

The Mysterious End-time “ELIJAH”—

Was Mr. Armstrong Who He Said He Was?

by Raymond F. McNair

One of the most disputed *issues* persistently
discussed in
the “Churches of God” is whether Mr. Herbert
W. Armstrong was *who he said he was!*

Since the demise of Herbert W. Armstrong in January 1986, one of the most fervently discussed topics in the greater “Churches of God” has concerned the *identity* of the **end-time “Elijah.”**

God’s people are generally *agreed* that Malachi 4 and Matthew 17 clearly reveal that God would send **“ELIJAH THE PROPHET *before* the great and dreadful DAY OF THE LORD.”** Sadly, that’s where the *agreement* ends! Why is this so?

Many have never understood the meaning of numerous important scriptures that clearly reveal there were to be **three *uniquely different* “Elijah’s”**—each of whom Almighty God would commission to do *a mighty work* here on earth *before* Christ’s *Second Coming*.

Unfortunately, there is *no general agreement* as to whether *Mr. Armstrong* himself fulfilled the Old and New

Testament prophecies concerning the **final “ELIJAH”**—whom Bible prophecy had predicted would do a **mighty end-time work**, lest God smite the earth with *utter destruction*.

A WORD OF CAUTION!

What are some of the major *disagreements* among those *who do not* agree whether Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the end-time “Elijah”? **Many thousands in the Churches of God sincerely believe he was the end-time “Elijah”!** Many others, *ministers* as well as *laymen*, fervently believe that Mr. Armstrong was *not* the “*Elijah*” *to come* at the end of this age.

NOTE. I want to make it clear that, although I believe it is *important* to realize the *true identity* of the *end-time “Elijah,”* however, I do *not* believe one *must* accept Mr. Armstrong as having fulfilled that role, or else he will *fail to make it into God’s Kingdom!*

Some ministers and brethren mistakenly think it is *vital* to believe that Mr. Armstrong was the *final “Elijah”* in order to be saved. And some ministers *require* baptismal candidates to *accept Jesus Christ* as Savior *before* being baptized. But in addition, they also believe ***no one should be baptized*** who does *not* believe that Mr. Armstrong fulfilled the prophecies regarding the *end-time “Elijah.”* And they ***disfellowship*** any member of *their church* who later *doubts* or openly *rejects* Mr. Armstrong as the *final “Elijah.”* Such a belief and/or practice is clearly **unbiblical!**

This is not to say that it doesn’t make any *difference* whether one believes the biblical teaching on this point. In

many cases, it *may* make quite a difference in the lives of those who *believe*, or *disbelieve*, that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the *end-time* “*Elijah*.” But it is *not vital to salvation* to believe this! One can be “saved” who may not *understand*, or *believe*, that he fulfilled the end-time prophecies, which long ago predicted the coming of the *final* “*Elijah*” at the end of this age.

IMPORTANT! I urge all of God’s people, including His *ministers*, not to *disparage*, *look down on*, or harbor *hostility* toward those who either *believe*, or *disbelieve*, that Mr. Armstrong fulfilled the *end-time* “*Elijah*” prophecies. We must all cultivate godly *grace* and *love* (John 13:34-35), and be able to respectfully *disagree* without being *disrespectfully disagreeable!* Also, we need to realize that we don’t all *walk together in lockstep*, regarding our *understanding* and *adherence* to God’s Word. The Apostle Paul made it very clear that we should *not* “judge” or “condemn” *vegetarians* (Rom. 14:1-4, 20), *teetotalers*, (v. 21), or those who think it is a “sin” to eat foods, especially **animal flesh**, *which has been* “offered to *idols*” (I Cor. 8:1-13).

Three Views of the End-time “Elijah”

There are *several views* regarding the *end-time* “*Elijah*”:

1) Some **Church of God** people believe a final “Elijah” is *yet to come* and do a mighty work on this earth.

2) Many modern **orthodox Jews** also believe *Elijah's* return to this earth is yet future. That explains why they set a place for *Elijah* at their tables for the Passover meal (*seder*), which they *annually* observe. A *seder* is a Jewish *home* or *community service* including a ceremonial dinner. The custom of setting a place for *Elijah* at their Passover tables is observed because they think the same *ancient Elijah*, who commanded *fire from heaven* and worked *mighty miracles*, will someday *return*, presumably in a “fiery chariot,” to carry on a future ministry.

3) Finally, many brethren in the Church of God believe that “*Elijah*” **has already come in the person and work of an end-time apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong**. Since this *third view* is widely held by many thousands of brethren in virtually all of today’s Churches of God, this is the view which we shall now examine in greater detail. Did Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, whose ministry lasted 52 years, fulfill the “Elijah” prophecies? Or should we look for *another person* yet to appear and do a mighty Elijah-like work?

“And this is the record of *John* [when the Jews asked him], ‘Who art thou?... **Art thou Elias** [*Elijah*]’? And he saith, ‘*I am not....*’ Then said they unto him, ‘**Who art thou?...**’ He said, ‘I am the voice of ONE crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]’” (John 1:19-23; Isa. 40:3).

John the Baptist spoke the truth when he told the Jews he was *not* the *ancient “Elijah”* whom the Jews expected to return. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly reveals that John *was “Elijah.”*

**Jesus Christ Said John Was
“ELIJAH!”**

What did Christ really *mean* when He spoke to His disciples about John being “Elijah”? They asked Him: “‘Why then say the *scribes* that *Elias must first come?*’ And Jesus...said unto them, ‘*Elias truly shall first come and RESTORE all things.* But I say unto you, that *Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they [pleased]....*’ Then the disciples *understood* that He spake unto them of **JOHN THE BAPTIST**” (Matt. 17:10-13).

Luke’s gospel explains what Christ meant by saying John was “Elijah.” Before John was born, an angel told John’s father, Zacharias, that his son would be a special prophet who would do an Elijah-like work. The angel said, “For *he* [John] **shall be GREAT** in the sight of the Lord... And many of the children of Israel shall he *turn* to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him [Christ] in the **spirit and power of ELIAS**, to *turn* the hearts of the fathers to the children...to make **READY a people prepared for the Lord**” (Luke 1:13-17).

Thus we see that *John the Baptist* and *Jesus Christ* were *both correct!* *John* rightly said he was *not* the same ancient Elijah mentioned in the Old Testament. However, just as God sent the *first Elijah* to *turn* the hearts of the Israelites away from their false Gods such as *Baal*, and *back* to the Lord—so John (the *second “Elijah”*) was sent in the “*spirit and power*” of *Elijah*, to cause many of God’s people to *turn* (that is, *repent*) and *return* to their God. Therefore, *Jesus* was *correct* in saying that John the Baptist *was* “Elijah”—that is, he had come in the spirit and power of *Elijah* and did an Elijah-like work, even though he was *not* the same old Elijah mentioned in the Old Testament. And John was also correct in denying that he was not “Elijah.”

Also recall that John said he fulfilled Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the LORD...*” Verse 10 also adds, “Behold, **the Lord GOD will come with strong hand**, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His *reward* is with Him, and *His work* before Him.” John the Baptist would “prepare” the way before Jesus Christ at His *First Coming*; but, just as John went before Christ in the “spirit and power” of Elijah, to “prepare a people” for the Lord’s ministry at His *First Coming*, so would another person later come in the spirit and power of Elijah to “prepare a people for the Lord” and to make them “**ready**” for their marriage to Jesus at His *Second Coming*.

The Scriptures tell us that the **Church**, Christ’s Bride, is to be made “**ready**” by having her “spots” and “wrinkles” removed (Eph. 5:25-27). “**His wife hath made herself ready**” (Rev. 19:7-9). Furthermore, Matthew tells us that when “the bridegroom [Christ] came...they that were **ready** went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was *shut*” (Matt. 25:10; cf. 24:44). And Jesus sternly warns the saints of God, “Be ye therefore **ready** also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke 12:40).

Malachi’s Prophecy Regarding the End-time Elijah

What did the *Prophet Malachi* say regarding the “*end-time Elijah*”? Actually, Malachi gave two important prophecies regarding the arrival of “Elijah” before the Day of the Lord: “**Behold, I will send you ELIJAH the prophet before the COMING of the great and dreadful DAY OF THE LORD:** And he shall *turn the heart of the fathers to their children* [and vice versa] lest I come and smite the earth with *a curse* [marg. *utter destruction*]” (Mal. 4:5-6).

If Jesus had *not* told us that John the Baptist fulfilled the *mission and work* of “Elijah” by making a people *ready* for Christ’s *First Coming*, **and if He had not told us that a future “Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things,”** we would *not* have known that Malachi’s prophecy would have a *two-fold fulfillment*: **1) John the Baptist** would prepare the way at Christ’s *First Coming*, and **2) an end-time “Elijah”** would prepare the way before Christ’s *Second Coming*, making a people “ready” for the spiritual marriage of Christ’s *bride* to the divine *Bridegroom*, Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:7-9).

Yet, there would be *a vast difference* between the *scope and magnitude* of John’s work and that of the *end-time “Elijah.”* John preached “repentance” and *baptized at most tens of thousands* with “**physical water,**” so that when Jesus began His Work at His *First Coming*, many would be *ready* to receive the “**living water**” from Him, by repenting, accepting Jesus as our Savior, and through the laying on of hands by God’s servants (John 4:5-15; 7:37-39; Acts 8:14-18).

John told the Jews: “But He that sent me to *baptize* with *water...is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit*” (John 1:33). The *end-time “Elijah”* would not only be responsible for bringing people to *repentance*, Christ and His ministers would also have power to lay hands on those who had *repented, accepted Christ* as their Savior, and were baptized, so that they could receive God’s *Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38-39). 8:14-23).

Those who had been baptized under John the Baptist’s ministry, later had to be *re-baptized*, and have God’s ministers lay their hands upon them to confer the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-23; 19:1-6).

Many Think Mr. Armstrong Was the *End-time* “Elijah”

The following letter I received, expresses the view—held by *many thousands* of members scattered through the “Churches of God”—who still believe Mr. Armstrong definitely fulfilled the “Elijah” prophecies of Malachi 4 and Matthew 17. This man’s letter to me says, “I have been praying that God will heal you completely, and maybe use you to *reunite* us scattered sheep who want to *hold fast* to what God’s apostle taught us. **Mr. Armstrong restored all things** [the “**18 TRUTHS,**” etc.], so what else is there but to take the *truths* revealed through him and learn to follow them more perfectly. **You seem to be the only Evangelist that still believes that Mr. Armstrong was the END-TIME ELIJAH.** God’s people need someone to *reunite* them from this *church wide confusion* that we find ourselves in.... You remind me of *Moses* who didn’t want to take the lead, but maybe that is what you are supposed to do, and *lead us out of this mess* we find ourselves in. Please, *move forward* in faith and God will do the rest.... God help us to remove the remaining *spots and blemishes* from our garments.”

I hasten to add that I do *not* look upon myself as a “**modern Moses,**” with a *special calling*. Neither do I consider myself to be the end-time “**Elijah,**” or “**Elisha,**” or one of the “**two witnesses.**” Over the years I have known many *deluded* individuals (including *a few ministers*), who concluded *they* were called by God to be the *end-time* “*Elijah*” or “*Elisha,*” whom they *assumed* was to succeed Mr. Armstrong; or they believe God chose them to be *one* of the “two witnesses.” God’s Word gives this warning to any such self-deluded “prophets”:
“**For if a man think himself to be something [important], when he is nothing [special], he deceiveth himself**” (Gal. 6:3).

Whom do I think I am? What is my calling? I believe I am *one* of a number of *faithful ministers*, whom *God* has ordained to serve as “**WATCHMEN**” over His Church, to help *shepherd* them into the Kingdom of God. I take my ministry and my calling very seriously, and want to help as many as I can of the *scattered brethren and ministers* in the “Churches of God.” For decades I have diligently studied God’s Word so that I can better help guide God’s people in holding to the **true doctrines** of the Bible. Mr. Armstrong recognized my *zeal* and *training* in the area of *doctrine*, and appointed me to serve under him by working with the Doctrinal Team at Headquarters. He asked me to assist him in order to help him *oversee* the discussions and doctrinal conclusions. I have since served in a similar capacity in the **GCG, CGCF** and the **LCG**.

A Typical Example of Disbelief...

The following **excerpts** from a letter, regularly sent out by the *founder* of one of the larger “Churches of God,” expresses the view that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong **did not** fulfill the Elijah prophecies of Malachi 4 and Matthew 17. His letter states: “Thank you for your questions about *Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong* and *if* he was the *Elijah*.... **Near the end of his life, he told a leading minister that he was not the *Elijah* to come.** Other times he would say that *the church* is doing the Work of Elijah. Other times *he indicated that he was probably the Elijah* to come. With all his heart, he wanted to finish the Work and to fulfill that role....”

