

ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART ONE

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Endtime Elijah Theory, Herbert W. Armstrong And Worldwide Church Of God, British-Israelism Doctrine, The Hard Work Of Being A Christian Writer, A Work Of Faith, Monopolizing The Truth, Humility In Our Understanding, Glorify The Lord In All Things, Don't Be Motivated By A Desire For Filthy Lucre, Don't Boast Beyond Your Measure, Puffed Up With Knowledge, Don't Try To Take Center Stage, Mark John Allen's Deception, Excerpts From "The Work of Elijah", One Unyielded Area In Our Lives Can Lead To Our Defeat, Satan Is Father Of Lies

Within certain Christian circles, there exists the belief that in the years preceding the Second Coming of Christ, a mighty Prophet of the Lord will arise in the United States of America. According to this particular school of thought, this Prophet will follow in the footsteps of the Prophet Elijah of old by exposing the sins of the religious and the political leadership of America, and of the American people in general. Similar to John the Baptist who preached in the wilderness areas of the Jordan River Valley, it is said that this Endtime Prophet will inspire the American population to repent of their sins in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

To support their misguided doctrine, the adherents of this particular belief point to certain Old Testament Scriptures which are found in the writings of the Prophet Malachi, as well as to certain verses that are found in the Gospels. Some of these verses include the following, which we will examine more closely later on in this series:

"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 the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
Malachi 4:5-6, KJV

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things."
Matthew 17:11, KJV

Perhaps one of the most well-known examples of this belief in an Endtime Elijah can be found in the life of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, who is the deceased founder of the Worldwide Church of God. Due to my own personal interest in anything that is related to Endtime prophecy, when I originally wrote this series, I took the time to read a considerable amount of material which had been written by Armstrong; including his final life's work entitled "Mystery of the Ages". I also visited a few websites which are dedicated to his life and ministry. I will candidly admit that I agree with some of

the views which were espoused by Mr. Armstrong, although not with all of them. If one believes everything that has been written in support of this man, it would seem that he was destined for greatness within the Christian world; at least from a human perspective.

Herbert W. Armstrong was born into a staunch Quaker family in or near Des Moines, Iowa on July 31, 1892. Without going into a great amount of detail, once Armstrong reached early adulthood, he entered the advertising business where he became quite successful. However, due to several serious setbacks -- such as the Great Depression of 1929 -- all of his hard work eventually came to nought. Some people view these events as God's Hand working in his life to prepare him for the ministry ahead. That ministry began in earnest in the year 1934, following his conversion and several years of theological training. During those years, Mr. Armstrong embraced certain doctrines which would later form a part of the British-Israelism doctrine. Lord willing, I may discuss this doctrine in another article at a future date.

While Mr. Armstrong's ministry found its humble beginnings in the state of Oregon, U.S.A., by the time of his death fifty-two years later, the various outreach branches of his ministry had reached millions of people the world over with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Herbert W. Armstrong's life and ministry came to a peaceful end on January 16, 1986 when he died in his sleep at the age of ninety-three.

As you will learn when I publish the aforementioned article concerning British-Israelism, Mr. Armstrong firmly believed that the United States of America is the modern-day parallel to Israel -- that is, the land between the two seas -- and that many of the physical blessings which were promised to Abraham, have found their completion in America, as well as in other nations which form a part of the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic world.

It is upon this foundation that he then launched into his belief concerning a great American Prophet named Elijah. Tragically, prior to his death, with the encouragement of some of his followers, it appears that Mr. Armstrong was actually led to believe that he was this Endtime Elijah. In my view, it seems that similar to other men of God who have gone astray, Mr. Armstrong was simply tricked by Satan into yielding to his own pride and vanity. Exactly where and when this began to occur, I honestly do not know. However, the following quote taken from a letter dated August 23, 1984, clearly shows the spirit of exclusivity which had already taken hold in his heart:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Brethren and Co-Workers, God wants that world to hear the message -- if only as a witness. We have delivered that message -- and we only! . . . We have served God faithfully -- and are the only voice in a lost and doomed world shouting out God's message."

----- End of Quote -----

While I can truly appreciate and respect Mr. Armstrong's

fervent dedication to the cause of Christ, when one begins to make such claims of being the only person with the right message -- that is, to be God's only Endtime voice -- then I believe that it is wise to examine their belief system with a great deal of caution, prayer and consultation with the Word of God. Just over a year later, on September 12, 1985, and only a few short months before his decease, Armstrong also wrote the following remarks in a letter to a co-worker which further reveals the self-aggrandizement to which he had sadly succumbed:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Since last December I have been working diligently on the largest and most important book of my life. In fact, I feel I myself did not write it. Rather, I believe God used me in writing it. I candidly feel it may be the most important book since the Bible . . . The Bible itself is a mystery to nearly all people. God and the nature of God -- what God is like -- God's purpose -- have been a mystery. No religion on earth has ever truly understood just who and what God really is . . . This new book, *Mystery of the Ages*, unveils all these mysteries. It puts the many different parts of the 'jigsaw puzzle' together."

----- End of Quote -----

Being a Christian writer myself, I honestly understand the degree of hard work and devotion that Armstrong applied to his writing ministry. It requires a great deal of patience, perseverance, inspiration and vision to sit at the keyboard day after day in what is for many Christian writers a rather lonely and thankless job. Sometimes we never even meet the people to whom we are ministering. We have absolutely no idea exactly how far and how wide our words are traveling; or how much of an effect we may be having upon the lives of other people. It is really a work of faith in large part.

However, this job is not without its rewards; not only in the next life, but in this life as well. It gives us great joy and personal satisfaction to know that we are faithfully feeding God's sheep day after day. Not only that, but it is in feeding others that we ourselves are likewise nourished and fed by the Lord. Personally, I am always getting excited and thrilled by the things which are revealed to me through God's Word. There is nothing like it. I have no doubt that this is the Lord's calling for my life at this present time. Whether it will be in the future, I honestly do not know; for as the Apostle James wrote:

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."
James 4:13-15, KJV

The main point is this: None of us has the right to claim a monopoly on the truth of the Word of God, as Mr. Armstrong did. For a person, organization or church to boast that this

is the very first time that a particular Biblical truth is being properly understood and explained -- as so many modern Internet-based writers foolishly do -- seems quite ludicrous to me. As I explain in the article entitled "Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word", we all need to remain humble before the Lord. As I have already said, to become excited by what the Lord reveals to us is acceptable. However, for anyone to make such inflated claims is not wise. Regardless of what type of ministry the Lord has chosen to give to each of us, we are not to do it for the sake of personal gain, or for self-aggrandizement. Rather, we should do it to glorify God alone, to enrich the lives of others by bringing them closer to Jesus Christ, and to lift up -- or to exalt -- His wonderful Word. Consider the following verses which clarify these points:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
1 Corinthians 10:31, KJV

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."
2 Corinthians 10:12-17, KJV

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;"
1 Peter 5:2, KJV

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;"
1 Timothy 3:8, KJV

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;"
Titus 1:7, KJV

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."
Philippians 2:3, KJV

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."
Psalms 138:2, KJV

In the previous verses, the term "filthy lucre" is actually referring to being greedy for material gain; that is, for money. It is derived from the Greek word "aischrokerdes". I discuss the commercialization of modern Christianity more fully in such articles as "MP3's, Commercialized Christianity and Christian Hypocrisy" and "Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon". I hope that you will take the time to read them.

To reiterate, in my view, Mr. Armstrong's remarks regarding the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God being the only voice of truth in the world were clearly exaggerated. If he had added a tone of humility to his remarks and stated that, like a number of other dedicated and hard-working Christian evangelists, his church was also involved in an important outreach for the Lord, this would have been more acceptable. Likewise, to candidly state that his last book, "Mystery of the Ages", may be the most important book ever written since the Bible, clearly reflects a serious problem in the area of pride and humility. If Armstrong had stated that he believed that his book was an important contribution to the Christian body, this would have been much more appropriate. Lastly, to believe that he was the Elijah of the Endtime is the height of vanity. In the words of the Apostle Paul -- which I quoted earlier -- Mr. Armstrong was clearly, and unwisely, boasting beyond his measure.

Let me emphasize that I don't question Herbert W. Armstrong's in-depth knowledge of the Word of God. Neither do I doubt his sincerity in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ; nor his love and deep concern for lost souls. However, the manner in which he elevated his work and himself in his final years, is a cause for concern. Some people may argue, "Well, what does it matter now? Armstrong is dead; so why not just leave him alone?" The reader needs to understand that this series is not a personal attack against Mr. Armstrong, or against any other individual. Rather, it is an exposé of the misguided, false doctrines, and the deceptive spiritual forces that can take hold of such men, if they are not extremely careful.

As I explain in the aforementioned article, some people do not realize that obtaining a lot of Biblical knowledge is a two-edged sword. Such knowledge can affect us in one of two ways. It will either humble us by showing us how little we really know, and how small and helpless we really are, or else it will make us proud, boastful and self-righteous. I am reminded of the following verses which are found in two of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul:

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."
1 Corinthians 8:1-2, KJV

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing . . . Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."
1 Corinthians 13:2, 8, KJV

"From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

1 Timothy 1:6-7, KJV

This is one of the primary dangers for those people who are enlightened through many years of following the Lord and studying His Word. It is a very serious danger for all of us, myself included. Instead of continuing to give the Lord all of the glory, which is His alone to receive, some of the Lord's servants begin to desire a little bit of the credit for themselves. They begin to elevate themselves in their own eyes, and then in the eyes of their followers as well. Even though the Lord -- who is the one True Source of Light -- desires to remain center stage, which is obviously His right to do, sometimes His servants want to push the Lord to the side, so that they can also bathe in the limelight, and thus receive a little bit of praise from their followers. If you see a Christian leader doing this, watch out! Run the other way as fast as you can!

In other words, such leaders may continue to praise the Lord outwardly with their mouths, but in their hearts, the sins of pride and vanity have already set in. These were precisely the sins of the Scribes and the Pharisees, as I point out in a number of other articles. By the time Jesus arrived, they were so spiritually off-center, that they did not even feel that they needed a Savior; at least not one who would attack and expose their whole false religious system. The importance of remaining humble and submissive before the Lord, as well as before our fellow brethren, is revealed in such verses as the following. As you read them, please notice that it is the Lord who exalts us, and not we ourselves, or our followers:

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"
1 Peter 5:5-6, KJV

"He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."
Luke 1:51-52, KJV

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:"
James 1:9, KJV

So again we see that exaltation, when it comes, is a work of the Lord, and not of man. While I truly wish that this were the end of this sad story concerning the Worldwide Church of God, sadly, this is not the case by any means. During the time when I last updated this series, I visited the website of a former acquaintance in order to obtain some information regarding Herbert Armstrong. My friend's name was Mark John Allen. He was a former member of the Worldwide Church of God, as well as a member of the Reformation Church of God. It was through reading an article that John authored that I

first became aware of the Endtime Elijah theory. This was a number of years ago.

