulfill those prophecies. That is exactly what many true prophets of God demonstrated as documented in the Bible. Mr. Armstrong never claimed to be such a prophet, but he did indeed engage in *prognostications* about how events would play out in the last days. From the earliest days of his ministry you will find assertions about the "likely" or "possible" fulfillments of things to come. These prognostications became more assertive by the ministry over time—fanned by self-proclaimed scholars like Herman Hoeh—until many members had their hearts set upon *very specific fulfillments*, like the church fleeing to a place of safety in 1972 and Christ returning in 1975. When these events did not materialize as hoped, much of the church felt let down, even betrayed. The ministry was forced to scramble to reaffirm their faith and confidence. That is why Mr. Armstrong

made his declaration in 1972 that he *was not a prophet*. This did not mean he was not an inspired servant of God, and we believe the fruit of his work to build the church upon the foundation of Jesus Christ—the doctrine—was proof of his legitimacy as an apostle—one sent. But many of those who could not separate in mind the *prophetic speculation* from *the doctrine* became disheartened and likewise discarded the baby with the bathwater.

That brings us back to our topic of watching. Watch what? It seems that in spite of the fact many of our brethren have been taught (by Mr. Cole) the difference between what was inspired by God and what was not, many still have a tendency to cling to *faulty and uninspired speculations* about the future, just as most of these apostate members in other churches are still doing! Not only was prognosticating details about the place of safety and the return of Christ presumptuous, so was attempting to conclude who would be the Beast and False Prophet! Those are specifics which would require an authorized prophet to tell you, if God chose to send one. But Mr. Armstrong admitted that God *did not raise up a prophet in our time!* That means all conclusions to date about who, what, when, and where these prophecies will be fulfilled are *without authority!*

That means *we do not know at all* that the Beast is strictly manifested in Europe, or that the Pope is the False Prophet. It also means we do not know how the Mark of the Beast will be fulfilled specifically. But, you might argue, did not Mr. Armstrong publish a booklet years ago specifically saying that "Sunday-keeping" would be the Mark? Yes, indeed. But again, who can make such a specific conclusion? Only a legitimate prophet, which Mr. Armstrong confirmed he *was not!* It is amazing that in spite of all of the sermons, articles, and letters written over the years by this ministry (especially Mr. Cole) to delineate the difference between doctrine and prophecy, many of us still seem to have a hard time setting aside uninspired speculations. For some of you who are new to our fellowship and feel this is new (and even shocking) information, please read our articles on the topic of prophecy, either on our website or by requesting them from the church office. Those articles document *the true purpose* for those long-range prophecies being in the Bible. They were not given by God to be a puzzle for each of us to try to decipher in advance. The just shall live by faith, not by being "tipped off" in advance about the specifics.

This is not to say that Europe is inconsequential. For no other reason than that Europe is dominated by modern descendants of Israel, they are certainly key in those events prophesied for the last days. Likewise, the Catholic Church is likely to be key. But anyone who insists upon viewing today's news events through the tinted glasses of the 1940s and 50s is begging to be deceived. The proof of that is found in what happened to the church in the 1970s. The whole church was "watching" intently. But in hindsight we now know we were watching the wrong things!

What did Christ really want us to watch?

Yes, it is important to be aware of things going on in this world. But you and I need to be watching *all quadrants*, not just *one small sector*. How can a sentry on guard duty do his job effectively if he is not watching all 360 degrees? The 1970s should have proven to us that we were like sentries staring at one little sliver of space, fixated so much on believing the threat would come from only one direction. All the while *the real fulfillment* was occurring *right under our very noses* from a sector we had totally ignored!

If we had it to do over again, what should we have been watching, after all? The church!

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. *Therefore watch*, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:29–31).

But while members of the Worldwide Church of God were "watching" Europe and the Catholic Church, the very prophesied apostasy from Truth occurred right in their very midst. Because they were looking in the wrong direction, those *wolves from within* did exactly what Christ said they would do with the full agreement of most of the sheep.

Now once again, the church at large which has swallowed so much false doctrine, is still content in itself, thinking it is "watching" as God requires. But if you do not recognize the real enemy, your watching will always be in vain. And if you continue to think the faulty speculations of the past hold the key for our future, you are setting yourselves up to be duped again. God is a pass master at making fools out of everyone who tries to get ahead of Him. And according to His perfect will, He simply will not let you, me, or anyone else do so. If we have learned anything from the past, it should be to watch without being presumptuous about how it will all play out.

This admonition of Christ to the churches is for you and me today:

*Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain*, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee (Revelation 3:2–3).



The other groups by and large dismiss this admonition because it was part of the warning given to Sardis. It is another of those failed speculations that only the messages to Philadelphia and Laodicea apply today. It is one more way in which Satan has seduced the people of God to fall for his "sight-of-hand" trick. Brethren, don't you do it! This warning is for you and me today.

If you think you already know how that Beast power and False Prophet will manifest, then you are primed to be deceived. If you think you know how the Mark of the Beast will surface and that you will see it a mile away, you are primed to be deceived. And if you do not find a way to truly purge yourself of all of these uninspired past speculations and focus instead upon the faith once delivered—the Truth upon which you will be judged—then you will become one of those slumbering virgins who will be taken unawares by the arrival of Jesus Christ as a thief in the night.

There is no reason for you to be deceived. God has promised that if you are focused upon the right things, you will be given *all that you need, at the time that you need it* to make the correct choices in the heat of battle. Let us, therefore, be *wise* watchers.

## **New Moon**

The new moon, Tebeth (tenth month), will begin on the evening of Monday, December 26. The new moon day is Tuesday, December 27.

## **Trip Schedule**

### **Mr. Brisby:**

December 17 ..... Don Carlos/Sulamay, Mindanao, Philippines

December 24 ..... Alaminos, Luzon, Philippines

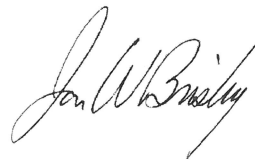
January 21 ..... Port St. Lucie, Florida

January 28 ..... Maryville, Tennessee

## Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 27-7	11-17-11	12-10-11	Resolve to Live the Faith: #7 Be a Peacemaker #2
WSE-RC 27-8	11-17-11	12-17-11	Resolve to Live the Faith: #8 What Is Involved in Attitude? #1
WSE-JB 22-138-25-H1	12-08-11	12-24-11	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: Problems in Marriage #1
WSE-RC 27-9	12-08-11	12-31-11	Resolve to Live the Faith: #9 What Is Involved in Attitude? #2
WSE-RC 27-10	12-08-11	01-07-12	Resolve to Live the Faith: #10 What Is Involved in Attitude? #3
WSE-JB 22-139-25-H2	12-29-11	01-14-12	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: Problems in Marriage #2

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby