

February 2019

Dear Brethren:

Many of you are aware that we are in the process of final editing for a major book release coming this year. *A Peculiar Treasure: The Enduring Legacy of Herbert & Loma Armstrong* hopefully will be in print by early summer. Those of you receiving our *Announcement Letter* each month are receiving more details on this project along the way. The material included here for you this month is taken from what will become Chapter Fourteen of the new book. The title of that chapter will be *The Prophecy Debacle*, and seeks to provide perspective on the history of prophecy speculation within our parent organization. We hope that this material will be of help to you and many more who will read it in the future.

### **Chapter Fourteen—The Prophecy Debacle**

If it is possible that Herbert Armstrong was indeed used by God to reveal biblical Truths concerning the real meaning of salvation for mankind, how then do we explain the failures that occurred with his prophetic speculations?

As already shown, the "hook" of connecting biblical prophecies to current events was a huge factor in attracting people to the Radio Church of God. Many were strongly affected by prognostications that we were living "in the last days," and that many of the Bible's long-range prophecies would be fulfilled "in our time." But the failure of apocalyptic events to climax as expected in the 1970s led to the "1972 Syndrome," as many members became discouraged and restless, clamoring for changes. Many simply gave up their belief altogether and walked away. If then God was truly involved, how do we account for these realities? How is it possible that Herbert Armstrong was not *a false prophet*?

### **Herbert Armstrong Not a Prophet**

For all of Mr. Armstrong's focus upon and expounding of Bible prophecies, he never actually claimed to be a "prophet." Is that surprising? And what exactly would that mean anyhow? Let him define it himself:

Thousands know that I, personally, have been called and chosen for a very definite commission in God's service. But I have definitely NOT been called to be a PROPHET — except as that word, Biblically used, does sometimes refer to a minister or speaker — one who proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Emphatically I am NOT a prophet, in the sense of one to whom God speaks specially and directly, revealing personally a future event to happen or new truth, or new and special instruction direct from God — separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible. And I never have claimed to be.

*There is no such human prophet living today! (Tomorrow's World, February 1972, Personal, p. 1)*

This statement had to be written to the whole church in 1972 because, in spite of never having claimed to be one given *divine insight* into future details, the church had indeed come to attribute such powers to Mr. Armstrong. If it seems that this is merely a legalistic parsing of words, that is exactly how many in the church may well have viewed it also. Regardless, the reality was that expectations of church members had been elevated to anticipate the return of Jesus Christ by the mid-1970s. When it became clear in 1972 that this would not happen, a lot of backpedaling had to be done. But unlike other churches that have leaders claiming to have received *divine insight* through *dreams or visions* to declare the who, what, where, and when of events that will take place in the future, Herbert Armstrong never did that. His statement to the church was accurate. But he also acknowledged why he was being forced to make such a clarification in early 1972:

It has never been our intention to SET DATES! Time after time, I have said — Garner Ted Armstrong has said — our literature has stated — "WE DO NOT SET DATES!"

Yet, in our human zeal and enthusiasm for getting this greatest mission on earth done, we have a few times come close to it or appeared to — and that we deeply regret (*Tomorrow's World*, February 1972, Personal, p. 30).

Here is an example of one such *zealous speculation* concerning future events:

While I EMPHASIZE, we cannot set dates, yet I am prepared to say now, for the first time, the second coming of Christ COULD happen during this coming decade, which we enter later this very week. Don't under any circumstances take that as setting a date -- but we are now far closer to the END OF THIS WORLD -- and the beginning of the happy and peaceful

WORLD TOMORROW than people realize! TIME IS SHORT! (*Co-Worker Letter*, December 29, 1969)

This is not the kind of wording that would be used by a cult leader claiming to have received *inspiration from on high* about specific dates for future events. It admits to being a speculation. But that does not change the fact that such wording caused members to get their hopes up nonetheless. It is no different than a daddy promising to "try" to take his child to the zoo on the morrow. It is not an absolute commitment, but the child's disappointment is no less severe if that outing fails to materialize.

It is also true that Mr. Armstrong's underlings were often *less constrained* in their prognostic assertions than was he. Evangelist Roderick Meredith is a good example. Notice some of his quotes from the 1950s and 60s:

After 1965, we are destined to run into increasing trouble with the Gentile nations. America and Britain will begin to suffer from *trade embargoes* imposed by the brown and oriental races. . . . We will begin to experience the pangs of *starvation* and the *scarcity* of goods! (*The Plain Truth*, August 1957, p. 6)

You might as well wake up and FACE FACTS! The world you live in won't be here 15 years from now! (*The Plain Truth*, December 1963, p. 7)

Frankly, literally *dozens* of prophesied events indicate that this final *revival* of the Roman Empire in Europe—and its bestial PERSECUTION of multitudes of Bible-believing Christians—will take place within *the next seven to ten years of YOUR LIFE!* (*The Plain Truth*, February 1965, p. 48.)

Many—not just a few—of Mr. Armstrong's helpers made such unreserved statements over the years, in writings and in sermons, and 1972 is when those ill-advised chickens came home to roost.

Interestingly, Mr. Armstrong previously had already identified these *expectations* as a problem within the church. He was not happy with the prospect of people being members for the wrong reason:

Reports indicate that many have "come in" to God's Church in this manner: They have come to really SEE and KNOW that this is, truly, GOD'S Church. They know there is terrible WORLD TROUBLE just ahead. They have heard how God's Church is to be taken to a PLACE OF SAFETY. . . .

So these people come in, selfishly, for a sort of spiritual and physical SECURITY -- to assure PROTECTION when the Great Tribulation bursts upon the world! But they are NOT themselves "on fire for GOD!" They are spiritual DRONES! And God will not give them protection! (*Co-Worker Letter*, March 2, 1967, pp. 6–7)

If Herbert Armstrong did not claim to possess special divine insight into times, places, and dates for future fulfillment, it confirms that in that sense he was not claiming to be a prophet. And if he was not a prophet, the fact that he disappointed the church with failed personal speculations likewise would not constitute being *a false prophet*. But again, that is not how it felt to many of his disappointed followers.

### **The Original Purpose of Prophecy Emphasis**

What was the real purpose—the intent—of Mr. Armstrong in seeking to be specific about Bible prophecy in light of current world events? Why was he doing it? Was it to make people think he was a prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah? If not, then why did he focus so much upon those long-range prophecies in the Scriptures? The answer is found in his own writings, for those who desire to understand.

1. He sought to confirm that the promises of God from antiquity have indeed come true. He leveraged evidence of *past fulfillment* of God's *prophetic promises* to substantiate the very validity of the Bible. Key in this was proving that God indeed fulfilled His promises to the physical descendants of Abraham:

This promise never has been fulfilled in the Jews. It cannot be "spiritualized" away by interpreting it as being inherited only through Christ. It could not pertain to the Church, for there is but ONE true Church acknowledged in the Bible, and it is not a nation, or a group of nations, but ONE Church of called-out individuals scattered through ALL nations. Yet this amazing promise MUST stand fulfilled, unless we are to deny the Bible and God's sacred Word!

Here is the enigma of the ages! Is this a divine promise unkept? Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll [a nineteenth-century agnostic orator] lost faith in God and rejected the Bible because they believed these tremendous national promises were never fulfilled.

The very fate of the Bible as the revealed Word of God — the evidence of the existence of God — hangs on the answer to this momentous question. The Jewish people did not fulfill these promises. They do not

refer to the Church. The world with its great church leaders does not know of any such fulfillment. Did God fail? Or has He made good this colossal promise unknown to the world? (*The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, 1967, p. 32)

2. He sought to prove that the Bible, though ancient, is a living book, speaking of events transpiring *in our very time*, not just about things that are past:

Prophecy is the proof of *divine revelation*! If One, in the Bible, speaking and claiming to be God, can make prophecies and tell what is going to happen in the future to nations, to cities, to empires, then if it actually happens *in every case*, and without a miss, you'll know *that* was a real God speaking.

But, if it were some person writing this, some *human mortal* writing in ignorance, groping in superstition, making great boasts, and claiming that he could foretell what was going to happen to proud cities, to nations, to great empires, and then it never happens, you know that *that* man was merely writing make-believe *out of his own imagination*.

Yes, prophecy is the proof of God, the *proof* of the divine revelation of the Bible. Prophecy is a taunting challenge that the skeptic *dares not accept*! (*The Proof of the Bible*; HWA, 1958, p. 5)

So this confirms the second significant reason that Bible prophecy was a major part of his emphasis. It offered hope that there really are solutions for man's troubles, no matter how ominous are the events transpiring on the world stage. It was a key aspect of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

3. He sought to convince people that time was short, that a sense of urgency was imperative, and that they needed to act immediately to prepare their own lives for the end.

Conclusion: Mussolini is the head of the Beast of Revelation 17, raising up the modern Roman empire. Last admonition: "Stop and think! WHY should Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, the rulers of Japan, wish to plunge the world into war? WHY? You cannot answer. They do not know. They are YIELDING to impulses and suggestions. God help us to pray! We need His protection" (*The Plain Truth*, February 1938, "How Demons Are Plunging The World Into War," p. 3).

This was an assertion that man has an invisible enemy who is seeking to destroy. Hitler and Mussolini were not final pieces of the puzzle, but it certainly holds true that

they were motivated by *the very same enemy* who has been influencing many world events since the Garden of Eden. The manifestation of these same wicked devices on the world scene in 1938 was just as relevant to people of that day as similar manifestations might be to us today. The rise of dictators in the 1930s was not a proof that the *end of the age* was imminent (even if that is what was anticipated), but the admonition for God's people to take these forces seriously and *to become spiritually converted in heart and mind* was not a vain exercise.

4. To teach that Christ told us *to watch*. Mr. Armstrong taught that we must care about current events in light of Bible prophecy because God said so, and also to avoid becoming deceived.

Jesus Christ thunders to those of us living in the end time, "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). (*Tomorrow's World*, September 1971, "Are You Watching?")

5. To offer the means to "save our skins" from terrible tribulation to come upon the earth.

2550 years from the year of the fall of Babylon ends in 1982. Seven years before that encompass 3 ½ years of tribulation, plus the final trumpet period before Christ takes over. Admonition: Get urgent so you can be spared from tribulation! (*The Plain Truth*, June 1953, by Herman Hoeh, "What Are the Times of the Gentiles?")

So based upon these very specific reasons given for emphasizing long-range biblical prophecy, we have documentation for *why and how* it *originally* became so important within the church. It was never about trying to prove that Herbert Armstrong had some special gift as a soothsayer, but a tool to help God's people establish and preserve a foundation of personal faith in the midst of difficult times.

### **Milk Doctrines vs. Strong Meat**

In hindsight, how much should this *Bible prophecy emphasis* have captivated the more experienced, committed members of the Radio Church of God? Sadly, the original purposes for studying prophecy (listed above) seem to have been forgotten quickly by minister and laymember alike. Think about it. Once someone responded to Mr. Armstrong's radio broadcast, had "proved" that the things he was preaching were

absolutely supported in the Bible, and also had proved by those prophecies that the Bible was truly relevant for people today, should that *novice-level understanding* have continued to be the dominant focus? Put another way, if much of the *stated purpose* of studying prophecy is to confirm that *the Bible is true, that God fulfills His promises*, and that *we live in the end times*, once those truths were *proven* by them, should they have continued to be such a fixation?

Recall that in Mr. Armstrong's own early quest to prove the Bible (when he was still an infant in his own understanding), he studied evolution vs. Creationism, concluding eventually that evolution is bogus. Was that study an end in itself, or merely *a stepping stone* to more important truths? What if he had stopped there, focusing forevermore upon the technicalities of Creation science vs. evolutionary theories, hashing and rehashing that very basic aspect? But he did not do that. Proving that God is real and that the Bible is true is only *a baseline* for going further to learn *the more important aspects* of who and what God really is, what man really is, and what is the true purpose of all of this existence. Once he proved the basics, he built upon it from there. It is even as the Apostle Paul explained:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12–14).