In fact, the original version of the series that you are now reading was written in response to some of John's erroneous claims. While he did not fully accept my conclusions, John did admit that I had presented a strong case and a convincing argument which was based on the Scriptures. Even if I had not fully persuaded him of his error, I was happy to know that at least I had managed to motivate John to question his personal beliefs, and to look directly to the Bible for his answers. I would now like to share with you a few excerpts from John's article called "The Work of Elijah". Please read them slowly and carefully, as they relate directly to what I will be sharing afterwards:

----- Begin Quotes -----

"Many people down through time have claimed to be the Prophet Elijah. In our present day, individuals from time to time do this as well. Some say they have seen God either personally in a vision, or an angel, and that this Being told them they were Elijah and had a special mission."

"Did Herbert Armstrong fulfill this role?"

"The purpose of this article, then, is to discover the purpose for Elijah and to understand his astounding role in this end time, which will also let us know, hopefully, just who he is when he finally appears."

"Many misguided people have thought that they were Elijah from time to time."

"For the last few years of his life, Herbert Armstrong and those around him claimed that he was doing the Elijah Work, and that he therefore was the Elijah to come. I suppose at the time it made a strange kind of sense. We were under the influence of the doctrine of exclusivity . . . which says that God is only working in one place at one time, and primarily through one individual."

"Sadly, there are many today within the churches of God who are returning to the old habits of exclusivity. This is really sad because most of us have just been through a prolonged and traumatic experience that should have shown us just the opposite, that God can work and does work in more than one place at a time and that we should love and treasure our brothers and sisters no matter what human organization they belong to and call them brothers and sisters in the Lord as long as they are obeying the commandments of God to the best of their abilities."

"Even more tragic is one group that claims that it, the church, is the Elijah Work now, and says dogmatically that Mr. Armstrong was the Elijah to come. If one doesn't accept these doctrines, they cannot be a part of that fellowship. In fact, what they have done, unwittingly, is to turn Mr. Armstrong into an idol for virtual worship and admiration, and they have set up their ministry on the same egomaniacal pedestal. Even angels will not allow themselves to be treated in this way, so why do mere men? As will soon be

evident, the Elijah of God is yet future. He may not be recognizable at first, but he will be finally to those who are being guided by the Spirit of God."

"Soon, our people and the world in general will become so evil and wicked that they will not be able to stand God's Word any longer. At that time, in response to their arrogance and sin, God will send another Elijah. This Elijah will come into a spiritual wilderness proclaiming God's Truth and warning in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in spiritual power to rule the world with a rod of iron!"

"Well, my friends, I don't know who this end time Elijah is going to be, but he will be used to proclaim God's Word in no uncertain terms to a sin sick world and a sin sick church, and they won't like it one bit."

----- End Quotes -----

From the previous statements, it is easy to see that while John did not believe that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was this purported modern Elijah, he still believed that this Endtime Prophet was yet to come. Furthermore, he acknowledged that a number of other misguided people had also been tricked by deceptive spirits into erroneously believing that they were this Elijah. I was also encouraged by John's willingness to admit that the Lord works in many ways through many people, and not just through one individual or organization at a time, such as through the Worldwide Church of God. John also recognized the dangers of man worship, as in the case of Mr. Armstrong.

Overall, except for the fact that he still clung to the idea of an Endtime Elijah, he seemed to have a healthy attitude. Tragically, that one small doctrine which he had not been willing to forsake, ultimately resulted in his own downfall. You cannot begin to imagine the shock, grief, discouragement, sadness and disappointment I experienced when I discovered John's so-called "revelations from God". Following are some excerpts from his commentary. Please keep in mind his former statements as you read these:

----- Begin Quotes -----

"And so, God has raised me up as a voice in the wilderness of spiritual confusion to proclaim the Good News of Christ's second coming. This is therefore an Elijah Work just before the terrible Tribulation to prepare the way for Christ's Second Coming when He will seize and actually sit on the throne He qualified for in His First Coming!"

"Yet, there are evil men -- many of whom have prayed for the very deliverance Christ is now giving them -- who scoff and sneer at God's end time Apostle. They doubt that the living Head of this Church, Jesus Christ, has raised me up to set God's church back on His track!"

"Let me ask you something. Did you think that Christ would violate His promise which He made to us in Mtt. 24 that He would inspire this Gospel to be proclaimed in all of the world as a witness before the Tribulation and the Day of the

Lord? Do you disbelieve the plain prophecy we just read in Malachi that He would send this end time Elijah the Prophet to set His people back on His track, and to turn our hearts to each other in love? Do you think that God is not capable of doing it, and of doing it His way, rather than man's way?"

"Men's churches and religious organizations make their choices about who is to be a minister in that church. These men have to have worldly credentials to be accepted by man! But God chooses for His servants those whom He decides to draft into the job He has for them."

"In just such a way, God has selected me to become His end time apostle and to be the spiritual successor to Herbert W. Armstrong, whose work forms the very foundation for what Christ is now preparing to build."

----- End of Quotes -----

What a terrible tragedy! This man had a fair opportunity to receive the truth concerning the Elijah prophecies of the Old Testament. He read my article. Sadly, not only did he reject it, but he likewise succumbed to the very same delusion as his predecessor, Herbert W. Armstrong. After reading John's previous comments, I immediately sent him a message in which I wrote in part:

----- Begin Quote -----

". . . We have had some interesting discussions in the past. I know that we see eye-to-eye on a number of issues; but please tell me that you do not honestly believe that you are now the Endtime Elijah, which even you yourself agreed that Herbert W. Armstrong was not. You have read the original version of my article. Does this mean that you have since then totally rejected its contents and Scriptural basis, even though at the time you candidly admitted that I had presented some very convincing arguments?"

----- End Quote -----

After waiting for a few days to receive a reply from John, I began to suspect that perhaps he had simply decided not to respond to me because he knew that I would not agree with him regarding this issue. Finally, on April 1, 1998, just a few days before I released the previous version of this series, John sent me the following response in which he confirms the position he had taken in his previous comments above:

----- Begin Quote -----

"I did not fully agree with the first edition of your Elijah article, but will be happy to look at what you write in the revised edition. I have had numerous dreams that validate my claims. Naturally, a lot of people don't believe these dreams happened, but they did. I will be happy to discuss this further after I read your updated article. If I am wrong, I will admit it, and retract what I have written."

----- End Quote -----

This was a clear confirmation of what I wrote earlier. It was because John did not fully agree with my understanding regarding the prophecies that are found in the Old Testament Book of Malachi, that he succumbed to this erroneous belief concerning himself being the Endtime Elijah. If Satan can maintain control of one, small, unyielded area of our hearts and lives; if we compromise in just one small thing in our walk with the Lord, eventually, he will be able to defeat us. It is similar to a small crack in the dam. If left unchecked, it may eventually result in a deluge of major proportions. In the same manner, if we cling to one small lie, soon Satan will flood our minds and hearts with many more; for as Jesus clearly said to the unbelieving Jews of His own day, Satan is a liar, and the Father of Lies, as we see by this verse:

". . . He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
John 8:44b, KJV

If John was not willing to accept my conclusions in the original version of this series, then it was rather obvious that it would be even more difficult for him to accept what I have written in this updated version of the same; because in my view, he had already begun hardening his heart to the truth. However, our God is a God of miracles, and He may yet work in John's life to show him the subtle trap into which he had fallen. Perhaps the Lord has already straightened out John. I honestly don't know, because many years have passed since I last heard from John, and I have lost communication with him.

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART TWO

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Divinely-Inspired Dreams Versus Our Wicked Imagination And Satanic Nightmares, Our Wicked Heart, Discovering God's Will For Our Lives, Spirit Of Exclusivity Is The Product Of Pride And Vanity, Our Divided Faith, Self-Proclaimed Promoters Of The Whole Truth, Ellen G. White And Seventh Day Adventists, Animosity Between Roman Catholic Church And The Adventists, Sabbath Keepers And Keeping The Whole Law, Lift Up Jesus And Not Ourselves Or Our Church, Glory In The Lord, Reluctance Of The Prophets To Accept Their Calling, Moses Complained He Was Slow Of Speech, Gideon Was Skeptical And Asked God To Give Him A Sign, An Angel And Gideon's Idol-Smashing Test, Test Of

The Fleece, Beware Of False Manifestations And False Angels Of Light, Jeremiah Worried That He Was Too Young To Be One Of God's Prophets, The Only Credentials You Need, Jonah Tries To Flee From God's Will For His Life, Saul Of Tarsus Is Knocked From His Horse And Blinded, Convinced By Indisputable Signs, Humble Servants Of The Lord, Apostle Paul's Humility, Beware Of False Prophets Who Entice You With Mysteries Secrets And Conspiracies, Being A Chosen Prophet Of God Was Not A Popular Job, Prophet Jeremiah's Sufferings, Murderers Of The Prophets Misguided False Self-Aggrandizing Prophets Of Our Modern Day

One thing I would like to point out to my readers is that John's conclusions were based upon certain dreams he had. As I explain in the article entitled "What is God's Will for My Life?", dreams are indeed one way to discover God's Will for our lives. This is confirmed for us in the Book of Job, for example, where we find the following verses:

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."
Job 33:14-17, KJV

While dreams are in fact one way in which we can determine the Will of God for our lives, they are definitely not the only way. Furthermore, our dreams are not always trustworthy either. The truth of the matter is that it is very easy for our evil imagination to give us dreams which we may believe are of the Lord, when in fact they are really not. Certain dreams can even be horrible nightmares which are inspired by Satan himself. Thank God that we don't experience the latter all that often. Let me remind you of the true condition of our human nature by way of the following verses:

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
Genesis 6:5, KJV

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
Jeremiah 17:9, KJV

"And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
Mark 7:20-23, KJV

The previous verses are an excellent response for people who embrace the attitude "I'm okay, you're okay", and who deny the reality of sin. The Lord knows our weak human condition. He is fully aware of the evil temptations to which we can so easily succumb, if we are not careful. He likewise knows how Satan tends to operate as well. It is for this reason that in

the Scriptures, we find a variety of methods which we can use as we endeavor to confirm the Will of God for our lives. By utilizing these different methods as a system of checks and balances, we can more clearly determine and confirm exactly what God's Will is, or isn't. To better understand this issue, allow me to again encourage you to read the article entitled "What is God's Will for My Life?".

As I stated earlier, for anyone to suggest that they, their church, or their organization is the only entity on Earth which preaches the full truth of God's Word, is a deception which is born of both pride and vanity. It is the spirit of exclusivity. Sadly, this evil spiritual disease has plagued the world of Christianity from one end to the other. Satan must no doubt be patting himself on the back, and laughing with glee, as a result of the division which he has caused within our faith. At this current time, there are so many churches and denominations, self-proclaimed "prophets", and other organizations which foolishly boast that they alone preach the truth, that it is a real tragedy. One can find these deceivers everywhere; not just in the church system, but online as well. I encounter them all the time, and I endeavor to keep them at arm's length.

The Roman Catholic Church does it; the Jehovah's Witnesses certainly do it; the legalistic Seventh Day Adventists are guilty of doing it; the Worldwide Church of God has done it; and I can't begin to imagine how many other churches, cults, organizations and individuals likewise erroneously claim to hold a monopoly on the truth. I will be discussing a few of these as we continue this series. For those of you who may possibly object to my mention of the Seventh Day Adventists, allow me to share with you a few quotes from the writings of Ellen G. White, who is recognized by many members of the SDA church as their founder and "prophetess":

----- Begin Quotes -----

"There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places . . . God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, a church on the earth, whom He has made the depositaries of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world."

