

Armstrongism
and
the Worldwide Church of God

I. WHERE THIS CULT ORIGINATED

A. This cult can be traced back to a man by the name of Herbert W. Armstrong and his supposed divine appointments.

1. Herbert Armstrong started out his career as a promotional and advertising man in Des Moines, Iowa in 1912. But in 1920 his advertising business failed in what he described as a flash depression
2. In 1924 Armstrong moved to Oregon and on two more separate occasions his business enterprises failed because of what he described as "forces beyond his control".
3. Sometime between 1924 and 1931 Armstrong was supposedly converted and began to write and do evangelistic work.
4. It is interesting to note that Armstrong's conversion came about through his wife's discovery and it was a conversion to what she had found. She believed that obedience to God's spiritual laws which were summed up in the ten commandments was necessary for salvation.
5. Armstrong at first set out to prove that his wife was wrong but later he concluded that she had indeed found the truth which meant to him that most of Christendom was not proclaiming the truth.
6. Armstrong was ordained in Eugene, Oregon in 1931 and began to conduct evangelistic campaigns there.
7. In January 1934 Armstrong began a radio program in Eugene, Oregon entitled "The World Tomorrow" and with his incredible speaking and promotional abilities he launched his cultist career filled with all kinds of false and heretical teachings.
8. At exactly 10 A.M. on January 1934 Armstrong declared this to be the starting point of the fulfillment of 90% of all Bible prophecies.
9. Armstrong went on to declare that Christ had chosen him to

be the instrument of carrying out His great commission in the end time. He contended on that historic broadcast that he himself was *the forerunner and apostle chosen to announce Christ's Second Coming just as John the Baptist had announced His first coming.

10. Armstrong called his movement and following "The Radio Church of God" and what began as a ridiculous proclamation of one misguided man has grown to an estimated 85,000 membership all carried away and corrupted by his heresies.

B. This cult has a background of questionable areas and a poor basis for believing in it.

1. First of all it is a matter of common knowledge that Armstrong's son, who is the executive vice president, has had an adultery problem sparing a 20 year period and he defends his weakness for women by quoting Mal. 2:14 and saying it was prophesied that he would be an adulterer.
2. It is also common knowledge that Armstrong divorced his wife which resulted in a big lawsuit and then married a much younger woman.
3. Not only has Garner Ted had a problem with women, but he has also had a problem with gambling and it is no secret that he has patronized the casinos of Las Vegas on many occasions and gambled with very high stakes - I might add with the monies of their misguided membership.
4. Notice according to Dt. 18:22 the test of a true prophet is measured by the fulfillment of his prophecies. Armstrong has prophesied on three separate occasions when the end of the age would come (1936, 1943, 1972) and of course he was in error on this and he has also been in error on a multitude of other very dogmatic assertions. In 1972 Armstrong under pressure from others admitted they had been observing Pentecost on the wrong day which he had contended for years was Monday.
5. Armstrong's use of finances ought to be enough for anyone to question who would contribute to this cult.
 - a. the Worldwide Church of God reports an annual income of nearly 56,000,000 dollars.
 - b. members of this cult are called upon to give a first tithe, a second tithe, and a third tithe. In addition other offerings are solicited on holy days, as love offerings, or as special sacrificial offerings when members are asked to even borrow money and give it

to the work. This all adds up to 40-60% of a person's
income on some occasions.

C. The leadership of this cult on the other hand lives in royal luxury with homes costing 200,000 dollars and more. Herbert before his death owned 3 chauffeured cadillacs and a rolls-royce. In his mansion among other costly items was a salt and pepper shaker set which cost \$12,000. And these are just the beginning of a long list of things which offered a lavish lifestyle supported by his spiritually ignorant and deceived devotees.

II. HOW THIS CULT WAS FURTHER PROPAGATED AND PASSED ON

A. This cult was initially propagated by Armstrong's radio ministry.

1. Notice what began in 1934 as "The Radio Church of God" was changed to "the Worldwide Church of God" in 1968.
2. On his broadcast "the Worldwide Tomorrow" Armstrong taught that a counterfeit gospel was circulated around A.D. 33 and by A.D. 58 a different and false gospel began to be propagated. Armstrong held that the true gospel work therefore had stopped for some 18½ centuries. But this was revived by himself in 1931 and he contended that only those believing his message would be saved.

