

ELIJAH AND THE TWO WITNESSES

The end-time Elijah and the two witnesses are converted godly individuals who feature prominently in the broad panorama of end time prophecy on the side of good against the forces of evil that will break loose at the end of this age.

Who are these individuals, how do we identify them and what is their role at this time? Are we talking about two or three different people? Is the end-time Elijah one of the two witnesses or is he someone different to them?

Many individuals who desire to be noticed or have some claim to being special often like to claim that they are one of these good guys and the church has had its fair share of people do just that. I have heard of a couple of humorous stories along these lines.

In the Worldwide Church of God when Herbert Armstrong was still alive someone came to the Pasadena head office and claimed to be Elijah the prophet. The person who greeted him was rumoured to say in return, "Sorry, sir, we are a non-profit organisation". On another occasion three guys rolled up and one of them said, "We are the two witnesses." Confused, the men who greeted them said, "Come back to us when you have figured which of the three of you are the two witnesses."

"The Elijah who is to come"

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6)

What is clear from the scriptures when we put them all together on this subject is that there are two fulfillments of this prophecy – an earlier fulfillment by John the Baptist preceding Christ's first coming and a latter end-time fulfillment by another individual preceding Christ's second coming.

I quote from Raymond McNair's excellent article "The End-Time Elijah – Has He Come Yet?" who quotes the other related scriptures and explains this point:

Christ made in **Matthew 11**: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John [the Baptist]. And if you are willing to receive it, **he is Elijah who is to come**" (vv. 13-14). So was John the Baptist actually Elijah the person? Clearly not. Indeed, when the Jewish priests and Levites asked John, "Are you Elijah?," he replied, "I am not" (**John 1:21**) — that is, he was not the same person who had walked the earth 900 years earlier. So why did Christ identify him as Elijah, as prophesied in Malachi?

The explanation can be found in the message the archangel Gabriel brought to John's father before John was born: "And [John] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in **the spirit and power of Elijah**, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (**Luke 1:16-17**). In essence, John came holding a similar office and bearing a similar commission to that of Elijah—to do an Elijah-like work. John was empowered by the same motivating force and spirit that Elijah was.

There are other elements to John's mission that should be brought out. His father Zecharias prophesied of him, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;

for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (**vv. 76-79**). John was no doubt aware that he was to fulfill these prophecies as his father must have told him of them as he grew up.

Indeed, when he denied being Elijah, and the priests and Levites asked just who he was then, John identified himself as "the voice of one" foretold in **Isaiah 40 (John 1:21-23)**, and the Gospels confirm this (**Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:3-6**). Notice the citation in Luke: "And [John] went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: **'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."**'"

Zecharias' prophecy was in part a reiteration of Isaiah's prophecy—and of another prophecy about preparing the way before the Lord that had been given in Malachi. Jesus said that John "is he of whom it is written [in **Malachi 3:1**]: **'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You'**" (**Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:27**). This prophecy is directly linked to **Isaiah 40** in **Mark 1:2-3**. Putting all this together, we see that the "voice of one" and the "messenger"—both preparing the way for the Lord—as well as the "Elijah to come," are all the same prophesied figure. But there is a major element yet missing here.

John certainly prepared the way before Christ's human ministry—but that did not immediately precede the "dreadful day of the Lord" heralding Christ's return in power and glory. When the disciples witnessed what is known as the "Transfiguration"—a vision of the Kingdom wherein Jesus, Moses and Elijah were all glorified—they asked Christ, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus answered and said to them, **'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him....'** Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (**Matt. 17:10-12**).

They understood this because, as we've seen, He had earlier *told* them that John was "Elijah to come" in **Matthew 11**. But in **Matthew 17**, John the Baptist had already been *dead* for some time (**13:1-12**).

So in the passage just quoted, Christ was referring to *more than one* "Elijah"—one who had "come already" (i.e. John) and one whom Christ said "is [yet] coming" or "SHALL first come" (KJV) and "WILL restore all things." The restoring of all things, then, is another element of the Elijah commission—to be fulfilled by, at least, the later Elijah.

Herbert Armstrong or One of the Two Witnesses?

The burning question in the Church of God relating to the end-time Elijah is whether this Elijah role was fulfilled by Herbert W Armstrong or will the end-time Elijah be one of the two witnesses?

The case for Elijah being one of the two end-time witnesses is built on the fact that the two witnesses do miracles such as those specific ones performed by Moses and Elijah giving the impression that these two men are types of Moses and Elijah.

In **Revelation 11:6** we read: "These have authority to shut up the heaven, that it may not rain in the days of their prophecy [like Elijah]. And they have authority over waters to turn

them to blood, and to strike the earth with every plague [like Moses], as often as they desire.”

This point does give strong support for the end-time Elijah being one of the two witnesses but is it enough and how well does Herbert W Armstrong fit this prophesied role?

I know personally I originally believed Mr Armstrong fulfilled this role during my time in the Worldwide Church of God but after this point was brought to my attention I leaned more in favour of this individual being one of the two witnesses.

I was in the Global Church of God at the time and certain of Rod Meredith's views on this subject I found persuasive. I remember having some friendly debate on the pros and cons of Herbert Armstrong being the end-time Elijah with some girls who came into Global after being in the Philadelphia Church of God which go to the extreme of requiring you to believe he was before being able to attend their group (sounds similar to the Muslim requirement of confessing Mohammed is Allah's prophet).

The nagging doubt that I had about Mr Armstrong related to how well he fulfilled the primary role of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa in strengthening family relationships.

The two real concerns that I had, firstly, was how could Mr Armstrong be the one to fulfill this role when probably only around 5% of the church youth stuck to the truth at the time of the doctrinal apostasy and secondly, how good a role model was Herbert Armstrong in this. To some degree his own family had a degree of dysfunctionality to it. He was estranged to one of his daughters and later in life estranged from his son, Garner Ted, who he disfellowshipped, who then formed his own group, the Church of God, International.

I understand that children have minds of their own and can still rebel regardless of how good the parents are. Just take Adam and Eve rebelling against God in the Garden of Eve and Lucifer's rebellion before that.

The young ladies who were on the pro-HWA side of the argument brought up the programs in Worldwide that Mr Armstrong developed for the youth in his defence. Later I read the article I quoted from above by Raymond McNair who did an outstanding job elaborating on that point which satisfied my doubts on that point as well as re-inforcing one critical part of the end-time Elijah's role that was overwhelmingly done by Herbert Armstrong, a part of the role that is nearly impossible to be fulfilled by one of the two witnesses.

What will the end-time Elijah look like in appearance? In **2 Kings 1:8** Elijah is described as a hairy man. In an excellent sermon called "The Ten Words" on the importance of evangelising our children Ron Dart gave his opinion that, like John the Baptist, the end-time Elijah would be a rough individual still to come on the scene and possibly be rough in appearance as both Elijah and John the Baptist are often portrayed and, who knows, could come out of left field driving a Harley. This reminded me of the Tribe of Judah church near my home at the time that had many bikers in it. I'd joke that there was a rival group called the Tribe of Benjamin formed after a doctrinal clash over what motorcycle Jesus would ride.

On this point I have my doubts but He does say that His thoughts are not our thoughts and He does have a penchant for doing the unexpected. Formerly a part of Garner Ted Armstrong's, Church of God, International, it is no surprise that Ron Dart would not acknowledge Herbert Armstrong as having filled this role of the end-time Elijah.

Might the end-time Elijah be someone rough in appearance as Elijah and John the Baptist are often portrayed? The Bible says nothing specific about his appearance, only that he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

While Mr Armstrong may have worn pin-striped suits no-one can argue with the fact that he shared their fire and brimstone speaking style, both very powerful and often quite blunt at times!

How Well Do the Contenders Fill the Two Roles of the Elijah to Come?

There are two key components to the role of the end-time Elijah:

- 1) He would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa (**Malachi 4:5-6**)
- 2) He will restore all things (**Matthew 17:11**)

How well does Herbert Armstrong and one of the two witnesses fill these two separate job roles of the end-time Elijah?

Let's look at the first job role of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa. How well did Herbert Armstrong fill this role?

Raymond McNair in his article "The End-Time Elijah – Has He Come Yet?" writes the following about how well Herbert Armstrong filled this role:

There is the commission in **Malachi 4:5-6** that the Elijah would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers lest God strike the earth with a curse—that is, wipe out its inhabitants. We have often associated these verses with someone strengthening families, especially within God's Church. And there is no doubt that Mr. Armstrong did this.

Besides restoring the truth about the very *purpose* of the family, he taught parents the importance of loving and properly rearing their children. And for the development and godly training of the Church's young people, Mr. Armstrong instituted three Imperial Schools, established several summer camps, published *Y.E.S. Bible Lessons* and the *Youth* magazine, and created Youth Opportunities United (YOU)—all for turning our young people's hearts to God and their parents. But though all of this may be intended by Malachi's prophecy, there may also be a dual application.

Turning the hearts of the children to the fathers is specifically interpreted in **Luke 1** as turning "many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God" and turning "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just"—again, to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (**vv. 16-17**). This makes sense because immediately before giving the Elijah prophecy in **Malachi 4**, God says, "**Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb [Mount Sinai] for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments**" (**v. 4**). Essentially, then, we may perhaps understand the prophecy this way. The "fathers" are the patriarchs and prophets, whose hearts' desire was for their descendants to be blessed through obedience to the Lord, which they taught...

So was Herbert W. Armstrong the Elijah to come? Or will it be someone else—perhaps one of the two witnesses? Remember that there was to be a "voice of ONE crying in the wilderness"—not the voice of TWO witnesses. What is clearly indicated is a *lone voice* in a wilderness of spiritual confusion—one man fulfilling this role, just as John the Baptist did. Now that doesn't mean this person would be *absolutely* alone and would have no help. Elijah ran three schools of the prophets—in Jericho, Bethel and Gilgal—and his students, including Elisha, assisted him. John the Baptist also had disciples (**John 3:25**). And in an interesting parallel to Elijah, Herbert Armstrong

founded three Ambassador College campuses—in California, Texas and England—to train ministers to assist him in his work. Still, Mr. Armstrong could clearly be described as the "voice of ONE."

If the end-time Elijah is still to come how can this future individual perform more than what Herbert Armstrong has done in this area? All efforts by any future leader in the church with regards to the development of our young people would simply be a continuance of the same things that Mr Armstrong instituted such as summer camps, youth magazines and programs and so on and we could add Ambassador College to the list of things Mr Armstrong established for the development of our young people. He did far more than any single individual with regards to this. Even in the United Church of God, the redevelopment of these programs, camps and magazines along with the establishment of Amabassador Bible Center has been a collective effort which no single individual has stood out in doing.

Those things that he instituted in the church made a real difference in keeping a high number of second generation children interested in and stick with the church. It was only after the watering down of the truth under his successor that saw a drastic reduction of the number of second generation members in the church and who fell away at the time of the apostasy.

The Elijah to come "will restore all things"

I said before that there is one critical part of the end-time Elijah's role that was overwhelming done by Herbert Armstrong, a part of the role that is nearly impossible to be fulfilled by one of the two witnesses. What is that role? After John the Baptist had already died Jesus said that Elijah "will restore all things" (**Matthew 17:11**).

The restoration of SO MUCH truth to the Church of God by God through Herbert Armstrong is itself an overwhelming proof of Herbert Armstrong being the end-time Elijah (see www.rogerswebsite/others/18-Restored-Truths.htm for the details of what was restored).

IF this Elijah spoken of by Malachi is yet to come, in all seriousness, WHAT ON EARTH could this individual restore that would overshadow the restoration of truth that God did through Herbert Armstrong?

Raymond McNair makes these comments about this in his article "The End-Time Elijah – Has He Come Yet?":

Of course, **the strongest supporting evidence we have for Mr. Armstrong being the Elijah to come is what he RESTORED to the Church.** Remember, Christ said the end-time Elijah would "restore all things." Now as we've seen, the Bible does elsewhere mention the "times of restoration of all things," but this clearly refers to the reign of Jesus Christ (**Acts 3:19-21**) — when God's direct rule and precious Truth will be restored to this earth as a whole.

The Elijah work occurs *before* Christ's return—preparing the way. The restoration under the end-time Elijah is clearly on a smaller scale. Does he, then, restore God's way, including God's government, to the people of physical Israel? No—as they are destroyed "for lack of knowledge" (**Hosea 4:6**) and will not repent, as many scriptures show, until after Christ returns.

What Mr. Armstrong said makes much more sense—that the restoration described is to *God's Church*, those who are truly His people. And what Mr. Armstrong did restore to the Church is staggering to grasp. As Joseph Tkach and the Worldwide Editorial

Staff noted in the 1986 article mentioned earlier, "Without Herbert W. Armstrong's legacy of these 18 restored truths—there isn't much left."

Further, consider that if Mr. Armstrong *wasn't* the Elijah to come, the restoration is yet to happen. This would mean that we are still far from the faith once delivered—and that either Mr. Armstrong was wrong about most of what he said or the truth he restored is insignificant with respect to what is *still* to be restored from the Apostolic Era.

Yet can you imagine all that Mr. Armstrong restored—which includes the understanding of who and what God is, as well as the overall purpose and plan of God for mankind—being paled into insignificance? This seems highly unlikely.

Notice the scope of what Mr. Armstrong did with God's help, after beginning with only 19 people. He trained thousands of ministers, teachers, office personnel, etc. to serve in the Work of God. Hundreds of congregations were raised up all over the globe, and were pastored by hundreds of ministers, who were well-trained at the three Ambassador College campuses to serve the needs of those who were baptized and became members of the Worldwide Church of God. Mr. Armstrong and those working under him probably baptized more than 125,000 people during the course of his ministry. As mentioned earlier, even after thousands had died through natural death or had dropped out of the Church, about 150,000 were in regular attendance at Sabbath services when Mr. Armstrong died.

At its apex, the *Plain Truth* magazine had more than eight million subscribers—more than *Time* and *Newsweek*—and thus an estimated 20 million people reading it each month. One in eight Canadian homes received it! The *Good News* magazine, the *Worldwide News* and many other publications were sent out to hundreds of thousands. Hundreds of powerful booklets, books and reprint articles—along with a well-written Bible correspondence course—were produced and mailed out from Pasadena by the millions.

Over several decades, the *World Tomorrow* radio and television broadcasts were heard and viewed by many millions, with weekly responses at the end ranging anywhere from 20,000 to 80,000. In fact, the telecast was one of the top religious programs in the country. So whereas John the Baptist preached to mere thousands for just a year and a half, Mr. Armstrong preached to scores of *millions* over the course of his 52-year ministry. Thus, his work was thousands of times bigger than that of John! **Indeed, it is possible that Mr. Armstrong reached more people with the Truth than all of God's ministers in history combined.**

During his later ministry, Mr. Armstrong, like Paul, brought the Gospel before world leaders (**cf. Acts 9:15**). He had personal visits with presidents, prime ministers and kings of nations, small and great, as well as various other leaders, including the secretary-general of the United Nations. Mr. Armstrong thus became well known to some of the major leaders of this planet—as the outpouring of condolences from them upon his death can attest. Under Mr. Armstrong, the Worldwide Church of God's beautiful headquarters in Pasadena became a showplace, visited by thousands, including famous people in government, education, music and entertainment. Thousands attended Ambassador Foundation cultural events in the world-renowned Ambassador Auditorium...

Seventh-day Adventists have acknowledged him as single-handedly doing more for the Christian observance of the Sabbath than anyone else in this century...

What about the religious leaders? Was he well-known among *them*? Certainly. Of course, *they* despised him. To them, he was *infamous*—a cult leader who defied their traditional doctrines. Part of their ministries became a reaction to his teachings. The Protestant message that "the law is done away" is not so blatant as it used to be. Shot

so full of holes by Mr. Armstrong, they've had to increasingly employ crafty wording to disguise it. Nevertheless, they actually *copied* a lot of concepts from him—such as the meaning of God's Feasts, a great deal of understanding about end-time prophecy and the way to go about proclaiming their message. Mr. Armstrong was a pioneer in broadcasting the Gospel through the electronic media.

A few years ago, one religious commentator remarked that he thought Herbert W. Armstrong had made a bigger impact on religion in America than any other man of the 20th century! Indeed, his dynamic message became a powerful witness to *many* nations.

It is this point about restoring all things more than anything else that persuades me to believe that Herbert Armstrong did, in fact, fulfill the role of the end-time Elijah as opposed to someone still to come like one of the two witnesses.

I still keep that point about the two witnesses doing Elijah-like miracles in the back of my mind but I cannot conceive of how one of them could restore all things in a way that would overshadow the restoration of so much truth in God's church that God did through Herbert Armstrong.

A Balanced View of Herbert Armstrong

Opinions of Herbert Armstrong vary greatly and often are at one extreme or the other. It concerns me the lack of balance that people have when it comes to their feelings and opinions of Herbert Armstrong.

Some go to the extreme of over-quoting him relative to the amount they quote scripture and putting the man on such a pedestal that it almost borders on worship.

The more common extreme is to ignore, put down or show little appreciation for the phenomenal things that God did through that man which are beyond reasonable doubt.

Virtually all of those ministers and members who put him down in the Church of God learned ALMOST ALL of the fundamental truths through Herbert Armstrong. For this, these critics should be grateful for that which God did through him, regardless of his faults.

Yes, there was corruption in the church and Herbert Armstrong had his share of flaws but did God consider that it had reached the point to disqualify the man?

While size is not the be-all-and-end-all and no proof of itself of being on-track (if it was we should all be Catholics), neither is growth irrelevant either as a sign of God's favour.

Consider that the growth of the WCG climbed consistently every year up until the 1972 when it hit its first negative growth year. For the rest of the "liberal" 70's the church's annual growth was negative or near zero with one highly unusual exception in 1974.

After doctrinal changes approved by Herbert Armstrong to the teachings on Pentecost and Divorce & Remarriage, the church had its first major split and lost 2000 members YET the church grew by an amazing 14%. Was this is a sign from God encouraging the church to be united and supportive of these changes?

After the church was "put back on track" from 1980 to 1986, after being stagnant for nearly a decade, the church grew 50% from 60 000 to 90 000 baptised members at the time of Mr Armstrong's death.

In light of that, we can ask the question, would God have blessed the church with that much new growth (and compare that with the lack of growth we've seen in the last decade) if, in God's eyes, Herbert Armstrong had sinned the point where he had lost the Holy Spirit? I would say that it is highly unlikely, if not impossible!

One part of his work that was both fascinating and also criticised was his witness to kings and world leaders. There are two criticisms leveled at Herbert Armstrong for this part of his work. One is that many of the meetings with world leaders were bought and the other is that he never mentioned Jesus Christ when he spoke to them.

I put the first question to his aide during the 1980's, Aaron Dean. He is remarkably frank man who is not afraid to admit when things are not done correctly even within his own church organisation. This trait really struck me in several conversations that I have had with him personally and I have a great degree of respect for him for his frankness and honesty. When I asked him the question he said that he could not vouch for the meetings in the 1970's but he says that none of the dozens of meetings in the 1980's were bought. Even that many personal invitations are quite extraordinary even if some were "bought" in the 1970's.

As to those in the 1970's most or all of them were genuine and the story of how it all got started is discussed in the Behind the Work film for 1985 which you can obtain the DVD by emailing to COGcds@worldnet.att.net. Some of the German Plain Truth staff had to go to a different seller to obtain a particular camera they needed for photos they were taking for the Plain Truth magazine. The camera seller had some excellent colour photos which the German staff were keen to acquire but were told they could not buy them off him because they were personal photos of the King of Belgium, who he was a friend of.

The camera seller did, however, ask for a copy of an Ambassador College envoy. He, in turn, without their knowledge showed it to the King of Belgium. The king was so struck by the quality of the college and the values presented that he dearly wanted to meet the man who ran the college and offered a personal invitation for Mr Armstrong to visit him. King Leopold was incredibly impressed with Herbert Armstrong and the Work that they struck up an extraordinary friendship. Many of the meetings in the years to come were as a result of King Leopold's praise of Herbert Armstrong to other world leaders he would come in contact with. Others came through other contacts he met in these "high circles" who spread the word about him. In the May 1971 co-worker letter Mr Armstrong wrote:

"An interesting example of this, was an incident that occurred during a reception at the residence of the United States Ambassador of Nepal this past February...I had just returned from a visit with King Mahendra at the palace. We were hosting a dinner for important local men and their wives at the hotel that evening, but stopped off at the reception to which we had been invited.

"The Ambassador in Kathmandu [Nepal's capital] happens to be a lady, and her husband is Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker at Saigon—U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam. He and his four or five chief assistants were in Kathmandu for the weekend.

"On learning that we had just come from meetings with the King, and with the Crown Prince the evening before—following meetings with President Giri of India, and Prime Minister Golda Meir of Israel—and on the previous trip with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India—at which time King Leopold was traveling with us—and that two days later we were to have a private meeting with the King of Thailand (Siam)—this government official looked puzzled, and asked, 'Well how in the world do you do it? We've been trying for six months to arrange meetings with some of these people, and yet we haven't been able.' And they had the power and prestige of the U.S. government!

“I couldn’t tell him how I arranged these meetings—because I didn’t! Could you believe a Higher Power than the United States government opened these doors?”

One criticism from his son, Garner Ted Armstrong (GTA), was that he never mentioned the name Jesus Christ when giving a witness to these world leaders. Herbert Armstrong did give a common message where he spoke on how the cause of most of the world’s troubles are spiritual in nature explaining the great paradox of why so much evil at the same time as great technological progress. He spoke of the two ways of life – the way of GIVE versus the way of GET and that man would get close to the point where he would destroy himself but would be saved when the great Creator would intervene in this world’s affairs and bring peace to this world.

I would respond to GTA’s criticism by saying that these individuals were intelligent people who would be well aware of the basics of Christianity and who Jesus Christ is and after his public presentations Herbert Armstrong would have been able to be more detailed and speak privately about Jesus Christ for those who were interested to know more.

The above mentioned DVD, “Behind the Work 1985”, has some fascinating footage of his meetings with Anwar Sadat of Egypt and the Prime Minister of Israel along with much more of his work as an unofficial Ambassador for World Peace.

Some very good resources for getting a balanced view of what happened in the church and what criticisms of Herbert Armstrong were valid and which were not include the following - the booklet entitled “HWA - His Life in Proper Perspective” by the Restored Church of God at <http://www.thercg.org/books/hwahlipp.pdf> and also “15 Accusations and Truthful Responses about Herbert W. Armstrong” by Bob Thiel at <http://www.cogwriter.com/hwaacc.htm>.

What needs to be remembered by those who do not have a positive attitude towards Mr Armstrong is this – what man in the 20th century would Satan **HATE THE MOST** and want to discredit? Given the phenomenal work God did through Herbert Armstrong wouldn’t Satan HATE and try to DISCREDIT him FAR MORE than any other person going around?

Of course, God’s servants make some horrendous mistakes. King David made some horrendous ones, even when you don’t count the Bathsheba affair, not to mention other servants of God yet God balanced that out in His view of them by remembering their positives as well and factoring in their overall attitude of trying to overcome their faults.

The key is repentance and genuinely trying to overcome. How much have you sinned? How much mercy and “slack” do you ask for and need from God as you try to overcome? Are you generous with the way you look at your own friends who struggle with big sins but are genuinely trying? If you are, do you give the same “slack” to Herbert Armstrong when it comes to his faults?

Many people are much more harsh on Herbert Armstrong compared with the mercy they give to themselves and to their own friends. Being **BALANCED** with our view of Herbert Armstrong means looking at him with the same consistent mercy we give our good friends. We know they hurt us on occasion and have their share of faults yet they are trying hard to do the right thing and we give them slack to the degree they try to overcome them. Herbert Armstrong deserves the same level of mercy in our eyes **ESPECIALLY** when you factor in how **MUCH** good God did through the man in restoring so much truth and bringing so many people into the church.

Does the End-Time Elijah Have to be a Prophet?

For the answer to this question I quote again from Raymond McNair:

Next, let's observe the fact that God said He would send Elijah "the prophet." Indeed, the original Elijah was a prophet. And so was John the Baptist—in fact, Christ called him "*more than a prophet*" (**Luke 7:26**). Some have argued that this disqualifies Mr. Armstrong since he wasn't a prophet—and then point to the prophesying of the two witnesses. To answer this, let's first notice a problem in that only "the prophet" is in quotes above. The Bible says "Elijah the prophet"—or simply, the Prophet Elijah. It doesn't say "a prophet in the spirit of Elijah." Indeed, just as the Elijah to come is not Elijah himself, there is no clear requirement that he be a prophet either. Rather, he simply comes in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet.

Yet let's carry this further and, for the moment, assume that being a "prophet" *is* a requirement. Now it's true that Mr. Armstrong claimed he was not a prophet in the sense of seeing visions or actually hearing God tell him what to say: "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" (*Tomorrow's World*, Feb. 1972, p. 1). But Mr. Armstrong long taught that "prophesying" could be interpreted as simply *speaking for God*—that is, *inspired preaching* from the Bible (cf. p. 1).

Indeed, though John the Baptist *may* have heard a supernatural voice or received visions from God, we have no record that he did. He may have simply communicated the meaning of Old Testament prophecies. Yet we would all acknowledge him as an inspired preacher who, Christ explained, was a prophet. Likewise, although the *two witnesses* are to "prophesy," the Bible doesn't specifically say whether or not they will see visions or hear voices. As for Mr. Armstrong, then, we certainly believe that he was often inspired in preaching from the Word of God.

Besides that, we understand that Mr. Armstrong was an *apostle* who was taught what to say directly by Jesus Christ—that is, by the Bible, which is essentially Jesus Christ, the *Word* of God, in print. **And the office of apostle, it should be realized, supersedes that of prophet—and includes it.** Paul wrote that Christ "gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists [i.e. preachers of the Gospel], and some pastors [i.e. shepherds] and teachers" (**Eph. 4:11**).

That these are ministerial ranks and not merely separate job functions is apparent from the fact that some of the "tasks" described are the same. For instance, *apostle* means "one sent forth"—that is, with the Gospel—and *evangelist* means "preacher of the Gospel." What's the difference? Their scope of oversight and accompanying ministerial authority. As far as job functions go, notice that each succeeding rank includes the functions of those beneath it. No wonder we find the apostles recording prophecies in their writings—they were also prophets in function, as well as evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Of course, oftentimes they were merely giving inspired explanations of prophecies that had already been given in the Old Testament—just as Mr. Armstrong did.

We have always used **Amos 3:7**—"Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets"—as part of the reason Mr. Armstrong's ministry existed. Were we not, then, attributing to him a prophetic role?

And perhaps most significant of all in this regard is the fact that the whole panorama of end-time prophecy was to be opened during the time of the sixth "head" of the Holy Roman Empire. Remember "five have fallen, one IS, and one is yet to come"? (Rev. 17:10; cf. *The Beast of Revelation*, pp. 36-37). And it was

opened at this time [during World War II] — to primarily one man, Herbert W. Armstrong.

Clearly, he played an important end-time role in generally revealing the events of the last days to God's people—indeed, with more clarity than ever before, as these prophecies were "closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (**Dan. 12:9**). His preaching from the Bible was, therefore, *specialy* inspired—not just as any minister expounding the Scriptures. It is therefore not at all far-fetched to see Mr. Armstrong as occupying a prophetic office—since, like John the Baptist, he was apparently "more than a prophet."

The Direct Statements of the WCG and Herbert Armstrong about who the End-Time Elijah was

Here are some direct quotes showing that the Worldwide Church of God and Herbert Armstrong himself felt in hindsight that he had fulfilled this role of the end-time Elijah:

Herbert W. Armstrong's Statements on the End-Time Elijah *Good News*, April 1980, pp. 25-26:

"I did not know it as a young man, late teens, 20s and into my 30s, but God was guiding my life from birth.... Jesus Christ, through His written Word, opened my mind to the PRIME BASIC TRUTHS He wanted me to have in starting me out as His servant.... God's TIME had come! **His time for one, of whom John the Baptist was type and forerunner, to prepare for Christ's SECOND coming....** I did not seek these basic foundations of TRUTH of my own volition! Jesus Christ revealed them.... He was preparing one called and chosen by God, even against that one's will, for an important service IN RESTORING THE LAW AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD to earth—even in the comparatively small Worldwide Church of God. **He was preparing one whom HE conquered and brought to repentance and faith, for this great END-TIME commission."**

***Worldwide News*, March 6, 1981, pp. 10-11:**

"John the Baptist was a man in the power and spirit of Elijah. John the Baptist came to prepare the way before the first coming of Christ. He was a type of someone to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ. So now prior to the Second Coming of Christ, there is someone... with a voice in the spiritual wilderness... crying out amid religious confusion... and preparing the way not for a physical Jesus, but a glorified Christ.... I'm going to say something to you now, that I would not have said five or six years ago under any circumstances. **I DON'T GO OUT TRYING TO FULFILL PROPHECY. BUT Jesus said, BY THEIR FRUITS YOU KNOW.** And sometimes you look back on fruits and you can tell some things you couldn't tell in advance before the fruits had been performed....

God was going to raise up SOMEONE who is going to prepare the way for the Second Coming and calling people, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. That's exactly what Elijah did physically. He reminded them that they had gotten away from the Kingdom and the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, and needed the RESTORING OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. And now before the Second Coming, as John the Baptist fulfilled that before the first coming, someone had to build the spiritual temple. Of course, God is doing it all. Christ is the One who is doing it.... **God has built it, but He has used me....** Do you think that has happened? Do you think we're near the time of the coming of Christ? Has anyone proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God? Has anyone proclaimed the law of God? Has anyone been calling on them to repent?... **The job God has called me to do is a prophesied job. It has been being done."**

Last Sermon, Feast of Trumpets, Sept. 16, 1985:

"There was an *Elijah* to come and to restore things *in the Church*. THAT HAS HAPPENED and what has been restored is the GOVERNMENT OF GOD—and many of the truths, at least *17 or 18 principal*, vital doctrines of truth, have been added to about the three that had survived in the Sardis era of the Church."

What is the Value of Understanding who the End-Time Elijah Is?

What is the importance – the value of understanding who the end-time Elijah is? How should it affect the way we look at doctrine, the way we look at prophecy and world events and so on? For his thoughts I quote again from Raymond McNair:

Just what IS the value of understanding this? Is there really *any* value in it? Well, clearly the recognition of the end-time Elijah must have *some* value or God would not have foretold him in the pages of the Bible. Remember, ALL Scripture is profitable (**2 Tim. 3:16**).

Certainly, this understanding helps to define part of our role and purpose. We believe we are continuing the Elijah commission of helping to prepare the way before Christ's Second Coming. Though Mr. Armstrong, it appears, was the end-time Elijah, we are continuing the work he was given to do, just as others completed the original Elijah's work. We can use the Elijah commission to help focus what we are doing as God's Church.