Proving that God is real and that the Bible is true are examples of "milk doctrines." It is merely the *basic foundation* needed before going on to learn what God really requires of us for salvation.

What does that have to do with studying prophecy? Most of the *stated reasons* for pointing *World Tomorrow* radio listeners to long-range prophecy was to help them come to have confidence that God is real, that the Bible is true, and that the Scripture is meaningful for people today. It is the very most basic, rudimentary, foundational instruction! It is all part of the "milk doctrines."

### **Prophecy Becomes a Drug**

Yet, ministers and members of the church became captivated by those long-range Bible prophecies well beyond just proving belief in God and the Bible. Why? They

became convinced that long-range prophecies which *were not yet fulfilled* could be "figured out" in advance, like a puzzle to be deciphered. Recall that this was one of those *legitimized reasons* previously listed (Point #5 above) for studying prophecy—to allow them to be in the right place at the right time when bad things happened, presuming that they could "save their skins" by having advanced knowledge of what was coming.

Many ministers spent their time trying to come up with clever theories that would link Bible prophecies to modern-day nations and individuals on the world scene, not to bolster their own faith in God, but in the hope of becoming known in the church as a "discoverer of new truth." The favorite sermons for many members became those speculating upon the who, what, when, and where of the future, rather than those sermons explaining how to become a better Christian. The word *prophecy* itself became synonymous with *speculation* on *who* in the news today might do *what* in the future. Many members who had been encouraged by Mr. Armstrong to study the Bible in order to grow closer to God, instead used their "study time" as "puzzle solving time." Rather than to use the Bible as a two-edged sword of introspection—to help show where personal faults lay (Hebrews 4:12) and thereafter doing the hard work to break bad habits—it was much more attractive to *study prophecy*. After all, it was private time used to read the Bible, right? So God must be pleased.

### **Understandable but Dangerous**

It is very understandable that people discovering value in God's Master Plan for salvation would become fascinated by what He says in the Bible is coming next. Jesus Christ's disciples were excited and intrigued by His prophecies, and His words made them eager to gain even 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 end of the world? (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 should 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 of us would not have an interest in knowing enough of the specifics so that we can maneuver ourselves out of harm's way? Can any of us honestly say that possessing such knowledge is not 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?

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 that we believe and act upon the promises of God, even when those promises are not yet confirmed for us to see. It means that 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 was exactly the rationale of many in the WCG who became 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 the pieces together. And that is exactly what many of the ministers under Mr. Armstrong believed was true.

## The True Purpose of Long-range Prophecy

But is that really true? The true purpose for those long-range prophecies in the Bible is not what most have ever considered, and in part, because of those mistakes made in the WCG, a much better understanding has since emerged for us, if we will learn from that past.

Here is the secret: God did not intend even for the last-day Church—*His peculiar treasure*—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 that 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 are said to 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 whole story to have any 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 (v. 6) [emphasis mine].

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (v. 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 will befall them, so that *when they actually transpire*, they will 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! If someone claimed to be the Son of God but then picked a confidant who manifested defective character, would that not make a normal person 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 in advance. The final betrayal was happening even as He was speaking. The real value of Jesus' prophecy concerning Judas was for the church in the time of the aftermath. John was selected by God to record this event in his gospel account. It was not just a game of hide and seek. It all had purpose.

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 for 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 by Moses, Isaiah, and many other prophets of old for thousands of years. 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 shew 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 still 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—after Jesus had 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 this God of the Bible 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 no one else will be allowed to have the details in advance. They were not recorded for that purpose. By reading those prophecies, God's church today—wherever it is—can be comforted by understanding the *general blueprint* by which God is working; and when they literally see those things begin to occur, rather than becoming fearful—having their faith destroyed—they can instead be fortified, knowing that it is all happening according to a Master Designer's plan.

The leadership of the Radio Church of God did not understand this principle of *the real purpose* of long-range prophecy. Because of that, serious mistakes were made in allowing church members to hope that Mr. Armstrong and others would tell them, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of [His] coming, and of the end of the world?" Well-meaning but ill-advised speculations destroyed the confidence of many, and it was a key reason for the eventual fracturing and later implosion of that organized body.