Did Mr. Armstrong ever say **definitely** that “he was NOT the *end-time* “**ELIJAH**”? I have never seen anything whatsoever that would definitely *indicate* that Mr. Armstrong ever came to really **disbelieve** that he was *what he often said he was*—**the end-time “*Elijah*.”** Consider these facts: Mr. Armstrong, a man of

great integrity, made *a habit* of informing the entire Church when he had been in serious error concerning major *changes* in *doctrinal beliefs*.

Here are *two examples* to illustrate that point: 1) After teaching for decades that **PENTECOST** was on Monday, he later became convinced that Pentecost should always be observed on Sunday, and quickly admitted the *error*, informing the entire membership of the WCG of the correct day. 2) Likewise, when he saw from the Bible that he had been wrong in his teachings concerning **“DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE,”** Mr. Armstrong *accepted* the fact that he had been in error. He promptly informed the entire Church membership of the correct biblical understanding on the subject of *divorce and remarriage*. There were a number of other errors, which he and the WCG once held, that he *admitted*, and then informed the WCG of those errors, giving them the newer, more perfect understanding of God’s TRUTH.

And, as we shall later see, Mr. Armstrong said on *dozens* of occasions that **HE alone, and no one else, had fulfilled the “Elijah” prophecies of Matthew 17 and Malachi 4.** Therefore, it is hard to believe that he would *not* have informed the entire WCG membership, *if* he had ever been *truly convinced* he definitely was wrong in his conviction that His own *fruits* demonstrated God had chosen him to fulfill the end-time “Elijah” prophecies. I find it extremely difficult to believe that, near the end of his life, he *abandoned* his previous view of being the *end-time “Elijah.”* To accept such that he did would, I believe, ignore the *facts*, in favor of embracing mere *hearsay!*

However, on occasion, Mr. Armstrong *may* have expressed some *doubt* in regard to his calling and ministry, concerning himself being the *end-time “Elijah,”* even as *John the Baptist* had previously been convinced that Jesus Christ was

“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29-33). Later, however, John came to *doubt* whether Christ was the Messiah. So John “sent two of his disciples, and said to Him, ‘**Are You the Coming One** [the *Messiah*], or do we look for *another?*’” (Matt. 11:1-3). Christ told John’s disciples to “show John *again*” Christ’s *fruits*—the *mighty works* which He was doing, *works* that proved He was the Messiah (vv. 4-6).

Here is another quote from the same letter in which a negative statement is made concerning Mr. Armstrong’s “Elijah” role: “So there are a number of *reasons* to feel that, *although Mr. Armstrong did an ‘Elijah-like’ work*, he MAY not have been the final ONE completely fulfilling this prophecy of ONE who *apparently* is to minister right up to ‘the great and dreadful Day of the Lord’” (Malachi 4:5).

But where does either *Christ* or *Malachi* tell us that the *end-time* “Elijah” will “apparently...minister *right up to* ‘the great and dreadful Day of the Lord’”? Clearly, there was a very good reason *why* Mr. Armstrong’s *long ministry* of 52 years did *not* exactly parallel the very *short period* of about a year and a half of John’s ministry. The ministry of the prophesied *end-time* “Elijah” had to occur *several decades* before Christ’s *Second Coming*. Why was this necessary? The many thousands of baptized *believers* called during his ministry would need *sufficient time* to “overcome” and prove their faith and obedience to God by their *fruits*. God usually gives those who are baptized *several decades* to “grow in grace and knowledge” before they die. (2 Pet. 3:18).

Will “ELIJAH” “Shake the Nations”?