Also, this knowledge gives us a proper perspective about where we are in end-time events. We are not still waiting for Elijah to precede the two witnesses. In our view, he has already come. This helps to give us a healthy sense of *urgency*, rather than being lulled to sleep on the notion that Christ's return is yet a long way off.

Beyond this, understanding these things helps our focus in studying the Bible. If Mr. Armstrong was *not* the Elijah, then—as we've seen—almost nothing has been restored compared to what *needs* to be and we should therefore be dissecting the Scriptures in search of the lost volumes of Truth that constitute the faith once delivered. All of our doctrines would need to be thoroughly reexamined.

On the other hand, if Mr. Armstrong WAS the end-time Elijah, as we believe, then we should tread very carefully on what he has delivered to us—focusing more on *preserving* what we have, as God told the Philadelphians (**Rev. 3:11**). This must not, of course, devolve into a Laodicean attitude of "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" (**v. 17**). Rather, we can still be searching the Scriptures for refinements of understanding in what we already basically know—realizing also that there may be *some* fairly major points of knowledge still to be added.

The Elijah to come we are told by Christ was to restore **ALL** things, which, in my humble opinion, includes **ALL** the core primary and secondary points of truth we need in this end time era.

This very much affects the way that we should look at points of doctrinal truth when others put forth beliefs which differ from what he taught.

The truths of God in the Bible can be classified into primary fundamental doctrines (eg. the Sabbath and the other ten commandments), secondary doctrines (eg. second tithe) and tertiary doctrines (understanding of many single verses in the Bible).

Some truths can be easily put into one of these three categories while others are borderline as to them being a secondary or tertiary doctrine as an example. There are thousands and thousands of tertiary or third level teachings since there is an enormous amount of understanding and little points in the Bible hence why my opinion of restoring ALL things is just a reference to the core primary and secondary doctrines only and not the minutiae of every conceivable low level teaching.

If Mr Armstrong was the Elijah to come who restored ALL things (not some or most) then it behooves all of us to not lightly ignore the teachings, both primary and secondary, that he taught us if we are to be rightly aligned with what God teaches us in the Bible.

There are the odd tertiary point of doctrine here and there where I have a difference of belief with Herbert Armstrong on but I submit to all of his views on primary and secondary doctrines as for me to go against what he taught would, to me, feel like I am calling God a liar about him restoring ALL things if Mr Armstrong was indeed the end-time Elijah.

One doctrine that I would consider tertiary would be the issue of makeup. Mr Armstrong vacillated on this issue himself, sometimes allowing it and at other times saying it was a sin which is where it was at when he died. I have an opinion but no definitive point of view on this subject other than to say that I do not believe it ranks as a secondary point of doctrine.

One doctrine I believe does rank as a secondary doctrine is that of interracial marriage which Mr Armstrong never vacillated on. This has been subsequently changed by the United Church of God which I believe is a very precarious thing to do in light of the prophecy about the end-time Elijah restoring ALL things. Who someone marries, in my humble opinion, is a far more important life-impacting decision than what someone temporarily wears for a day.

There are some other people who put forth prophetic views that significantly differ from what Mr Armstrong taught such as differing identities of who the end-time beast power is. This is something significant enough I believe to be considered a secondary point of doctrine and such views people should be very careful about embracing considering the import of the prophecy of the end-time Elijah restoring ALL things.

Preparing the Bride of Christ

If preparing a people is the primary meaning of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers then this part of Elijah's commission may have to be completed by the church though started by the end-time Elijah. For his comments on this interesting aspect to the story of the end-time Elijah I quote one last time from Raymond McNair:

It is also true that God had given a direct three-fold commission to Elijah that was only one-third finished when he was finally removed from the scene. After Elijah fled for his life from Jezebel, God encouraged him at Mount Sinai and then gave him the assignment of anointing *Hazael* as king over Syria, *Jehu* as king over Israel, and *Elisha* as a prophet to follow in his steps (**1 Kings 19:15-16**).

But Elijah did only *one* of these things—he anointed Elisha. Hazael and Jehu, on the other hand, would not be anointed until about 25 years later—nearly a decade after Elijah was taken out of the picture. So who anointed *them*? It appears that *Elisha* anointed Hazael—between **verses 13 and 14 of 2 Kings 8**. And it is certain that Elisha had one of the sons of the prophets anoint Jehu, as is recorded in **2 Kings 9:1-6. Elisha and the sons of the prophets, then, saw it as their duty to finish Elijah's commission—and they did.**

Now it's apparent that John the Baptist was not succeeded by others—even his disciples—in his work of preparing the way before the Messiah. For he preached right up until Christ appeared on the scene (**Mark 1:14**). Yet if Mr. Armstrong was the end-time Elijah, what are we to make of the fact that Christ has not yet returned? Remember, the Elijah was to prepare the way before Him—to prepare a people, God's Church.

Clearly, the Church is *not yet ready*. The preparation of Christ's bride, His Church, *continues*—in fact, **Mr. Armstrong told his successors to finish this task!**—and the Elijah commission would therefore now be *unfinished*. Yet who, at the end, makes Christ's wife ready? *She* does (**Rev. 19:7**) — with Christ's help (**Eph. 5:27**). Thus, all of us are to have a part in finishing the preparation begun by the Elijah to come...

It should also be noted here that it appears the two witnesses will essentially complete the warning aspect of the Elijah commission. Many have viewed the fire proceeding from their mouths (**Rev. 11:5**) as really meaning that fire can be called down from heaven at their word—and have then seen here a picture of *Elijah*, as he is immediately identified with this miracle (**cf. Luke 9:54**). The two witnesses also pray for and deliver a 3 ½ year drought (**Rev. 11:6**) — again, just as Elijah did (**James 5:17-18**). But they do not exactly parallel Elijah as he ministered to one widow out of the country during the drought of his day—which was only a tiny part of his overall work—while the primary work of the two witnesses occurs during the end-time drought, when they really do "shake the nations." And again, they are TWO while Elijah was ONE—just like the *end-time* Elijah. This all makes sense if we understand the two witnesses to be *completing* an Elijah commission that has already been partially fulfilled when their major work begins.