But is that fact proof that Herbert Armstrong was a "false prophet"? Or is it possible that God was indeed working through and inspiring him concerning matters of real substance? Was there a difference?

Recall from Chapter Two that wherever you find God's *peculiar treasure*, it will be a body that first receives *divinely revealed doctrine*, but then departs from it *en masse*. That has always been so! The only real question is, what factors would cause *God's true church* to lose faith and to abandon its foundation of Truth? God said it would happen. What would be the cause?

### **Doctrine Is Not Prophecy!**

Another key that Worldwide Church of God members did not possess was understanding the difference between *doctrine* and *prophecy*. Most yet today do not understand that distinction! Yet it provides many of the answers we are seeking.

Doctrine includes the definition of right vs. wrong, an understanding of facts concerning the physical and the spiritual realms, and a general understanding of God's plan in dealing with humanity. Doctrine includes everything His called people need in order to know what pleases Him and what displeases Him, how to worship Him properly, and what to eschew in order to avoid His displeasure. It also includes an understanding of who and what God is, who and what man is, and the general blueprint for understanding the Master Plan that God is using from beginning to end. All of this is a succinct definition of *doctrine*.

Separate and apart from this is *prophecy*. Members of the Worldwide Church of God were never told there was a difference. To them, dabbling in prophecy was part of "the doctrine" of the church. So when many speculations failed, they counted it as evidence of "false doctrine." But that is not true!

Prophecy is about God recording advanced details of events to come, and for particular reason. We have already discussed the purpose of *long-range* prophecy. It was recorded by God so that His people will not be shaken when they experience severe tribulation, and also to attest *in advance* that God is carrying out a very purposeful plan *exactly as He has predetermined*. When events transpire that *exactly match* what God prophesied in advance, it is proof that a Master Architect is at work.

Short-range prophecy is something we have not yet addressed. What is the difference? *Short-range prophecies* are given to substantiate both God *and the prophet representing Him*. Such prophecies are understood quickly, due to the limited time period which they involve. Examples include Moses testifying in advance to Pharaoh what God was about to do (Exodus 12–13), Macaiah testifying to Ahab what God was about to do (1 Kings 22:14–38), and Jeremiah facing off against Hananiah to prove which one of

them was authorized to speak in God's name (Jeremiah 28:5–17). In these cases, God used *prophecy* to prove that a servant had been given a special commission by God to achieve a particular purpose. That purpose is always *to communicate a vital message to a target audience*, not to elevate the prophet for his own vanity.

Regardless, whether we are talking about *short-range* or *long-range* prophecy, we are talking about God communicating/recording special messages for particular purposes at particular times. But this is all *totally separate* from doctrine—the revealed knowledge of right vs. wrong for *all of humanity* that applies *at all times*, in every age.

Why is this distinction important? The proof that we are seeking in identifying God's *peculiar treasure* will be found in examining *the doctrine*, even as outlined in Chapter One. That is our true yardstick. And as documented in Chapter Two, wherever that true church is found, it will be a physical body prophesied to go astray in time. What would cause it to do exactly what God said would occur? If the true church (physically) always holds fast to God's Truth, makes good decisions administratively, and avoids all errors in judgment (like in dealing with prophetic speculation), then there would be no causation for disappointment and resultant apostasy. Yet that apostasy was prophesied by God, so there likewise has to be a cause in the form of *mistakes made!*

Why is it not possible that the *unwise handling of prophecy* could have been one of those causative factors that God foresaw? If that is perhaps true, then it would help to preserve the possibility that Herbert Armstrong's work was indeed inspired by God, doctrinally, in spite of the errors prophetically and administratively.

Is that just grasping at straws? Is it an attempt to justify the legitimacy of Mr. Armstrong's work at any cost? As always, you must be the judge. But for those of you who continue to find value in the very unique *doctrinal teachings* of Herbert Armstrong—explanations from the Bible that make more sense than any other religion out there—then just maybe this clarification about prophecy (its history within the Worldwide Church of God and its proper role in the greater scheme of things) will be of benefit.

Your Servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the typed name.

Jon W. Brisby