The above-referred-to letter sent out by one of the larger

“Churches of God,” then expresses several *misleading statements*: “Is God going to raise up as the ‘**final Elijah**’ an individual at the *very end*—literally *the last few years*—of this age who will **SHAKE THE NATIONS** of *modern Israel* with a *powerful ministry*, backed up by **MIRACLES** and **SIGNS** and cause them to come to an awareness of the real God of Israel whom they have forsaken? **Will such an individual eventually become one of the ‘TWO WITNESSES’?** “Do the miracles demonstrated by the *two witnesses* in Revelation parallel the miracles of both Moses and Elijah and so *indicate* that one of them is, in fact, the *final ‘Elijah’*? Because of all these *sincere concerns*, and others, we feel that it is best not to ‘**appoint**’ someone else as God’s ‘final Elijah.’ Rather, it is best to wait for God to obviously show clearly *if* Mr. Armstrong is this individual or to wait on God to reveal this individual in His time. It may be very, very *embarrassing* if we go around *appointing* someone into an office, which God alone has the right to *appoint*. Then, if the ‘**final Elijah**’ comes along a few years later, we would certainly have some explaining to do to God!”

But I would ask, would it not be even *more embarrassing* to those who *knew* Mr. Armstrong personally—and should have *recognized* his *fruits* that clearly revealed him to be the *end-time ‘Elijah,’* yet denied his divine appointment—to later learn that **God Himself had “appointed” the very person whom they refused to accept?**

A 217 page book, written by the *founder* of one of the smaller “Churches of God” may *pin-point* the reason for the previous writer’s *denial of the Armstrong/Elijah connection*. In his book, the *founder* of this smaller “Church of God,” speaks of some who “believe,” while others “don’t believe” that “**the great Elijah prophecy had been fulfilled by Mr. Armstrong....**” However, the author of the 217 page book, also

adds that he thinks the above-referred-to Church leader who denies Mr. Armstrong's Elijah connection is a **“senior evangelist [who] privately hopes to fulfill it [the Elijah prophecy] himself.”**

However, there is absolutely *nothing* in the Bible which says that the *end-time* “Elijah’s” ministry will occur during **“the last few years”** of this age, or that he will **“shake the nations...with a powerful ministry,”** or that he will perform great **“miracles and signs.”** Christ said John fulfilled the “Elijah” prophecies (Matt. 17:10-13), but He was also aware that **“John did no miracle”** (John 10:41). And Jesus made it clear that a future *end-time* “Elijah” was yet to come” (Matt. 17:11).

Clearly, there is absolutely nothing in Christ's words in Matthew 17, or Malachi's words in Malachi 4, that says the *end-time Elijah* would perform *great miracles*. It is true that the *original Elijah* performed *eight miracles*, as recorded in the Bible. Mr. Armstrong also performed numerous miracles of *healing* and *casting out of demons* during the 52 years of his ministry. However, I don't know of anyone who claims Mr. Armstrong performed as *spectacular miracles* as those performed by *Elijah, Jesus, Peter* or *Paul*.

Did either John the Baptist or Mr.. Armstrong **“shake the nations”**? No! Mr. Armstrong repeatedly said in his *sermons* and *writings* that it is *God* who will “shake the nations,” not puny men (Isa. 2:17-22; Rev. 18: 16:17-20). And neither is there anyone who is presently doing a “work” that is more than *a fraction* of the size and *scope* of the *mighty work* which *God* did through Mr. Armstrong. In fact, **the overall impact of the work of all the “Churches of God” is VERY PUNY, indeed**—when compared with what God did through the Work of the *end-time* “Elijah,” Herbert W. Armstrong!

Did Mr. Armstrong *Claim He Was “Elijah”?*

Clearly, during the *latter years* of his 52-year ministry, Mr. Armstrong became convinced that, by carefully examining the *fruits* God produced through him, he *was the prophesied end-time “Elijah.”* He reluctantly came to believe that God had used Him to fulfill the Elijah prophecies of Malachi 4 and Matthew 17. Let us now examine a number of *Mr. Armstrong’s own statements* to see what he really believed and taught on this subject. Did he repeatedly *say* he was the end-time “Elijah”?

September 1985 While delivering his Feast of Trumpets message to God’s people on September 16, 1986—just *three months* before his decease—Mr. Armstrong stated: “There was an ELIJAH to come and 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.**”

-October 1982 While giving his Feast of Tabernacles sermon on October 22, 1982, Mr. Armstrong stated, “Jesus said **the ELIJAH shall yet come and restore all things....** God raised me up to *restore the government of God.* But it is only *restored* so far in the Church.... You go back and read Malachi 3:1-5 and Malachi 4 [and] where Jesus said, ‘**Elijah truly shall come**’—even *after* John the Baptist was put in prison [and was *beheaded*], he was *yet* to come. **The [end-time Elijah] was to restore.** John the Baptist didn’t *restore.*”