The Two Witnesses

In **Revelation 11** we are introduced to two men of God referred to as the two witnesses. Who are these men? What is their mission? Let's look at the verses which describe these two men and see what we can learn from those verses:

Rev 11:1 And a reed like a rod was given to me. And the angel stood, saying, Rise up and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it.

Rev 11:2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it was given to the nations. And they will trample the holy city forty-two months.

In **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4** Paul writes: "the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, setting himself forth, that he is God."

Straight after this Paul says: "And the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (**2 Thessalonians 2:8-9**).

It is fairly safe to say that the man of sin is the same person as the lawless one (i.e. the sinful one). The lying wonders and deceptive miracles appear to be those ascribed to the second beast of **Revelation 13 (verses 13-14)**. This miracle-working man of sin, therefore, would be the leader of the church power behind the coming United Europe, as opposed to a leader who comes amongst God's church which is also referred to as the Temple of God (though this might be type) .

Daniel 11:40-45 speaks of the end-time King of the North (the coming United Europe) conquering the Middle East and the Holy Land. **Daniel 12:11** speaks of an abomination of desolation where the daily sacrifices would be taken away 1290 days prior to some event, which appears to be the return of Christ based on other similar dates for the length of the Great Tribulation.

If the man of sin is the miracle-working leader of the church power behind the coming United Europe then this church leader enters into an end-time physical Temple since he enters **IN** it (so more than just an altar) and stops the sacrifices and sets up the abomination of desolation.

It may well come to be that the Jews acknowledge the research of Ernest Martin who, in my opinion, proves the Temples were situated on the archaeologically-acknowledged City of David to the south of what most people refer to as the Temple Mount (for more information please refer to my compilation – The Lost History of Jerusalem). This would free the Jews to build the Temple where the previous temples stood without the need to touch the Dome of the Rock.

The beast power and false church will have control of the end-time Temple that the Jews build as well as control of Jerusalem, the holy city.

Having said all that, the Temple referred to in **Revelation 11:1-2** appears to not be that physical Temple since it says in those verses that Temple will not be at the mercy of the Gentiles in the same way its outer court and Jerusalem will be. We would have to conclude that it is referring to the New Testament church as the Temple. If so, then we are encouraged to remain an integral part of the church and not outside as a prospective member or a spiritual Gentile so we will be protected in the tribulation.

Rev 11:3 And I will give *power* to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy a thousand, two hundred and sixty days, clothed *in* sackcloth.

Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

We are told that they will be given power and will prophesy for 1260 days or 3½ years and that they will be clothed in sackcloth as opposed to pin striped suits.

They are called the two olive trees and the two lampstands. We will come back to explore this verse a little later.

Rev 11:5 And if anyone will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone will hurt them, so it is right for him to be killed.

Rev 11:6 These have authority to shut up the heaven, that it may not rain in the days of their prophecy. And they have authority over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

We have already seen that the “lawless one”, also referred to as the second beast of **Revelation 13** and the false prophet of **Revelation 20:10**, will have great miracle-working powers. The two witnesses will also be given power from God to work miracles. The kind of miracles described here are fire proceeding out of their mouths to devour their enemies who try to hurt them, causing drought, turning water to blood and causing any plague they so desire.

To anyone who now claims to be one of the two witnesses all I would say to them is show me the miracles! While we shouldn't be out looking for miracles normally the Bible plainly says that miracles will be main identifier of these two witnesses.

Imagine the showdown between the two witnesses and the false prophets! The false prophet will have the backing of Satan, the great false church and a political superpower that controls half of the world. The two witnesses will appear to be part of an obscure small sect of christians in the world's eyes but will have the backing of God's great power to warn and persuade the masses of the world to turn to God before the full fury of the Day of the Lord approaches.

The great false church will probably move its headquarters to Jerusalem as implied in **Daniel 11:45** and in Jerusalem is where the final showdown between the two witnesses and the beast and false prophet occurs.

Rev 11:7 And when they complete their testimony, the beast coming up out of the abyss will make war against them and will overcome them and kill them.

Rev 11:8 And their bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Rev 11:9 And many of the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will see their dead bodies three days and a half, and they will not allow their dead bodies to be put in tombs.

Rev 11:10 And the ones who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, and will make merry, and will send one another gifts, because these two prophets tormented those living on the earth.

The beast power will finally succeed in killing the two witnesses as they deliver their testimony in Jerusalem where the false prophet will be based at this time. They will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3½ days and those who support the great false church will rejoice that these "tormentors" will have finally been silenced. Then something dramatic happens after 3½ days.

Rev 11:11 And after three days and a half, a spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet. And great fear fell on those seeing them.

Rev 11:12 And they heard a great voice from Heaven saying to them, Come up here. And they went up to Heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.

Rev 11:13 And in that hour a great earthquake occurred, and the tenth *part* of the city fell. And seven thousand names of men were slain in the earthquake. And the rest were frightened and gave glory to the God of Heaven.

Rev 11:14 The second woe passed away. Behold, the third woe comes quickly.

After 3½ days they are resurrected back to life and go up into the sky in a cloud. It has been common opinion in the Church of God that this event is the time of the first resurrection to spirit life at the return of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 11:14 throws a spanner in the works when it comes to that opinion. It says that the second woe is past and the third one (the last seven plagues or vials – **Revelation 16**) is about to come.

How long do these plagues last? Are they more than 3½ days or less? The sixth of the last plagues is the river Euphrates being dried up and the kings of the East coming across and gathering at Armageddon before proceeding to fight Christ in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

This event alone could take more than 3½ days. Each of the other plagues may take days as well.

Immanuel Velikovsky in “Worlds in Collision” proposed that God caused the plagues of Egypt at the time of the Exodus with the passing of a planetary body. He proposed this intruding planetary body with its red cometary tail caused the plagues of blood (like the red dust and rocks of Mars and Venus), the darkness, the meteors that were hail mingled with fire and a climaxing great earthquake at the time of the tenth plague.

I have used this same model in developing a theory about the remarkably similar plagues of the Day of the Lord which are more explicitly ascribed with cosmic terminology (refer to my paper on the Day of the Lord). If my theory is correct then it is worth noting that the Jewish Talmud says that the plagues of Egypt lasted a period of 2 or 3 months. [Interestingly, Velikovsky came to his theory of a planetary passing based on ancient records with its curious prophetic overtones during World War II at the same time Herbert Armstrong came to understand the prophecies of the Book of Revelation.]