----- End Quotes -----

Make no mistake. Ellen G. White is referring to the Seventh Day Adventist church. How ironic that while we have all long heard that the Roman Catholic Church is supposedly the "Holy Mother Church", and the "one true faith", there are clearly other churches which likewise make the very same claim. The fact of the matter is that the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventists have been at odds with each other for many years now, as is quite evident in SDA literature. Not only that, but Seventh Day Adventists are convinced that the Roman Catholic pope is the Antichrist, and that changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday represents the Mark of the Beast. Quite frankly, I disagree with both positions.

Personally, I have had my share of run-ins with the Seventh

Day Adventists on my Facebook page, due to their legalism, and their insistence that Christians are obligated to keep the Sabbath. In fact, some time ago, I wrote an article which addresses this issue called "Are Christians Obligated to Keep the Sabbath?". Recently, while approving new friend requests on my Facebook page, I came across one timeline where it was stated that rather than cower under the criticism that they receive as a result of their supposed strict adherence to the laws of the Old Testament -- in particular, their observance of the Sabbath -- Seventh Day Adventists should be proud of the same, and proud of the fact that they uphold God's Laws, while other Christians do not. I have but one thing to say to any Seventh Day Adventists who may be reading this series:

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
James 2:10, KJV

Thank God for the freedom, Grace, Mercy, Righteousness, and Salvation, which we can all find through our faith in Jesus Christ -- without the works of the Law -- as otherwise, we would all surely be hopelessly lost. At any rate, this proud spirit of exclusivity, and foolishly placing ourselves on a pedestal, is in direct contradiction to the Scriptures which clearly inform us to uplift the Lord, as opposed to elevating ourselves, our particular church, or our organization. This truth is made rather evident by verses such as the following where we are clearly admonished to glorify the Lord, and to not seek glory for ourselves:

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth . . . Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
1 Corinthians 10:17-18, 31, KJV

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."
2 Corinthians 4:5, KJV

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."
2 Corinthians 10:17, KJV

Please notice who is the Lord, and who is the servant in the previous verses. If that isn't clear enough for you, consider also how Jesus referred to His own Disciples in relation to Himself in the following verses:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."
John 13:16, KJV

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."
John 15:20, KJV

Thus we see that we are not supposed to uplift ourselves by any means. Rather, we are supposed to glorify the Lord, and promote His wonderful Word as well. Returning to our earlier

discussion, by proclaiming himself the Endtime Elijah, Mark John Allen did the exact opposite; just like his own mentor Herbert W. Armstrong, and so many other servants of the Lord. Quite frankly, as I mention in the article "The Office of a Prophet", I have never known any true Prophet of God in the Bible who ever really wanted the job for which God had chosen him. It is for this reason that in my articles, as well as on my Facebook page, I frequently express my concern regarding how many people now refer to themselves as Apostles, Prophets and Prophetesses. I find such proud boasts both foolish, and dangerous at the same time. These deceivers are leading God's people astray; and one of these days they will have to face the music as a result of their actions, unless they repent.

Turning to the Scriptures, Moses did his very best to try to get out of His calling from the Lord. He told the Lord that he was slow of speech, and that no one would listen to him or believe him. He basically said "Lord, send whomsoever you will, just please don't send me! Find yourself another man!" Consider these verses that are found in the Book of Exodus:

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee . . . And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue . . . And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send."

Exodus 4:1, 10, 13, KJV

As you may recall, it was not until the Lord had displayed His Power by turning Moses' shepherd's staff into a serpent, and by turning his hand leprous, that Moses finally got the point that this was serious business, and that he had to do the Lord's bidding, regardless of the consequences. As we all know, as a result of his obedience, God used Moses in a very great way to liberate the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and then to lead them to the Promised Land of Canaan. However, Moses had to take that first step of faith in spite of his own personal feelings of inadequacy.

When the Lord called Gideon to fight against the Midianites, Gideon was very skeptical of the entire situation. Just as Moses had reacted by voicing his doubts, Gideon likewise was full of excuses, and had a very difficult time believing the message of his Angelic Visitor. Gideon basically said, "Look, if God is with us Israelites, where are all of the miracles our fathers told us about? I am just a poor man. What do you want with me? Not only that, but I am the youngest man in my father's house. You are going to have to give me some mighty signs if you really expect me to believe that God has chosen me to deliver my brethren from the Midianite army." Consider these verses:

"And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites . . . And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the

least in my father's house . . . And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me."
Judges 6:13, 15, 17, KJV

As you may know, it was not until after the Lord's Angel had demonstrated some amazing pyrotechnic wonders, by causing a flame to materialize out of nowhere, and completely burn up Gideon's offering, that Gideon was shocked into realizing that this being was truly an Angel of the Lord, who had come to deliver an important message to him, by the direct order of the Almighty Himself. Notice Gideon's change in attitude in the following verse:

"And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face."
Judges 6:22, KJV

Despite the fact that Gideon had begun to take the situation more seriously, the Lord was not quite through testing him just yet. The Lord wanted to make sure that Gideon was truly the right man for the job that he would soon undertake. Thus, He asked Gideon to do something extremely radical. The best example I can think of, would be if the Lord were to ask you to go down to your local Catholic church, and knock over and destroy their beautiful idol of Mary, and the pretty garden that surrounds it. Following is the test which the Lord put before Gideon:

"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it:"
Judges 6:25, KJV

Following the incident with the Angel and the burning altar, Gideon realized that he had better do exactly as he had been instructed to; even if it turned the town folks against him; which it obviously did. However, God was with Gideon. Thus, He used Gideon's own father to protect him. Nevertheless, in spite of the Divine Wonders he had already witnessed, dear Gideon still doubted in his heart that God had called him to deliver his brethren out of the hands of the Midianites. Thus we enter the story of Gideon's fleece. To keep this account brief, I am just going to quote the verses where Gideon tests the Lord twice concerning this incident:

"And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."

Judges 6:36-40, KJV

It was after the Lord had performed these two signs with the fleece for him, that Gideon finally became convinced that God was really going to use him to defeat the powerful Midianite army. While God did indeed perform such miracles in the Bible in order to instill faith in some of His servants, this does not mean that we should just blindly accept when some people today claim to have received similar signs from God as well. This is because there are some individuals who are so full of pride and self-imposed delusion, and so eager to be somebody special, and somebody spiritual, that they will believe just about anything in order to support their false claims. They will see what they want to see, and claim that it is a sign from God, when perhaps it really isn't. It may just be their own wicked heart, or it could be a false manifestation from Satan himself. Let us not forget that Satan can indeed appear as an "angel of light", as can those people who are in league with him, as we can determine by the following verses:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
2 Corinthians 11:13-15, KJV

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
Isaiah 5:20, KJV

Turning to another Scriptural example of reluctance being demonstrated by one of God's Prophets, when the Lord called the young lad Jeremiah to preach against the sins of Israel about forty years prior to the Babylonian invasions, he too was full of personal doubts regarding being able to fulfill the Lord's plan for his life. In this case, Jeremiah simply complained that he was too young to be a Prophet. However, even that did not prevent the Lord from choosing him, as we can determine by the following verses:

"Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."
Jeremiah 1:4-7, KJV

While Jeremiah's excuse may have seemed like a valid one, it still was not sufficient for him to be excused from the work which the Lord had ordained for him to do. In fact, as with Moses and Gideon, the very fact that Jeremiah felt inadequate to perform the job, made him the perfect choice to actually do it, because he would be forced to rely completely on the Lord. In other words, as I explain in an article of the same name, all of these men had the credentials that they needed, because they were not trusting in themselves, and they were

each anointed by the Lord.

As many of you will know, the Prophet Jonah foolishly thought that he could evade God's Will for his life by fleeing on a ship. However, three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish with slimy seaweed wrapped around his head, soon changed the Prophet's mind, as we can easily confirm by the following verses:

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD . . . Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights . . . The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head."
Jonah 1:3, 17, 2:5, KJV

In the end, Jonah came to his senses, cried out to the Lord for His salvation, was spat out by that great fish, and then obediently went to Nineveh, where he preached against that great city for a period of forty days. As a result of Jonah's reluctant obedience, the people of Nineveh repented of their sins, and were spared from destruction until a later date.

Turning to the New Testament, in the Apostle Paul's case, he was so blinded by his pharisaical pride, and had strayed so far from the truth, that the Lord chose to resort to some rather drastic measures. Paul was literally knocked from his horse as he rode to Damascus, and blinded for three days, in order to get him on the right track. Paul not only saw the glorious Light of Jesus Christ that fateful day, but he came to see the Light of truth as well. Paul must have known in his heart that persecuting the Christians was wrong. It is evident that God must have been convicting his conscience for some time. That is why the Lord said to him "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks". In other words, Paul was resisting the conviction of the Holy Ghost; which is God's still small Voice that speaks within our hearts. Here are the key verses from that incident:

"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks . . . And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."
Acts 9:3-5, 8-9, KJV

There are several important lessons we can draw from these five Scriptural examples. First of all, other than perhaps Paul -- who at that time was known as Saul of Tarsus -- none of these men were filled with a lot of self-confidence. They did not ask for or seek the missions which God had designed for them. In fact, in one way or another, they resisted God's Will for their lives. Most of these people were convinced to

accept their calling from the Lord by indisputable signs. It was not simply a matter of experiencing a dream, or hearing a voice. They had actual physical signs which convinced them of their God-chosen destinies. God wanted to make them certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that He was indeed speaking with them, and directing them in their actions. Perhaps this was because He foresaw the resistance they would all face in the times ahead.

In light of this Scriptural evidence, short of such clear and unmistakable signs of confirmation, I honestly don't know how anyone today can possibly make such a wild claim of being the Endtime Prophet of God, or the so-called "Endtime Elijah". It just does not follow the Biblical pattern. As you will learn shortly, this is only half of the story.

Please also notice, however, that once they were convinced that the Lord had called them, these servants of the Lord did not proudly announce themselves as some great ones. None of them ever said "Hey! Here I am. I am your new Prophet of God. I am your deliverer. Everybody follow me now! I am going to tell you things that no one has ever told you before! I am going to reveal to you the truth for the very first time in the history of the world." Quite to the contrary, despite the important mission which they had received from the Lord, they maintained a level of humility which clearly puts to shame many of the modern preachers and self-proclaimed "prophets" of God. For example, consider how the Apostle Paul describes himself in a number of his Epistles:

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

1 Corinthians 15:8-10, KJV

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"

Ephesians 3:7-8, KJV

"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

1 Corinthians 4:9-13, KJV

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

2 Corinthians 10:10, KJV

Regarding the tactic of claiming to reveal Scriptural truths which have never been shared with the world before -- I have come across so many of these online charlatans -- as I point out in the series entitled "Lying Wonders of the Endtime", this happens to be one of the favorite tricks that the Devil uses to attract naive, gullible souls into his web of deceit. He enjoys using enticing words such as "secret", "mystery", "esoteric" and "conspiracy", because they attract people like moths to the light. Some of his false prophets are pros when it comes to luring innocent, spiritually-hungry souls into their lairs with their sales pitch of "Hey! I know something that you don't know! If you want to know what it is, you must first join my church or my organization and follow me." Even worse, as I point out in "Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon", many of them will tell you that you have to purchase their book in order to find out what they claim to know. Let me warn you again to beware of these false angels of light.

To even be considered a Prophet of the Lord in Biblical times must have been an extremely humbling experience. As I mention in other articles, Jeremiah was cast into prison a number of times, including being thrown into a mud pit so that he sank up to his armpits. He was also accused of being a liar and a traitor to his own nation. Jeremiah was not the only one who endured such treatment at the hands of his enemies; that is, the very people he was trying to warn and save from terrible destruction. All of God's Prophets were basically treated in the very same fashion; and as Jesus Himself tells us in the Gospels, quite a few of them were likewise murdered by their very own people; as we can determine by the following verses:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."
Matthew 23:29-39, KJV

Clearly then, being a Prophet of God was not a popular job. It was not a position which gave one great honor and glory. One would have to be crazy to even desire such a ministry; especially in ancient rebellious Israel. No doubt that is at least one of the reasons why the Lord had to really convince

these men of their callings, before they would finally yield to Him. That being the case, why is it that today, there are so many people who are so eager to take upon themselves the mantle of an Apostle or a Prophet, even going so far as to self-assign themselves these titles? Doesn't it seem to you that there is something seriously wrong with this picture? Do all of these misguided, false, self-aggrandizing prophets of our modern day really fit the Biblical pattern? I think not.

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART THREE

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Carnally-Minded Followers And Man Worship, Paul Is Viewed As A God, Keep Your Eyes On Jesus And Not On Any Man, Jesus Came Two Thousand Years Ago To Become The Lamb Of God And Savior, Kingdom Of God, Firstfruits Of The Resurrection, Resurrected And Glorified Bodies, King Herod Accepts The Praise Of Men And Is Afflicted With Worms And Dies, Evil Simon The Sorcerer Attempts To Purchase The Holy Ghost, The Greatest Among You Shall Be Servant Of All, Mark John Allen's Claim Of Being The Endtime Elijah, God Sends Strong Delusion When We Reject His Truth And Rebel Against Him, Free Will And Personal Choice, Stewing In Our Own Juice, God May Turn Away From Our Prayers, Father Knows Best, Rebellious King Saul Forfeits The Kingdom, Israelites Demanded A King Contrary To God's Will, For Good Or For Evil God Gives People The Leader Which They Deserve, God Influences The Political Affairs In The Kingdoms Of Men

In all fairness, it should be recognized that in certain cases, man worship isn't always the leader's fault; although it will become his fault if he does not do anything to stop it once he realizes that it is happening. Sometimes leader worship, or personality cult worship, can be the result of the carnally-minded followers who feel the need to uplift and idolize the servant of the Lord. Such people foolishly take their eyes off of God -- who is the true Power behind the man -- and they place their eyes upon the person himself instead. They look at the anointed, instead of at the anointing. It is simply a weak human tendency which many people seem to have. Many years ago, when I was still a very young man, I did the same thing, but the Lord woke me up, and I eventually came out from under that delusion.

Not only that, but this problem with man worship has existed

for thousands of years. Even the First Century Apostles had to deal with this very same problem. Consider the following verses where we discover that certain Disciples had begun to coalesce around different leaders of the Church at that time, and that they even sought the favor of some of them, for the sake of personal advantage:

"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"
1 Corinthians 1:11-13, KJV

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."
1 Corinthians 3:3-7, KJV

"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."
Jude 1:16, KJV

In the Book of Acts, we find several examples where people proclaimed the Apostle Paul to be a god. For example, on his way to Rome, after their boat had been shipwrecked on the island of Melita -- which today is assumed to be the island of Malta -- Paul was bitten by a poisonous viper. Notice how the people reacted when, contrary to their expectations, Paul did not fall down dead after a few minutes:

"Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."
Acts 28:6, KJV

In another incident which we find in Acts chapter fourteen, Paul and Barnabas went to the town of Lystra in the region of Lycaonia, which today is a part of central Turkey. After Paul had healed a certain man who had been crippled in his feet from birth, notice again how the local inhabitants reacted to this healing miracle of the Lord:

"And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker."
Acts 14:11-12, KJV

Such was the superstitious nature of many people of that period, and for many centuries after that as well. Anything which could not be easily understood or explained was simply

attributed to the gods, or else to the demons, depending on one's perspective. In fact, even in our modern times, there are still many cultures which embrace unfounded -- and to be candid -- silly, superstitious beliefs. However, unlike the people who proclaimed Paul and Barnabas to be gods who had come down from the sky, the Scriptures very clearly inform us on whom we are supposed to keep our eyes. For example, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul tells us that we certainly should not place our eyes upon any man or human leader, no matter what title they may appoint themselves, and no matter what position they may hold. Rather, we should all keep our eyes firmly placed on Jesus Christ, who alone is the Author and the Finisher of our faith:

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
Hebrews 12:2, KJV

As you may know, Jesus was likewise confronted with this same problem regarding man worship on at least one occasion. After the Lord had multiplied the fishes and the loaves on the mountainside along the shores of the Galilee, notice how the people reacted to this wonderful display of God's Power:

"Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."
John 6:14-15, KJV

Although Jesus truly was and is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He realized that it was not His Father's plan for Him to take control of the Earth at that particular time. He came two thousand years ago, not to take upon Himself the mantle as our King and indisputable ruler of the Earth, but rather to become the slain Lamb of God and our Savior. Until Jesus offered up His life on the Cross for the sins of the world, there could be no Kingdom of God on Earth, because there would be no one to populate that Kingdom. Thus, as I more amply explain in a number of other articles, through His own Death and Resurrection, Jesus became the Firstfruits of the Resurrection; and the father -- or progenitor -- of a whole new nation of people -- that is, the born-again sons and daughters of God -- who each in their own time, will also follow in His footsteps, and thus receive a new, glorified, spiritual body. Consider the following verses which confirm these points:

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body . . . For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."
Romans 8:22-23, 29, KJV

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all

men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."
1 Corinthians 15:19-23, KJV

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature . . . And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."
Colossians 1:12-15, 18, KJV

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,"
Hebrews 12:23, KJV

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."
James 1:18, KJV

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"
Revelation 1:5, KJV

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."
Revelation 14:4, KJV

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"
Romans 6:4-5, KJV

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."
2 Corinthians 5:1-4, KJV

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
Philippians 3:21, KJV

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."
1 John 3:2, KJV

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."
1 Corinthians 15:40-52, KJV

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, KJV

Returning to our previous topic of discussion, contrary to the previous examples of the Prophets and Apostles who all demonstrated godly humility, consider now what happens when mere men do decide to accept the praise and worship of their followers. In the Book of Acts, when King Herod Agrippa let the praise of men go to head, it angered the Lord so much, that we are told that Herod was smitten with worms and died. In fact, it is believed by some Bible commentators that his earlier predecessor -- Herod the Great -- may have died as a result of the very same kind of affliction:

"And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."
Acts 12:21-23, KJV

In Book XIX Chapter 8 Section 2 of his "Antiquities of the Jews", Jewish historian Flavius Josephus -- who survived the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple compound in 70 AD -- offers a more descriptive -- although probably embellished -- account of this same incident. According to Josephus, the Idumaeen -- or Edomite -- king died five days later, as we see here:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Herod, having reigned three years over all Judea, (he had reigned over the tetrarchy of his brother Philip four years before this,) went down to Caesarea, and there exhibited shows and games in honour of Claudius, and made vows for his health. On the second day of these shows, he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture most truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the first reflection of the sun's rays, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those who looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, 'He is a god:' and they added, 'Be thou merciful to us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.' Nor did the king rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, looking up, he saw an owl on a certain rope over his head, and immediately conceived that this bird was to him a messenger of ill tidings; and he fell into the deepest sorrow; a severe pain also arose in his bowels, and he died after five days' severe illness."

----- End Quote -----

In Acts chapter eight, we also find the story of Simon the Sorcerer. A warlock from Samaria, Simon foolishly thought that he could purchase the Power of God for a price from the Apostles. Aside from the fact that this Power is obviously not for sale, the problem is that evil Simon did not really want the Holy Ghost so that he could glorify the Lord and win new souls to Christ. He wanted it for the purposes of self-aggrandizement, and so that he could boast even more of his spiritual powers, and thus maintain even greater control over the people of Samaria, who were already involved in a lot of dark practices, which they had inherited from their pagan conquerors, the Assyrians. This issue is discussed in more detail in such articles as "The Fruits of Disobedience":

"But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries . . . And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy

wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Acts 8:9-11, 18-24, KJV

These worldly men were not the only ones who had a problem with yielding to their pride. We all share the same sinful nature. Thus, it should not come as a surprise to us that even some of Jesus' own Disciples apparently squabbled at times regarding who was the greatest among them. In fact, it seems that some of them -- including the young Disciple John -- yielded themselves to this same spirit of exclusivity. They erroneously assumed that they were the only ones, and a part of some kind of privileged inner circle or special club. However, please notice how the Lord was quick to put them in their proper place in the following incident, which we find in the Gospel of Luke:

"Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." Luke 9:46-50, KJV

Please notice how Jesus states "for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." This goes hand-in-hand with a few other things that the Lord taught, such as the following:

"Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." Matthew 23:10-12, KJV

"And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part." Mark 9:33-40, KJV

"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
Mark 10:43-45, KJV

Keeping in mind all of the previous verses, let us return to our discussion regarding Mark John Allen and the Worldwide Church of God. The sad thing about that situation is that in the first set of excerpts which I shared with you from John's article, he clearly recognized that Herbert W. Armstrong's followers had idolized him. John pointedly said that this was wrong; yet he began doing the very same thing. He set himself up all by himself as God's Endtime Elijah, in the hope that other members of the Church Of God would recognize, honor and respect him as such. In fact, it appears that John claimed to be not only the Prophet Elijah for the Worldwide Church of God, but for all of America as well, and quite possibly even for the entire Westernized Christian world.

Again, all I can say is how tragic, and how sad. At the same time, I suppose I really should not be too surprised. I have told my readers many times before what happens when we choose to reject the truth of God's Word. In a word, the Scriptures clearly inform us that God Himself will send us delusion if we are so obstinate in our rebellion against Him. In case you have forgotten those Scriptures, allow me to share them with you again:

"I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not."
Isaiah 66:4, KJV

". . . because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:"
2 Thessalonians 2:10b-11, KJV

If we reject God's truth and want to be deceived, then that is precisely what the Lord will allow to happen. What else can He do? As I clearly point out in articles such as "Free Will and Personal Choice", it seems that God has purposely limited Himself by giving us the freedom of personal choice. He will try to point us in the right direction; but if like a rebellious and stubborn sheep we don't want to follow Him, then we must be willing to face the consequences and suffer for our mistakes until we have learned our lesson. In fact, as I explain in "Beholding the Evil and the Good", there are times when it may seem like God has even abandoned us, and left us to stew in our own juice for a while, so that we can get a good taste of what it is like to be without His love, protection and blessings. In severe cases of rebellion, He may even turn His back on our prayers. If you doubt that this is possible, then consider the following verses and beware:

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
Isaiah 59:2, KJV

"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee."