B. In addition to Armstrong's radio work, in 1947 he founded Ambassador College of Pasadena, California beginning with eight faculty members and four students.

C. Another aspect in the spread of this cult has been through its literature.

1. In 1934 Armstrong started "The Plain Truth" magazine and this was later associated with his college and referred to as the college ministry. This in itself has been responsible for a large measure of this cult's growth. It has followed a very colorful and appealing format and it is distributed free.
2. Another means to get out Armstrong's heresies was launched in 1969 with another magazine entitled "Tomorrow's World". This was published for some three years before it ceased.
3. Then there followed a magazine entitled "Good News" for members only which was exclusively for them but in 1973 this publication became known as "The Worldwide News" and then it was made available to anyone who subscribed for it with a \$4.00 fee.

D. We find that this cult has used the television also as a medium of communication and an instrument to ensnare converts.

Finally Armstrong's son despite all his sinful escapades has greatly helped his father in propagating this cult and he is now the chief broadcaster and leader of the movement. This man is a silver-tongued orator and speaks with such authority and dogmatism that he is not only appealing to listen to but he is very persuasive especially to those persons with no spiritual grounding in the Word of God.

III. WHAT'S WRONG WITH WHAT THEY BELIEVE AND TEACH

A. About God

1. What Armstrongism teaches
 - a. Armstrong contended that the Trinity was a false doctrine which came out of the church council of Nicea.
 - b. He contended the Trinity was a pagan concept adopted from the Babylonian belief of Ninrod, Semiramis and Tamuz.
2. What's wrong with this teaching
 - a. The Bible presents God as existing in three persons as one Godhead (Gen. 1:1,26; 11:7; Isa. 6:8).
 - b. The Bible gives instances where the three persons of the Trinity are involved (Gen. 19:24; Isa. 48:16; Matt. 3:16,17; 28:19).

B. About Jesus Christ

1. What they teach
 - a. Armstrongism teaches that Christ had an Adamic nature which was capable of sinning.
 - b. Garner Ted says Jesus had to cry out to God day and night to keep from falling.
 - c. Armstrongism teaches that Christ's deity is less than God the Father and that He will never quantitatively equal the Father.
 - d. As far as Christ's resurrection, they contend that His body just disappeared as a divine spirit being.

- e. The worse yet, they hold that Jesus had to be saved and He is the only human being thus far who has ever been born of God or saved and this occurred at His resurrection.

2. What's wrong with these teachings

- a. First of all the Bible declares that Christ is God manifested in the flesh and that He was born of a virgin and without a sin nature (Jn. 1:1; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 7:26).
- b. Secondly the Bible states that Christ's deity is the same as the Father's (Heb. 1:3; Phil. 2:11; Col. 2:9; Jn. 10:30).
- c. Thirdly the Bible states that Christ arose bodily and not as a spirit (Lk. 24:39; Jn. 20:25, 26; Acts 1:9-11).
- d. Finally to believe that Christ needed to be saved is to believe in no Saviour. For if Christ was a sinner like all the rest and needed to be saved then He could not have been an acceptable and worthy sacrifice any more than any other man to take away sins (Heb. 9:6,7,12,14).

C. About the Holy Spirit

1. What they teach

Armstrongism teaches that the Holy Spirit is a force and not the third Person of the Trinity. The force which is revealed in a Christlike life is the extent of "it" they say.

2. What's wrong with this teaching

The Bible presents the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Trinity and one who is God (Acts 5:3,4). And we see His involvement in the works of creation, salvation and every other divine dealing (Gen. 1:1,2; Jn. 6:63).

D. About Salvation

1. What they teach

- a. Armstrongism teaches that men can become God and that they are in training to become just that.
- b. In order to become like God, Armstrongism teaches that men must measure up to a system of works for salvation. These include baptism by a minister of Armstrong's church, keeping the Sabbath day, observing O.T. holy days, trying to live by every Word of God, tithing to Armstrong's church,

and being in this obedient way at death.