March 19, 1981 In Mr. Armstrong’s **Co-Worker Letter**

of March 19, 1981, he said, “As *John the Baptist* prepared the way, in the PHYSICAL wilderness of the Jordan River for the *first coming* of the HUMAN Jesus...then coming to His MATERIAL TEMPLE, and to His physical people Judah.... so **God would use a human MESSENGER** in the Spiritual wilderness of 20th century religious confusion, *to be a voice CRYING OUT* the gospel of the KINGDOM OF GOD.... **Brethren has that been done by this Church?** Did God raise up a ONE-MAN leadership [a ‘voice of ONE’] to be used by Him... in proclaiming after 1,900 years the *true Gospel* of the Kingdom of God—to even go to *kings* and *heads* of nations (Rev. 10:11).... Has that happened, in your days, and has God brought you into this prophetic fulfillment as a part of it? **Has ANYONE ELSE done it?”**

Mr. Armstrong’s Denial...

February 1981 In late February 1981, Mr. Armstrong made the following comments before the WCG ministers attending a Ministerial Conference in Pasadena, Ca. His comments later appeared in the *Worldwide News*, March 6, 1981: “Now the disciples asked **John the Baptist**, ‘Are you the **Elijah** that was to come?’ He said, ‘No, I am not.’ **I have been asked, ‘Are you the Elijah?’ And I say, ‘No.’** Jesus said though, if you can bear it, ‘Elijah has already come.’ And then He explained that John the Baptist was *a different man*, not the *same man* as Elijah. But 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 [1900 years later] prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ.”

Mr. Armstrong then added, “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 [Israel] 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?...** "Has anyone [else] proclaimed the [true] *Gospel* of the Kingdom of God? Has *anyone else* proclaimed the *law of God*? Has anyone been calling on them to repent?... **But the job God has called ME to do is a PROPHESED JOB. It has been [and is] being done"** (*Worldwide News*, March 6, 1981 pp. 10-11).**

Can *anyone* read the above words of Mr. Armstrong and still entertain any *doubts* whatsoever that he fully believed God had called and commissioned *him* to do the work of the *end-time* "Elijah"? Of course, John the Baptist *denied* being "Elijah," when the Jews asked him *if* he fulfilled the Elijah prophecies in Malachi 4. And in like manner, *Mr. Armstrong denied* being "Elijah," and he was not the original "Elijah" of old, who did a mighty work in the 800s B.C. Both *John the Baptist* and *Mr. Armstrong* were wise enough *not* to say, "**Yes, I am Elijah**"—knowing full well that this would evoke *ridicule* and *persecution*. But it appears that deep in their hearts, John and Mr. Armstrong both realized they were fulfilling Malachi's Elijah prophecy.

April 1980 Mr. Armstrong, in many statements, revealed that, years before his demise, he believed God was using **him** as the end-time Elijah to “restore” the government of God to His Church, along with many other *important truths!* Note his words: “I did not know it as a young man, late teens, 20s, and into my 30s, **but God was guiding my life from birth....**” *Paul* also said, “God... separated me from my mother’s womb” (Gal. 1:15). And God told *Jeremiah*, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet...” (Jer. 1:5).

Mr. Armstrong then added, “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 [had come] for **ONE**, of whom John the Baptist was a *type* and *forerunner*, to prepare for Christ’s *Second Coming*.... He was preparing **ONE** [meaning *himself*] 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.... He was preparing **ONE** whom He conquered and brought to repentance and faith, for this **GREAT END-TIME COMMISSION**” (*The Good News*, April 1980, pp. 25-26).

What Was Mr. Armstrong’s “Crowning Achievement”?

Mystery of the Ages was first published in 1986—just a few months before Mr. Armstrong’s death. He often said *Mystery of the Ages* was his most important work. In that book, he made numerous statements that clearly *identified himself* as the **ONE** God sent to fulfill the *end-time Elijah* prophecies. Mr. Armstrong commented on Isaiah 40:3, 9-10 and Malachi 3:1,

saying: “*The ELIJAH to Come*. Both of these prophecies have a *dual application*. First, they refer to *John the Baptist*, who prepared the way before Jesus’ human ministry more than 1,900 years ago. But, as a *prototype*, or *forerunner*, these prophecies foretell **ONE to prepare the way before Christ’s Second Coming** as King of kings and Lord of lords to rule over all nations....”