Jeremiah 7:16, KJV

"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble."

Jeremiah 11:14, KJV

"Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good."

Jeremiah 14:10-11, KJV

"We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through."

Lamentations 3:42-44, KJV

The key lesson that we need to learn here is that God always knows what is best for His children. I am reminded of an old black and white American family television program that we used to watch as young children. It was called "Father Knows Best". Can anyone doubt that our Heavenly Father truly knows what is best for us, even when we think that we know better? Pride and rebellion are terrible things. I have talked about this issue before, such as in the aforementioned series "The Fruits of Disobedience". In articles such as "The Children of God and Politics", I also mention how the Prophet Samuel had to rebuke rebellious King Saul after the king decided to do things his own way, instead of following the instructions which Samuel had given to him, which were in fact given to Samuel by the Lord. Consider the following verses:

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

1 Samuel 15:22-23, KJV

As you may know, as a result of Saul's disobedience, it was some time after this that both the king and his sons died in a battle against the Philistines, and David became the new king of Israel. It just isn't worth being disobedient to the Lord. One other important lesson which we can learn from the story of King Saul is that God gives people the leader which they deserve. As I explain in other articles, King Saul was very rebellious, but so were the Israelites. It was not God's Will for the Israelites to have a human king over them. They already had their one true King in Heaven, but they wanted to be just like the pagan nations around them. Thus, rebels that they were, they pressured the Prophet Samuel to anoint a king over them. The Lord told Samuel in so many words "Go ahead;

do it. Let them learn their lesson the hard way"; and they most certainly did. Consider the following verses. For the sake of brevity, I have omitted the verses where the Prophet Samuel informs them what Saul will be like:

"Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king . . . Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city."

1 Samuel 8:4-10, 19-22, KJV

Quite frankly, I am convinced that this same concept still holds true today as well. Whether president, prime minister, king, queen or dictator, God gives people the leader that they deserve. A wicked, rebellious people receive a wicked, rebellious ruler. So what is your nation's leader like? If you doubt that God influences the political affairs in the kingdoms of men, then consider the following verses and be wise:

"Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another."
Psalms 75:5-7, KJV

"Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:"
Daniel 2:20-21, KJV

"This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."
Daniel 4:17, KJV

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers

of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."
Proverbs 21:1, KJV

Please go to part four for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART FOUR

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God Is Not The Author Of Confusion, Well-Balanced Orderly And In Harmony, False Manifestations In The Churches, Confusion For The Wicked, Ronald Weinland Claims He's Sackcloth Witness And Endtime Elijah, David C. Pack Founds Restored Church Of God And Claims To Be God's Apostle, Gerald Ray Flurry Founds The Philadelphia Church Of God And Claims To Be Like Elisha And "That Prophet", Roderick C. Meredith Founds Global Church Of God And Living Church Of God, Bob Thiel Founds Continuing Church Of God, Other WCOG Splinter Groups, A Pack Of Wolves, William Marrion Branham, A Pillar Of Fire, Branham's Gift For Healing, Claims Of Being Prophet Elijah, Two Men Claim To Be Elijah At The Same Time, Branham's Story And Testimonies, My Personal Skepticism, Internet Information Can Be Manipulated

If there is one thing of which I am absolutely certain, it is that the Scriptures plainly teach us that God is not the author of confusion. This is precisely what the Apostle Paul said to the Church at Corinth on one occasion when he wrote to them concerning the Gift of Prophecy. Furthermore, after discussing the Gifts of Prophecy and speaking in Tongues, he also stated that all things should be done decently and in order. Consider the following verses:

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints . . . Let all things be done decently and in order."
1 Corinthians 14:33, 40, KJV

While Paul specifically applied this Biblical truth to the usage of the Gifts of the Spirit and how they should each be exercised, this very same truth applies to God's Nature in general, when it concerns how His Spirit operates within the Christian Church. In other words, no matter how we look at it, God is simply not the author of confusion. He operates in a very orderly fashion. Everything He does is planned, timed, and executed perfectly. Everything He does is well-balanced, and in harmony. In fact, the very nature of our own Universe attests to this fact, and offers clear proof of this point.

As I explain in a number of other articles, if you happen to find yourself in a church that is filled with a lot of noise, confusion and strange manifestations, I advise you to leave immediately, because that is not really the true Spirit of the living God. It is a false, deceptive, devilish spirit. Of course, how God chooses to deal with wicked people is a very different matter. The Scriptures inform us that He will bring confusion upon their heads as a result of their own sins. Such was clearly the case with the Tower of Babel, which we find in the Book of Genesis. That incident resulted in a confusion of tongues -- or different languages being spoken -- which is the exact opposite of what the Apostle Paul describes in his Epistle.

So how does this particular point regarding God not being the author of confusion relate to our current discussion? Well, it may surprise you to know that Herbert W. Armstrong and Mark John Allen are not the only men who have claimed to be the supposed Endtime version of the Prophet Elijah. As I will now explain to you, there have been several men living on the Earth at the very same time, all of whom have lived in the United States of America, who have claimed -- or who have been claimed by their followers -- to be the Endtime Elijah. The next man we will discuss is Ronald Weinland.

Online sources state that Weinland is a former minister of the United Church of God, which is an offshoot of Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. In 2000, Ron Weinland founded the Church of God, Preparing for the Kingdom of God, which is primarily active on the Internet. Since February of 2013, Weinland has been serving a forty-two months sentence due to tax evasion. Aside from his various false predictions regarding the Return of Jesus Christ -- which will be listed in part eleven of this same series -- between 2006 and 2008, Weinland identified himself and his wife, Laura, as the Two Sackcloth Witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven. In a blog entry on his website which is dated December 24, 2009, this deceived man not only claims to be one of the Two Sackcloth Witnesses, he also claims that he is the final fulfillment of the so-called Endtime Elijah prophecy, which, as we have already clearly seen, is false:

----- Begin Quote -----

"The truth is that neither John the Baptist nor Herbert W. Armstrong fulfilled the complete prophecies concerning the 'Elijah to come,' but they fulfilled a 'type' of that prophetic fulfillment. The actual fulfillment has not yet occurred, but it is about to be fulfilled in full spirit and truth."

"As God has made me both an apostle and a prophet for this end-time, He has also given me to fulfill prophecies being the spokesman of the two end-time witnesses of Revelation 11. In addition, He has given me to fulfill the prophecies of the 'Elijah to come' and of Zerubbabel."

"Yes, I have come in the full spirit and power of Elijah. God and His Son have made it so -- not me! I seek to fulfill the commission God has given me with all the zeal and power God gives me to do so. And He has given me much to fulfill this task!"

"John the Baptist was not a prophet. Herbert W. Armstrong was an apostle, but he was not a prophet. Yet God says He will send 'Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the LORD.' I am that prophet and I am to proclaim it so! That is given to me from Jesus Christ and God the Father."

----- End Quote -----

As you can see from the previous quoted material, we have a problem. If Mark John Allen is the Endtime Elijah, then how can Ronald Weinland be the Endtime Elijah? Uh-oh. How do we even try to explain that?

Another person I need to warn you about is David C. Pack. Similar to Ronald Weinland, Pack is also a former minister of Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, which in 2009 changed its name to Grace Communion International. Due to the schism which occurred in the WCOG in 1995, Pack then became a minister at the Global Church of God, or GCG, which I will discuss momentarily. However, upon being fired from the Global Church of God in May of 1999, he founded another offshoot of Armstrong's church called the Restored Church of God -- or RCG -- which is based in Wadsworth, Ohio. Mr. Pack mimics Herbert W. Armstrong in many ways; including in the doctrines that he teaches, and in the literature that the Restored Church of God distributes. Furthermore, similar to Mark John Allen and Ronald Weinland, Pack is convinced that his RCG church is the only true extension of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, and the only church through which God is currently working on the Earth. It is the same spirit of exclusivity that we have seen over and over again.

More importantly, in a lengthy sermon he gave on February 26, 2005 called "21st Century Apostle" -- which used to be available on the Restored Church of God website -- Mr. Pack makes the false claim that he is the "Apostle" of the 21st century". Additionally, in his authorized biography, which is available for free reading on the Restored Church of God website, while discussing this very same issue, Pack writes the following:

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"You must come to grips with the fact that, as with Mr. Armstrong to the sixth era, there has to be one person -- one leader -- somewhere on earth today who delivers the message to the seventh era. God had to designate and inspire a man to this task."

"It has not been my task to create the message or warning to the seventh era. That is Christ's job. Mine was to understand my role under His rule, to get out of the way, and to allow the patient, merciful, loving Jesus Christ to explain His message -- His instruction -- to His people. I did not seek or ask for the job. Like you, I was drafted to be a Christian soldier (II Tim 2:3-4). The appointment came and, as with Paul, 'necessity was laid upon me' (I Cor. 9:16). And no other messenger will come."

"God has selected a new leader for the remnant of

Philadelphia. Just as Mr. Armstrong would not apologize for God's decision to use him, neither can I. Perhaps the biggest single reason (and I suppose there may have been several) that God selected me is because I never sought this office -- never dreamed for a split second that God could have this position in mind for me. (If I am accused otherwise, that is someone else's error.)"

----- End Quotes -----

So as you can see, Pack is convinced that he alone is God's man for the hour, and his church -- the Restored Church of God -- is God's one true church on the Earth today. You will also notice that like other groups and people who splintered from Armstrong's church, he embraces the Seven Church Ages false doctrine. The man is clearly deceived.

Being as we are discussing different offshoots of Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, let me advise you about several other individuals. The first of these is Gerald Ray Flurry. Just like Ronald Weinland and David C. Pack, Flurry is also a former minister of the Worldwide Church of God. In December of 1999, along with his assistant pastor John Amos, he founded the Philadelphia Church of God. Mr. Flurry views himself as God's divinely appointed successor to Herbert W. Armstrong. However, Flurry does not believe that this means that he is the Endtime Elijah. His church teaches that not only was Armstrong an Apostle, but he was also the Endtime Elijah. So how does Flurry fit into this deceptive picture?

For his part, as Armstrong's alleged successor, Flurry claims to have the spiritual anointing of the Prophet Elisha, who as you may recall, received the spiritual mantle of Elijah when the Prophet was taken to Heaven in a fiery chariot. To support his erroneous claim, Flurry wrote a booklet in 1990 that was entitled "Malachi's Message for God's Church Today". According to Flurry, this booklet is supposedly the "little book" that is mentioned in Revelation chapter ten. Flurry claims to have received "Malachi's Message" from a mighty Angel. I am sharing the first ten verses of Revelation ten with you because they contain something else which I will discuss momentarily:

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go

and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." Revelation 10:1-10, KJV

According to certain online information which I discovered, Flurry's "Malachi's Message" is actually plagiarized from an earlier collection of letters which were written by a former member of the Worldwide Church of God called "The Letter To Laodicea". Whatever the case may be, the important point to consider is that the entire Philadelphia Church of God, and Flurry's position in it as its so-called "prophet", rests on the lies which Flurry tells in this book, which he claims is a revelation from God. Not only that, but Flurry foolishly claims that the seven last chapters of the current version of his book -- he has published several versions of the book since 1990, in which some material has been removed -- are the aforementioned Seven Thunders. Yes, I am shaking my head too.