- c. They hold .that no one is yet saved or can be in this life.
When one is converted to Christ's way this is his
conception but he does not experience his actual spiritual
birth until the resurrection.

2. What's wrong with these teachings

- a. Because of such legalistic teachings as these, Armstrongism has been rightly called "The New Galatianismt'.
- b. Notice that the Bible declares very emphatically that men are saved by grace through faith and not by their works (Ram. 4:1-8; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; Rom. 8:3,4; Gal. 2:16, 3:21; 2:21). note Rom. 10:4
- c. The Bible also declares that salvation is a present possession (I Jn. 3:2; II Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:5) and those saved are referred to as babes (I Pet. 2:2), as little children (I Jn. 2:1), and sons (Jn. 1:12), but none are ever called "embryos".

E. About heaven, hell, and the hereafter

1. What they teach

- a. Armstrongism teaches that heaven is a pagan doctrine.
- b. Hell as only a temporary pl&ce of punishment which is a suburb of Jerusalem.
- c. They also hold that the soul of man is mortal and dies at death.
6. Armstrongism speaks of a second and third resurrection of men in which everyone will have an opportunity to be saved.

2. What's wrong with these teachings

- a. First of all the Bible says at death those who are saved go to be with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8) and those who are unsaved wake up in hell (Lk. 16:19-31).
- b. The Bible says that Christ is preparing believers a mansion in heaven (Jn. 14:1-6) and that the place of torments for the unsaved is real and will last forever (Rev. 14:10,11).
- c. It is also for sure that no one will have another opportunity to be saved if they go out of this life unsaved (Prov. 11:7; Jn. 8:24; II Thess. 2:10-12).

F. About healing

1. What they teach

- a. Armstrongism holds that sickness is always the result of sin in one's life and that it is always God's will to heal.

- b. They contend that the practice of medicine is idolatry and that doctors are false prophets.
- c. They repudiate the idea that one should accept sickness as God's will. So like the pentecostals they send out anointed handkerchiefs and solicit offerings for prayers and healing.

2. What's wrong with these teachings

The Scriptures reveal to us that many times sicknesses and suffering are in fact according to God's will (I Tim. 4:20; I Tim. 5:23; II Cor. 12:7-11).

G. About the ten lost tribes

1. What they teach

- a. Armstrongism teaches a heresy known as Anglo-Israelism or British-Israelism.
- b. They contend when King Zedekiah's sons were all killed that Jeremiah the prophet took the King's daughter along with Jacob's pillow stone to Ireland and this became the coronation stone for the Davidic Kingdom.
- c. The ten Northern Tribes who were taken in the Assyrian captivity supposedly settled in Europe and the present day British are their descendants. These are then identified as Ephraim and the United States is identified as Manasseh.
- d. These folks contend that Queen Elizabeth is now seated on the throne of David and that Ephraim represents England or Israel. According to their heresy Judah represents the Jews who are still under God's curse and they are distinguished from the Israelites or British.

2. What's wrong with this teaching

- a. First of all according to Amos' prophecy in approximately 728 B.C. the ten tribes would be destroyed and their restoration would never be realized (Amos 9:8-10). It is unscriptural then to suppose that after nearly 3,000 years these tribes would reappear as the British Empire and that the U.S. would have the covenanted blessings

passed on to them as God's Israel.

b. Secondly it should be noted that the Bible keeps the Church, the Jews, and the Gentiles separated as far as God's dealings with them. Gentiles are not and will never be Jews or Israel in any sense. British- Israelism takes the covenanted promises of God to the Jews and misapplies them to the Gentiles.

C. As for the Jews of Judah who returned after the Babylonian captivity not being Israel, Nehemiah records 11 times that they were Jews and 22 times he refers to them as Israel.

Sources: The Kingdom of the Cults by Wallter Martin
The Incredible Armstrong Duo by Robert Sumner
Heresies Exposed by William C. Irvine