If there is a period of much more than 3½ days for the third woe (the last seven plagues) then this resurrection of the two witnesses may occur some time before the first resurrection. If the Great Tribulation lasts 1260 days, the same period of prophesying by the two witnesses, this means they begin their witness before the Great Tribulation. Either it will be 3½ days before the Tribulation starts if their resurrection noted here in **Revelation 11** occurs at the time of the first resurrection or even further before if there is more time between their resurrection and the first resurrection.

If their resurrection is before the Great Tribulation will it be to physical resurrection (before a spirit one at the first resurrection) or will it be a spirit resurrection? While a spirit resurrection seems more likely here a physical resurrection is still a possibility. That they went up to heaven in a cloud doesn't automatically mean it is a spirit resurrection as God took Elijah up in the clouds in a whirlwind (**2 Kings 2:1**).

In defence of the common opinion that they are killed 3½ days before the first resurrection and that they are resurrected at the time of the first resurrection and Christ's second coming, it speaks of a great earthquake that kills 7000 people at the same time as their resurrection. This may well be the great earthquake of the last of the seven last plagues (**Revelation 16:17-21**). A great earthquake in Jerusalem occurs at the time that Christ descends to the Mount of Olives spoken of in **Zechariah 14:3-5**. If the seven last plagues last longer than 3½ days then **Revelation 11:14** might need to be taken more loosely and not so chronologically exact as John is describing a vision and writing what he sees.

The Two Olive Trees and the Two Lampstands

In **Revelation 11:4** we read: “These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.”

A lampstand is a symbol of a church (**Revelation 1:20**). Lampstands allow people to see in the dark (**Matthew 5:14**). Olive trees produced olive oil and oil is a symbol of God's spirit as seen in the parable of the virgins (**Matthew 25:1-13**) flowing through His servants as they serve others.

If we substitute the word church for lampstand in **Revelation 11:4** it says, in effect, “These are the two olive trees and the two churches”.

Zechariah 4 describes a vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees. There are two olive trees on either side of a single lampstand with seven candles branching from it.

After speaking about Zerubbabel for a few verses the angel then says “the two olive trees are the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord and the earth” (**Zechariah 4:12-14**). This appears to equate with the two witnesses who are called “the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth” (**Revelation 11:4**). The high priest, Joshua, and the governor, Zerubbabel, spoken of in **Zechariah 3 and 4** may be types of these two end-time witnesses.

In Zechariah there is one lampstand (**Zechariah 4:2**). The people were united under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel in Zechariah’s time. There are two lampstands or two churches in the end-time (**Revelation 11:4**) which are represented by the two witnesses so we don’t see quite the same unity in the end-time church.

Who are the two churches or lampstands in the end time? The most likely answer is one group are those who go to place of safety (**Revelation 12:6**) and the other group are those who aren’t protected - “the rest of her offspring who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (**Revelation 12:17**).

Joshua is referred to as a brand plucked from the fire (**Zechariah 3:2**). Fire represents the Great Tribulation in **Revelation 3:18** and maybe the second witness is plucked out of it a little while after it begins. Perhaps the second witness comes from those who don’t go to the place of safety and is a representative of the great many small splinter groups in the Church of God.

I have heard the exotic idea that the two witnesses will be Enoch and Elijah who will be brought back to life. At the Jewish seder (Passover) a cup is prepared for Elijah in case of his return. This Jewish sentiment is reflected in the Jews expecting the literal Elijah at the time of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

While this is in the realm of possibility there are two things against this idea in my mind. Firstly, who are the two churches (lampstands) Enoch and Elijah are representative of? The second point is if Elijah was resurrected to physical life at this time then why wouldn’t he fulfill the Elijah role that we have seen that Herbert Armstrong fulfilled?

We can see a fascinating parallel between what happened in Zechariah’s day and what has happened in the end-time Church of God. Just as Judah went into Babylon we have also seen our former association go into a kind of spiritual Babylon. A remnant of the Jews returned to rebuild the Temple of God in Zechariah’s day. In like manner, a remnant of God’s people in our time have had to come out and to rebuild the Work and the Church of God.

With that as background let’s read **Zechariah 4:6-8** with an end-time context in mind: “So he answered and said to me: ‘This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish *it*. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.’”

God will see to it. God will help His people overcome all obstacles such as removing mountains (**Zechariah 4:7**). Jesus said if we had pure faith as small as a mustard seed God would move mountains for us (**Matthew 17:20**).

Zerubbabel is told that God will build the Temple again through his efforts and those supporting him (**Zechariah 4:9**). This did happen in Zechariah’s day but this prophecy is

dual and also refers to the rebuilding of God's church (His Temple – **1 Corinthians 3:16**) and His work in our day now.

This is God's work, not the work of any man and since it is His work He'll do whatever it takes to help us complete the job we have been given to do. We can have complete and utter faith in that. That doesn't just apply to the work of preaching the gospel but also refers to the building up of the spiritual Temple – the church. However slowly it might happen at times, the Bride of Christ will be ready in time and we can have complete faith in that.

God says not to despise "the day of small things" (**Zechariah 4:10**). In **Haggai 2:3** God says: "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, *is this* not in your eyes as nothing?"

Do we have this attitude today regarding the size of the church and the work in comparison to how it was in our former association? Do we despise the day of small things now when we compare ourselves with the days when the church numbered 150,000 and the Plain Truth went out to millions of people each month?

In **Haggai 2:7-9** God says "I will fill this temple with glory," says the Lord of hosts. 'The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts." God almost always starts things out small but with a very big end in mind.

Even though God promises His Work will grow once again, God is still much more interested now in the quality of our own personal conversion than He is in the quantity of people converted. In the millennium the whole world will be ruled by God and people of all nations will become converted and what we had in our former association will be miniscule in comparison.

Prior to that God's church will become big enough at the end to become noticed and hated by all nations (**Matthew 24:9**). Much of this higher visibility of the Church of God at this time will be a direct result of the witness and miracles performed by the two witnesses which will draw much media attention as they do battle against the forces of the beast and the false prophet. The beast may temporarily prevail and kill them but they will triumph when God resurrects them and Christ returns to this earth.

Both the end-time Elijah and the two witnesses will be resurrected and the Church will have been made ready. At this time Christ will bring His rule to this world that so desperately needs it. In the end the good guys will win!