In the original 1990 version of "Malachi's Message for God's Church Today", Flurry strongly suggested that he was God's Prophet. However, in later editions, as I said, some comments were removed, for whatever his reasons. However, in a sermon called "Office of a Prophet" -- which Flurry gave in January of 1994 -- he began to reacquaint his church with his belief in being a Prophet of God, although he did not come right out and say it at that time. Following is what he said in part in that sermon. Flurry begins by quoting Acts 3:22 where Peter quotes Moses saying "A prophet . . . like unto me":

----- Begin Quote -----

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

"You should hear him in all things brethren, that's what God says. And he's going to raise up a man, that's just like you, but he's going to have a commission. He's just like other church members, but he does have a commission from God. And your job of course, as always, is to back him and support him, and you're, God says you're the same as a prophet or a righteous man if you support him and back him, and involve yourself in that work. It's the same for all of us. It's the same for all of us. But I'll tell you this, God's top physical office is very important to you brethren, because how you think about that office, does reflect how you think about God. I'm not talking about following a man in error. You never want to do that. But you do want to love and respect God's office, because it does reflect on how you think about God, and your attitude toward God."

----- End Quote -----

However, five years later, during a ministerial conference

in 1999 which was held in Oklahoma, Mr. Flurry gave five sermons in which he made it clear that he believed that he was "that prophet". What prophet was Flurry talking about? We find out in the verses below:

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou THAT PROPHET? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither THAT PROPHET?" John 1:19-25, KJV

It may interest you to know that I've had Muslims use those very same verses to try to convince me that Muhammad is the one who is mentioned in the previous verses. I will explain to you later on in this series who "that prophet" really is, for those of you who may not already know.

Following his five 1999 sermons, Flurry continued to enforce the belief that he is the so-called Endtime Elisha, as well as the "that prophet" who we find in the Gospel of John. For example, in the July and August 2000 edition of his church's bimonthly magazine called "Royal Vision" -- I possess a PDF version of the same -- Flurry published a six-part article called "That Prophet". Four years later in February of 2004, in a sermon he gave entitled "That Prophet", he again claimed that he was the Prophet of whom Moses had written:

----- Begin Quote -----

"If you just study this book, you'll know who That Prophet is . . . It does set me apart from the other ministers . . . Is God going to give us something like this that we cannot prove? . . . [It is] revelation from God; from outer space way beyond Mars. That's where it comes from. If it doesn't, I'm crazy. It's from way, way out there; far, far away. Just like they said in Star Wars."

"I'm just like you. In fact it even says when they, over in, a, Deuteronomy that, Moses said there, they'll raise up someone of the people just like me. I mean I'm just like you. I'm just like you. And so God chooses one out of that group and says, all right here's the revelation now get things going, but I'm just like you . . ."

"This is a special commission that I have, brethren, and it is directly from God. You can read Deuteronomy 18 and verse 15 later where a, look God says, look I'm gonna take, I'll take somebody out of your, from your own brethren, that's the way it works. And so that's what God has done. I'm just like you are. I'm just like you and God forbid, brethren, if I ever should try to exalt myself above you. I'm just like you, I, I am of you."

----- End Quote -----

In his booklet entitled "Who Is "THAT PROPHET"?", Flurry also continued to promote himself as the Endtime Elisha and "that prophet", with sentences such as the following. Please note that the capitalization is his and not mine:

----- Begin Quote -----

"There are only two prophesied leaders in this end time who do God's work - ELIJAH AND THAT PROPHET."

----- End Quote -----

Flurry has become so highly exalted in his own mind due to his pride, that he even places himself above his own mentor and spiritual predecessor, Herbert W. Armstrong. In fact, he has assigned himself almost three dozen different titles. I could say a lot more about the man based on what I have read, but I am sure that it is evident by now that, just like the rest of the men we have examined, he is seriously deceived.

The second person who I would like to warn you about is named Roderick Meredith. Just like Mark John Allen, Ronald Weinland, David C. Pack and Gerald Flurry, Meredith was also associated with Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. After leaving that church, Meredith founded his own splinter group called the Global Church of God in San Diego, California in 1992. As you can imagine, just like all of the other misguided offshoots which grew out of Armstrong's church, it was not before long that the spirit of exclusivity had overtaken Meredith and his church. It should not come as a surprise to you then, that in a sermon Meredith gave on May 17, 1997 called "Where is the True Church Today?", he claimed that the Global Church of God was the one "true church" through which God was working. Due to a leadership conflict -- Meredith obviously felt that he deserved the position -- he was fired from the Global Church of God in November of 1998. The GCG eventually moved the base of its operations to the United Kingdom.

A month later, Mr. Meredith founded the Living Church of God, the headquarters of which is currently located in Charlotte, North Carolina. Similar to some of the other men who we have examined, Meredith believes that he has been chosen by God to re-establish the true church, and is convinced that only his church is faithfully following Armstrong's teachings. He also views the members of his church as the spiritual heirs of the Church which was first established in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Similar to Armstrong's church and its offshoots, the Living Church of God likewise places strong emphasis on observing the Mosaic Law, and is Sabbatarian in nature. While I was not able to find any information where Meredith outright claims to be Elijah or Elisha, according to a 2005 letter that was written by a woman who left his church, it was common for the church's members to refer to Meredith as "God's Anointed".

Another person who ties into the Worldwide Church of God is Robert Thiel. In December of 2012, after becoming fed up with the direction that the Living Church of God had taken under Meredith's leadership, Thiel left that church and started a new church called Continuing Church of God in Arroyo Grande, California. Other than watch a short teaching video he made regarding the possible identity of the "man of sin" -- who

is described for us by the Apostle Paul in the second chapter of his second Epistle to the Thessalonians -- I know nothing about Thiel. Whether or not he has made any claims regarding being an Endtime Prophet of God, I do not know at this point.

Please note that the aforementioned groups are not all of the offshoots of Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. There are a number of other splinter groups such as the United Church of God, an International Association -- or UCG -- Church of God, a Worldwide Association -- or COGWA -- Church of God, an International Community -- or COGaic -- Church of the Eternal, God -- or CEG -- Church of God, a Christian Fellowship -- or CGCF -- Church of God Fellowship, Sabbath Church of God, and Church of God, 21st Century.

As I compiled all of the previous information regarding the various splinter groups which broke away from Mr. Armstrong's original church, in addition to the spirit of exclusivity that is so apparent in all of them, I was dismayed by the level of corrupt internal politics, vicious backbiting, betrayals and bickering which exists between them all. They are like a pack of wolves fighting over the same piece of meat. I see men who are full of pride, vanity and self importance, and who display very little true Christian character. It seems like they are all more interested in position than anything else. But, of course, they each claim that God has given them that position.

Just as both Mark John Allen and Ronald Weinland have made a simultaneous claim concerning being the so-called Endtime Elijah, you will be interested to know that there's likewise another man -- whose life overlapped Herbert W. Armstrong's life -- who is also regarded as the Endtime Elijah by his followers. That man -- William Marrion Branham -- was a preacher and a faith healer who was born in a log cabin to a poor family who lived deep in the mountains in the American state of Kentucky.

According to William Branham's personal testimony, and other online material which I have read concerning him, since the morning he was born on April 6, 1909, wonderful spiritual and physical manifestations are said to have accompanied him throughout his life. Branham came to refer to this spiritual presence as the "Pillar of Fire". There are several black and white photographs I have looked at which are purported to show this mysterious presence. Based on the articles and the testimonies I have read, these photographs are said to be authentic; and the negatives of the same unaltered in any way.

Personally, I was not impressed by said photographs. While I am by no means an expert regarding such matters, and thus cannot say with any degree of certainty what caused the odd aberration which can be seen in the images, I suspect that it may simply be a photographic anomaly which may have been caused by the camera itself. At any rate, Mr. Branham claimed that whenever this presence -- the Pillar of Fire -- was near him, he had the gift to see a person's affliction, to know if they were going to be healed by looking into the future, and then to claim the healing for them.

The information I read states that Branham's fame became so widespread, that he traveled to different parts of the world

in order to heal those people who had petitioned him. In some cases, they even paid for his travel expenses. One particular beneficiary of Mr. Branham's gift of healing is said to have been George VI, who was the former king of England, as well as the father of Great Britain's current queen, Elizabeth II.

While Mr. Branham was still alive when I was a young boy, I personally never had the opportunity to hear of him, or to meet him. Concerning his gift of healing, I am not sure what to think of it. It does seem unlikely that Mr. Branham's fame would have risen to such a degree if he did not possess some special gift or talent. Based on the Scriptures, we do know that Healing is in fact one of the Gifts of the Spirit, which the Lord imparts to whomsoever He will. We likewise know that Healing was an important part of Jesus' ministry, and that He passed this Gift on to His Disciples. As we have already seen with the example at Lystra, even the Apostle Paul -- who was not one of Jesus' original twelve Apostles -- possessed this wonderful Gift. I discuss this topic more at length in such articles as "Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?".

The main point I wish to make regarding William M. Branham, isn't so much whether or not he truly possessed the Gift of Healing, but rather the claim which has been made by a large number of his followers regarding Branham being the Endtime Prophet Elijah. As I mentioned earlier, the lives of Herbert W. Armstrong and William M. Branham overlapped each other by fifty-six years. I want you to really stop and think about this. If God is not the author of confusion, then how is it that He could possibly have at least two persons on the Earth at the same time who were both claimed to be this so-called Endtime Prophet Elijah? Was God purposely playing tricks on us; or was one or both of these men seriously deceived and lying? In his personal testimony which he shared before a small audience on January 17, 1955 in Chicago, Illinois, Mr. Branham stated the following:

----- Begin Quote -----

"I was baptizing down on the river, my first converts, at the Ohio River, and the seventeenth person I was baptizing, as I started to baptize, then I said, 'Father, as I baptize him with water, You baptize him with the Holy Spirit.' I started to -- to put him under the water. And just then a whirl come from the heavens above, and here come that Light, shining down. Hundreds and hundreds of people on the bank, right at two o'clock in the afternoon, in June. And It hung right over where I was at. A Voice spoke from there, and said, 'As John the Baptist was sent for the forerunner of the first coming of Christ, you've got a . . . have a Message that will bring forth the forerunning of the Second Coming of Christ.' And it liked to a-scared me to death."

----- End of Quote -----

Later on, as William Branham continued to share his personal testimony, he related the following incident which occurred some time later while he was in the state of Texas:

----- Begin Quote -----

"And one night when I was walking out onto the . . . in a

Cathedral, San Antonio, Texas, walking out there, a little fellow sitting up here begin to speak in tongues like a shotgun firing, or a machine gun, rapidly. Way back, way back there, a fellow raised up and said, "Thus saith the Lord! The man that's walking to the platform is going forward with a ministry that was ordained of Almighty God. And as John the Baptist was sent as the first forerunner of the coming of Jesus Christ, so he packs a Message that will cause the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."