Mr. Armstrong then says that the “**end-time last warning message is NOW GOING OUT WORLDWIDE in amplified power. It is going before kings, emperors, presidents, prime ministers of nations—and to their peoples, on all continents and all nations of the earth!...** It is revealed in Malachi 3:1-5 and 4:5-6 that God would raise up ONE in the power and spirit of **ELIJAH**, shortly before the *Second Coming* of Christ. In Matthew 17:22 Jesus said, even *after* John the Baptist had completed his mission [and was *beheaded*], that **this prophesied Elijah ‘truly shall first come, and RESTORE all things....’** The **HUMAN LEADER** to be raised up *somewhat shortly prior to Christ’s Second Coming* was to prepare the way—prepare *the Church*—for Christ’s coming, and RESTORE THE TRUTH that had been lost through the preceding eras of the Church. Also a *door* was to be opened for **this LEADER and/or the Philadelphia era of the Church to fulfill Matthew 24:14....These prophecies have now definitely been fulfilled**” (*Mystery of the Ages*, 1985, pp. 9-10, 290-291).

This book, which some called Mr. Armstrong’s “crowning achievement,” should leave no doubt that he definitely believed God used *him* to fulfill the prophecies of the *latter-day “Elijah”* (Mal. 4:4-6).

Furthermore, the *Ambassador College Correspondence Course*—which Mr. Armstrong *supervised* and

approved—clearly showed that *end-time Elijah* would appear at the close of this age: “Jesus also said the *Elijah to come* would ‘RESTORE ALL THINGS’ (Matt. 17:11)... Just as Christ shall *restore the government of God over the entire earth, the ONE who was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah would restore it in God’s Church....* God has used *him* [Mr. Armstrong] to *restore many related truths*. Of primary importance was the restoration of Christ’s TRUE GOSPEL of the Kingdom of God!...” (Lesson 18, pp. 5-6, 11, 14-15).

Could Mr. Armstrong have made it much clearer—that he believed the *Elijah prophecies* had *definitely been fulfilled* in his ministry? Again, we ask: “But did he later *repudiate* his former view that God used him to fulfill the *Elijah prophecies*?” *Did he disavow his oft-repeated claim* that he had fulfilled the “Elijah” prophecies? As mentioned earlier, no one has yet produced a *written document* or a verifiable *oral statement* by Mr. Armstrong showing where he ever *abandoned* his previous view, that he believed **his fruits demonstrated God had used him to fulfill the prophecies concerning the end-time Elijah as revealed in Malachi 4:5-6 and Matthew 17:11. Neither has anyone yet produced any credible eye-witnesses to testify that Mr. Armstrong definitely renounced his view of himself as the end-time “Elijah.” And no one has yet claimed he made a “bedside confession,” just before his death, in which he supposedly disavowed his earlier conviction that he was the end-time “ELIJAH”!**

Is there a *possibility*, or even a *probability*, that Mr. Armstrong may have occasionally had *doubts* in regard to *his role as the end-time “Elijah?”* Remember, John the Baptist later came to *doubt* whether the One he had previously called the “Lamb of God” (John 1:19-34) was really the prophesied *Messiah*, saying, “Art thou He that should come? Or look we for another?” (Luke 7:19). Likewise, it is *possible, if not probable,*

that Mr. Armstrong, as a normal human being, may also have had some *doubts* from time to time. But this does *not* mean he *accepted* those “doubts,” and *definitely concluded* he had been wrong in thinking and teaching the brethren in the WCG that he was the ONE whom God had chosen to fulfill the prophecies concerning the *end-time Elijah!*

The Work of the “THREE ELIJAH’S”

...Explained Later

In the next installment of the *end-time” Elijah”* series, we shall discuss the lives of the *three Elijahs*, and show how all three were *great men* in God’s sight, all of whom preached powerful sermons on *repentance*, thereby turning many thousands from sin and back to the true God. We will also examine *similarities* and *dissimilarities* of those *three “Elijahs.”* And we shall show *evidence*, both from *Scripture* and from his *fruits*, that God appears to have predestined Mr. Armstrong to fulfill the *end-time “Elijah”* prophecies.