----- End of Quote -----

While I was not able to locate any quotes where Mr. Branham directly claimed to be the Prophet Elijah who is spoken of in the prophecies of the Prophet Malachi, nevertheless, it is evident to me that by sharing the previous stories, Mr. Branham was in fact inferring that very thing. As I already said, hundreds of thousands of his current followers -- who are primarily of the Pentecostal and Charismatic persuasion -- do in fact believe that Branham -- who they refer to as "Brother Branham" -- was the Endtime Prophet Elijah. I even come across some of them on Facebook from time to time, or else I will receive an email message from some of them.

Concerning the aforementioned two testimonies, to be quite frank, while I know that this will offend some of his more ardent followers, Mr. Branham's account of the Ohio River incident seems like a backwoods yarn to me. If this incident really took place exactly as Mr. Branham described it, with literally hundreds of witnesses present, I would think that the entire Christian world would have been moved by it. In fact, I would think that people would still be talking about it even to this day. Of course, I have no way to either prove or disprove his story. After all, I was not there. Neither do I personally know anyone who was there at the time. Many of them are now dead, or quite elderly.

In similar fashion, neither was I present at any of Branham's meetings where all of these wonderful miracles of healing and other spiritual manifestations are said to have taken place; so all I have to go by is the information which I have found on the Internet. The problem with this is that information can easily be manipulated, exaggerated and embellished so as to convey a picture which goes way beyond the factual truth. Furthermore, it can be difficult to prove or disprove, being as these events happened so long ago.

Please go to part five for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART FIVE

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Branham False Doctrines: Didn't Acknowledge Jesus As The Rock, Branham Promoted False Doctrine Regarding Seven Church Ages, Branham Falsely Predicted 1977 To Be Year Of Christ's Return, Scriptures Regarding False Prophets, Evidence Points To Mr. Branham Believing Himself To Be The Endtime Prophet Elijah, Head-On Collision In 1965 Results In William Branham's Death, Senseless Meaningless Death, Tales Regarding Realigned Bones, Multiple Men Claim To Fulfill Malachi's Prophecy Regarding Prophet Elijah, False Prophets And Deceivers Are On The Rise, David Brandt Berg And Children Of God Cult, Alleged Healing Of Virginia Brandt Berg, Deborah Davis And "The Children Of God: The Inside Story", Reaching Hippies Of Southern Calif., David Berg Changes Name To Moses David And Initiates Bible Names For His Group Members, New Creatures In Jesus Christ, California Youth Respond To Berg's Message, Controversial Witnessing Techniques, Prophets Of Doom And Prophet Buses, Children Of God Go Global, Berg And Zerby Commit Adultery

While I am not very familiar with Branham's teachings, I have read enough to realize that he embraced a number of doctrines and beliefs which contradict the Scriptures. For example, Mr. Branham claimed that in the following verse that is found in the Gospel of Matthew, not only was the Lord not referring to Peter as the Rock, but He was not referring to Himself as the Rock either:

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
Matthew 16:18, KJV

As I point out in a number of articles, Jesus most certainly was the Rock who had been prophesied since the times of the Old Testament era. Consider the following Scriptures which clearly verify this point:

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."
Psalms 118:22-23, KJV

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? . . . And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them."
Matthew 21:42, 44-45, KJV

"And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"
Mark 12:10-11, KJV

"This [meaning Jesus] is the stone which was set at nought

of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."
Acts 4:11, KJV

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

1 Corinthians 10:4, KJV

"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,"

1 Peter 2:6-7, KJV

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces . . . And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure"

Daniel 2:34, 44-45, KJV

While conducting my research regarding William M. Branham, I also discovered that he was an early -- and in fact, primary -- supporter of the Seven Church Ages doctrine. This doctrine -- which Branham heavily promoted in his 1965 book called "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages" -- is supposedly based on the following verses which we find in the Apocalypse; that is, in the Book of Revelation:

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

Revelation 1:19-20, KJV

According to Branham, each of these seven churches represents a church age which has existed from the time of the original First Century Church, up to our present time, with the final church age being the age of the Laodicean Church. Mr. Branham also claimed that the seven Angels which are mentioned in the previous verses aren't actually spiritual entities, but rather seven human messengers -- or Prophets -- one of each of whom has existed during each of these seven church ages. As far as I am concerned, this is a man-made false doctrine which is not supported by the Scriptures. In fact, only ten verses earlier, we are clearly told exactly who these Seven Churches are, as well as where they were located, and when they existed, as we see by the following verses:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a

great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."

Revelation 1:10-11, KJV

Clearly then, these were seven Christian congregations which existed at that time in Asia Minor, which we know today as the country of Turkey. There is really no mystery there, or a need to try to interpret what those two verses are saying. To do so is to twist and pervert the meaning of God's Word; and that is exactly what William Branham did, in my opinion. These are just two examples which cause me personally to have serious reservations regarding everything which has been said regarding Mr. Branham. However, that is not all, as I will now explain.

In addition to what I personally view as highly exaggerated stories regarding Mr. Branham's life -- some of which were promoted by Branham himself -- and the false doctrines which he both embraced and promoted, I also discovered that similar to a number of other Christian denominations, organizations and preachers, William Branham falsely predicted the year of Christ's Return. Based on seven prophecies or visions which he claimed to have received in 1933 which pertained to events which were unfolding in the world, Branham predicted that we would witness the Return of Christ and the beginning of His Millennial Reign in the year 1977. This year would likewise mark the conclusion of the governments of man upon the Earth. Branham's prediction is clearly stated in chapter nine -- The Laodicean Church Age -- of his aforementioned book entitled "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages". Consider this:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Based on these seven visions, along with the rapid changes which have swept the world in the last fifty years, I PREDICT (I do not prophesy) that these visions will have all come to pass by 1977. And though many may feel that this is an irresponsible statement in view of the fact that Jesus said that 'no man knoweth the day nor the hour.' I still maintain this prediction after thirty years because, Jesus did NOT say no man could know the year, month or week in which His coming was to be completed. So I repeat, I sincerely believe and maintain as a private student of the Word, along with Divine inspiration that 1977 ought to terminate the world systems and usher in the millennium."

----- End Quote -----

Well, obviously, as has occurred with every other preacher who has foolishly predicted the year of the Return of Jesus Christ -- Harold Camping being the latest sad example -- Mr. Branham was dead wrong. While he tried to protect himself by referring to his belief as a prediction, and not as an actual prophecy, nevertheless, I think we should consider what God's Word tells us in the Book of Deuteronomy:

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall

speaking in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."
Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

Imagine that. Claiming to speak in the name of the Lord when the Lord had not spoken at all, was considered to be such a serious offense, that the false prophet was sentenced to die. I discuss the issue of Prophets of God more at length in such articles as "The Office of a Prophet".

At any rate, regardless of whether he referred to it as a prediction or a prophecy, William Branham's glaring failure here is made all the more apparent, not only by the claims which he made concerning himself, but also by the claims which have been made by his devoted followers. Let us not forget that this man claimed to receive visions, dreams and prophecies from God. Mr. Branham claimed to hear voices from Heaven. He also claimed to speak directly to Angels. He was likewise convinced that a spiritual presence -- the Pillar of Fire -- accompanied him at his meetings, and that this presence enabled him to peer into the future, thus allowing him to see whether or not a person was going to be healed.

In short, this man claimed to be seriously in tune to God's Spirit. That being the case, and if all of Branham's claims were true, how is it that he was so misguided when it came to his 1977 prediction? Wouldn't God's voice have told him "Hey William! You've got it wrong!"? Quite frankly, I just don't believe that real Prophets of God -- such as the ones that we read about in the Bible -- ever get it wrong. They are always on the mark regarding their prophecies, because they are truly in tune with God's Spirit, and hearing from the same. As far as all of these others are concerned, I am reminded of verses such as the following:

"For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD."
Jeremiah 29:9, KJV

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
Matthew 24:11, 24, KJV

"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."

Mark 13:22, KJV

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, KJV

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

2 Peter 2:1, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

As I mentioned earlier, as far as I know, William Branham never outright claimed to be the so-called Endtime Prophet Elijah. However, if we consider all of the evidence which I have now shared with you, it seems rather apparent that he did believe this in his heart, and that he also implied it in some of his comments. Let's review some of the facts.

- During the Ohio River baptism, Branham said that a bright light shone on him, and that a voice from Heaven stated that his message "will bring forth the forerunning of the Second Coming of Christ". Clearly, Branham was comparing himself to John the Baptist, who carried the same Spiritual Anointing as the Prophet Elijah.
- Branham said that during a San Antonio, Texas meeting, a man stood up and prophesied that Branham's message "will cause the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ". It is obvious that this is another comparison to the ministry of John the Baptist and the anointing which was upon Elijah.
- Branham believed that we are in the last of seven church ages.
- Branham believed that there is only one Prophet -- or angel according to his belief -- per church age.
- Branham was convinced that Christ would begin His reign on the Earth by 1977.

Putting all of these points together, it isn't difficult to see what Branham was really saying. Even if you cannot see it personally, his most ardent followers certainly do; and that is why so many of them continue to believe that he was the so-called Endtime Elijah. In a word, those poor folks are just as deceived as Branham was himself. For those of my readers who may be Branham followers, I ask you to consider the following interesting point. As the forerunner to Jesus Christ, John the Baptist lived right up to the time of the revelation of Christ to the nation of Israel. That being the case, if William Branham was following the same pattern as John the Baptist, and was the Endtime Prophet Elijah, should he not have likewise lived up to the Return of Jesus Christ as well?

As some of you may know, William M. Branham died at the age of fifty-six on December 18, 1965 in a hospital in Amarillo, Texas, U.S.A. His tragic death was brought about by certain teenage drunken drivers which resulted in a two-car head-on collision a few miles outside of Friona, Texas. I read a few different testimonies regarding the accident, as well as the aftermath; and I must tell you that it was very graphic and very heart-wrenching. Branham suffered a slow, awful death over a period of six days. To be honest, I must admit that it is difficult for me to understand why the Lord would allow one of His servants to die so horribly in such a senseless manner.

While John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Stephen, James and many other of the Lord's servants also died by horrible means, it should be noted that it was at the hands of their enemies who were trying to stop their mouths, and obviously prevent them from preaching the Gospel. Furthermore, their deaths served as a witness and a testimony to many others. Quite frankly, I don't see how being horribly mangled in a car wreck served to glorify the Lord by any means. It was a senseless, meaningless death.

As I stated earlier, my personal impression is that some of the stories regarding Branham's life and ministry have been highly exaggerated and embellished by his devoted followers. For example, there are stories which claim that prior to Mr. Branham's death six days after the horrible accident, many of his broken bones were miraculously realigned. I really don't wish to come across as seeming to be insensitive. However, I have serious doubts regarding this claim. The question which arises in my mind is this: If the Lord did heal Mr. Branham's bones, what purpose could this have possibly served? Equally importantly, if Branham was truly the Endtime Prophet Elijah who was supposedly going to herald the Return of the Lord in 1977, then why not heal his entire body and raise him back to life? Sadly, this question has an obvious answer which should be apparent to all.