Remember that many Bible readers have overlooked the fact that God ordained that there would be *three “Elijahs”*: **1)** The *original Elijah* (“Elijah the Tishbite” (1 Kings 17:1), who is mentioned many times in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in I and II Kings. **2)** *John the Baptist*, who came in the “spirit and power of Elijah,” whom Christ said was “Elijah” (Matt. 17:10-13). **3)** And, finally, an *end-time “Elijah”*—of whom Jesus said, “*Elijah truly shall first come, and RESTORE ALL THINGS*” (v. 11).

And, in my next article I hope to demonstrate conclusively **that no prophet or apostle ever did such a powerful work, as that which God did through Mr. Armstrong.** In fact, we will see why *many* believe Mr. Armstrong communicated the Word of God to more people—*perhaps as many as 70 to 80 million*—more than all of God’s servants throughout history! After carefully examining in detail the *fruits* of his long, 52-year ministry, how can *anyone* honestly entertain further doubts that the *outstanding accomplishments* of this *end-time “Elijah”* were truly amazing!

Note: In early 1999, Raymond F. McNair (with input from a church employee) wrote a rather thoroughly researched article titled, ***The End-Time Elijah—HAS HE ALREADY COME?*** That article was the equivalent size of a 35-page *Reader’s Digest* magazine.

In August 2001, Mr. McNair wrote a more comprehensive booklet titled, **THE THREE ‘ELIJAHS’—*Questions and Answers Regarding the End-time ‘ELIJAH’!*** That booklet was about the size of a 70-page *Reader’s Digest* magazine.

The **Church of God-21stCentury Home Page** on the *Internet* is now up and running, with some material already posted. Hopefully, these two “Elijah articles” will also be posted on the *Internet* in the near future.

A PERSONAL NOTE. Here is a brief note regarding my varied experiences in the Work of God during the past 55

years. Most of you will have become familiar with my articles in various Church publications (the *Good News*, *Plain Truth*, *Tomorrow's World*, etc), and more recently in articles which were published in other "Church of God" publications. I have served for nearly 50 years as a *writer* and *editor*.

My appointment to serve on the WCG Doctrinal Teams.

Mr. H.W. Armstrong appointed me to serve *under him* over the Headquarters Doctrinal Team in 1974, knowing that I would not introduce "liberal" doctrines into God's Church. After Mr. Armstrong's decease, the Pastor General who succeeded Mr. him appointed me to be over the Doctrinal Team in Pasadena; but shortly afterward, my wife and I were sent to the South Pacific to head the Work of God in New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, etc. Since I would not endorse the *strange doctrines* then being seriously considered at our Pasadena Headquarters, my continued presence would have been a big obstacle in the eyes of those who planned to make sweeping doctrinal changes in the WCG.

My ordination as an Evangelist in the WCG. Mr.

Herbert W. Armstrong ordained me as an Evangelist—over 51 years ago. During those 51 eventful years I served as the pastor of 14 churches in the U.S., Britain and New Zealand, and in 1954-1955, I founded the Chicago Church of God, the first WCG Church east of the Mississippi River. I also served as Director of the Work of God in Britain (1958-1973).

Appointed Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador Colleges in England, and Pasadena, CA. In 1960, Mr. Herbert W.

Armstrong appointed me Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College, near London. Later, in 1978, Mr. Armstrong asked me to serve as Deputy Chancellor of Ambassador College in Pasadena, California—in order to help him put Ambassador College *back on track*. I continued serving God's Work in that position for nearly ten years—until 2 years after Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986. I was gratified to hear him say,

before his decease, that **he was very pleased to see Ambassador College *back on track***. I always counted it a great honor and a fantastic privilege to work with God's end-time Apostle for over 36 years, from the time I entered Ambassador College in 1948, until his death in 1986—approximately 36 years.

I was privileged to conduct many baptismal tours while serving in the Worldwide Church of God. In the summer of 1949, Mr. Armstrong sent Raymond Cole and me on the first student-led, nation-wide baptismal tour, during which time we baptized about 125 brethren. In the following years, I conducted *seven* more baptismal tours in the U.S. and Canada before being sent to London, England in 1958 to take charge of God's Work in Britain, where I continued to serve the Work of Jesus Christ during the next 15 years. After arriving in London, England, I conducted several baptismal tours in the British Isles, and was later sent to Southern Africa with another minister to baptize a number of people in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and in South Africa.

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