With the information I have now shared with you, I hope that you can see the pattern and the common threads which exist between the stories of these three different men, all of whom claimed -- or claim -- to be the Endtime Prophet Elijah who will supposedly prepare the way for the Second Coming of the Lord. What you will also find interesting is the fact that at the different websites I visited which are dedicated to these men and their ministries, the very same verses from Malachi

chapter four are used to support their claims. This one point alone clearly reveals the deception and the confusion which results from the claims which have been made by these men, or by their followers. Has God prepared three Endtime Prophets who carry the same Spirit as the Prophet Elijah of old? Or perhaps two? Or maybe one? What if there are none at all?

If you are feeling somewhat confused right now regarding this Endtime Prophet Elijah business, please don't worry. I assure you that later on in this series, I will be sharing with you what I believe to be the correct interpretation regarding the controversial verses concerning the coming of Elijah. As you will come to understand, there is no controversy at all, once one grasps what the Prophet Malachi was really writing about.

This belief in an Endtime Prophet of God is not just limited to the supposed arrival of a Prophet Elijah. During the past century -- particularly during the past forty or fifty years -- both within and without Christianity, there have been many charismatic figures who have attracted followers to themselves and to their wayward doctrines. Sadly, their numbers appear to be growing. These deceivers and false prophets range from men who claim to be reincarnations of some of the Prophets of old, to others who claim to be actual manifestations of Christ, to yet others who believe that the Lord has given them a special anointing to carry out a particular ministry at this time. Not all of them are men. There are likewise women. I discuss some of the more tragic examples in the series entitled "Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults". While many Christians anticipate the arrival of Jesus Christ, as I point out in the article entitled "To Tell the Truth: Moshiach, Mahdi or the Messiah?", the Jews likewise await their messiah -- Moshiach ben David -- while Muslims expect the appearance of the Mahdi.

In the late 1960's, one of the groups which rose to the fore of the "Jesus Revolution" of southern California, U.S.A. was the Children of God. This evangelical group was founded by David Brandt Berg, who was a former pastor and leader of the "Teens for Christ". Berg was born on February 18, 1919 to an evangelical couple. While the husband of this team was noted for his excellent singing voice, it was his wife -- Virginia Brandt Berg -- who became better known due to her evangelical work in Florida, and weekly radio broadcast which was known as "Meditation Moments". According to the account which has circulated within the group for the past forty-five years, as a young adult, Virginia Berg suffered an automobile accident which left her with serious back injuries and other medical complications. In her personal testimony -- which I read about forty years ago -- Mrs. Berg notes that at the time of her accident, she was a staunch atheist who was thoroughly enjoying the pleasures which this life has to offer. The Apostle John pinpoints exactly what that is in the second chapter of his first Epistle, as we read here:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

1 John 2:15-17, KJV

According to this same story, it was not until the Lord had literally brought her to the point of death as a result of her accident, that Berg finally surrendered her worldliness, her atheism and her pride, and cried out to God in complete desperation. Berg's personal testimony states that it was at that point that the Lord delivered her from her afflictions and blessed her with a miracle of complete healing. After this event had occurred, Mrs. Berg conceived and gave birth to her son, David Brandt Berg; which we are led to believe was a miracle in itself, because the doctors said that Berg could not conceive any more children.

If you notice a degree of caution in how I have related the previous account, it is because in a book which she authored after leaving the cult entitled "The Children of God: The Inside Story", Deborah Davis -- who is one of the daughters of David Brandt Berg, and one of the founding members of the Children of God -- states that the story of her grandmother's accident and so-called "miraculous healing", which has been believed without question for over four decades by members of the cult, is in fact an exaggeration and distortion of the truth. Please refer to Deborah Davis' book for more details, assuming that it is even still in publication.

According to his own personal testimony, for the most part, David Brandt Berg remained close to his mother's side until her death in California many years later. Berg says that it was actually his mother who first sparked an interest in the hippie counterculture of southern California during the late 1960's. Before long, together with his first wife and their four teenage children, Berg assumed the reins of the ministry to the teenagers of southern California which was first begun by his mother. In the formative years of his organization's development, Berg initiated the practice of adopting Biblical names by assuming the name of Moses David. This practice was viewed as a means of fulfilling such verses as the following:

"And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."
John 1:42, KJV

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
Ephesians 4:22-24, KJV

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"
Colossians 3:9-10, KJV

It was later revealed in Mr. Berg's weekly communications, which became known as the "Mo Letters" -- derived from the

name Moses -- that the reason he had chosen this particular name was because, according to certain prophecies he had supposedly received, Mr. Berg believed that he possessed the spiritual anointing of both Moses and King David of the Old Testament. Similar to the Moses of old who freed the Hebrew slaves from Egyptian bondage, Moses David believed that his calling was to free the hippies from the corrupt American system by offering them a whole new way of life by way of faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps if Mr. Berg had maintained the purity of that vision and goal, he wouldn't have gone so terribly astray in the years to come.

Given the attitudes which prevailed at that time, it is not surprising that many youth responded to Berg's invitation to become "fishers of men" and followed in step behind him. Some of Berg's early witnessing methods were quite revolutionary and controversial to say the least. One such method was the practice of leading his radical, youthful followers in church invasions dressed in long burlap robes as they carried wooden poles, wore large yokes and bore large posters that contained warnings of prophetic doom. Berg and his followers arrived at these eye-catching events in large red buses which they dubbed "prophet buses". Needless-to-say, such actions quickly aroused the ire of the conservative religious establishment.

By the mid-seventies, despite heavy persecution -- or perhaps as a result of it -- the Children of God, who now numbered in the thousands according to their own reports, had expanded to over eighty countries living in communities which they called "Colonies" or "Homes". Berg also moved abroad and spent a lot of time in Europe, particularly in Spain. At about that same time, they went through some major changes. One of these was that Berg changed his Bible name from Moses David to simply Father David. His second wife -- Maria, whose real name was Karen Zerby prior to a legal name change to Katherine Rianna Smith in 1997 -- came more to the fore of the group as well.

It should be noted here that while the cult refers to Zerby as Berg's second wife, the truth of the matter is that based on the Scriptures, Berg and Zerby were engaged in an outright and continuous act of adultery. This is because Berg took a sexual interest in Zerby during the group's early years while he was still married to his first wife, Jane Miller. In fact, in order to justify his wayward selfish actions and sin, Berg concocted a prophecy -- which was later released as "Prophecy of the Old Church and the New Church" -- in which he claimed that God said that Miller represented the spiritually dead church, while Zerby represented the new church and new bride to whom Berg was now to be married. While Berg continued to financially support Jane Miller, nevertheless, Jesus taught the following in the Gospels:

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."
Matthew 5:31-32, KJV

"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not

read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."
Matthew 19:3-9, KJV

"And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."
Mark 10:2-12, KJV

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."
Luke 16:18, KJV

Please go to part six for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART SIX

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Sexual Sharing In The Family Of Love Is Fornication, Berg's Perverted "Law Of Love", Importance Of Comparing Scripture With Scripture, "Flirty Fishing" Equates To Prostitution, AIDS, The Cult's Jesus Babies, Trained Liars And Deceivers, RNR Leadership Shake-Up, Persecution And Home-Grown Leaders, Wisdom Of Daniel, David Berg's Repeated Prophetic Missteps,

Antichrist Christ's Return Berg's Death And Comet Kohoutek,
Two Sackcloth Witnesses Of Revelation 11, Davidito And Maria,
Ricky Rodriguez Murders His Former Nanny And Commits Suicide
David Brandt Berg's Journey Down Road Of Sin And Fleshly Lust
The King David Bible Verse Set, Prophecies Regarding Christ
And Moshiah Ben David, Danger Of Personality Cult Worship,
Berg's Writings Equated To Modern Scriptures, "The Story Of
Davidito", Judaizers' Criticisms Of Apostle Paul, Position
Of Roman Catholic Church Regarding The Scriptures, Family's
Practice Of Praying In The Name Of David, Pray In The Name
Of Jesus, Jesus Said To Call No Man Our Father On The Earth

It was also during those years that Berg was in Europe that the cult adopted the new name of the "Family of Love". This was due in large part to several new controversial doctrines which were introduced by Berg. One of these is referred to as "sharing". This practice involves the mutual sharing of sex partners, regardless of whether or not they are married. In other words, cult women, regardless of their marital status, were expected -- and sometimes required -- to meet the sexual needs of the single men in the group. This practice operated in reverse as well, and cult men were likewise expected to meet the sexual needs of single women. Wife-swapping was also common. Berg -- a.k.a. Father David -- convinced cult members that this practice was acceptable and permissible under the Bible's "Law of Love". He based this false doctrine on verses such as the following:

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."
James 2:15-18, KJV

Ignoring all of the other things which the Bible teaches us regarding human sexual relationships, in his wayward manner of thinking, Berg interpreted the phrase "those things which are needful to the body" to include sexual needs as well. He was thus convinced that any activity which was motivated by genuine love -- including consensual sex between both single and married individuals within the group -- was not a sin. However, as with the long-term adultery that was committed by Berg and Zerby, sexual "sharing" is not condoned by the Bible in any fashion. For example, consider the following verses:

"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband . . . I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."
1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 8-9, KJV

Please notice that we are clearly told that every man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband

as well. There is no mention of sexual sharing between single individuals, or with married couples, as occurs in the cult. It is because of grievous doctrinal errors such as this that for years now, I have emphasized to my readers how extremely important it is to compare Scripture with Scripture, in order to arrive at a proper understanding of God's Word. We cannot grab a single verse, or even a few verses, and build a belief out of it; particularly if there are other verses -- which we may purposely choose to ignore -- which contradict what we want to believe. David Berg's group --and many other cults as well -- does this repeatedly. That is why such cults are both deceptive and dangerous for young Christians who do not yet possess a strong foundation in God's Word. In other words, they can be easily swayed and manipulated by false doctrine.

The second doctrine which David Berg introduced at that time became known as "Flirty Fishing", or simply "FF'ing". This sinful form of evangelization utilized sex as a lure to win new souls to Christ, and to win new converts to the group as well. Berg pioneered this practice with the full cooperation of Karen Zerby, who became the first of the "flirty fishies", first in London, England, and then on Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Once David Berg and Zerby had experimented with its effectiveness, it was introduced to the enter cult during the late 1970's. While Berg initially emphasized the fact that the primary purpose of this new "ministry" was to win men to Christ who could not be won by less extreme means, and that it was to be used as a last resort, the truth of the matter is that the Family of Love soon realized that it was also a very lucrative practice. As a result, in many cases, Flirty Fishing amounted to nothing less than prostitution.

One of the by-products of the practice of Flirty Fishing was the birth of hundreds, if not thousands, of so-called "Jesus Babies" within the group over the years. These were children who did not have a regular biological father in the cult. It is my understanding that the term "Jesus Baby" is borrowed from a phrase that has long been used in Italy.

According to online information I read quite some time ago, due to the threat of the AIDS virus, supposedly, this vile practice of Flirty Fishing was discontinued by the cult in 1987. However, given the extremely secretive and deceptive nature of The Family International -- as this cult is now known -- I cannot say whether or not this is really true. At the very least, my personal suspicion is that cult members may continue to engage in the practice of sexual "sharing", whether they publicize the fact or not. Please remember that cults such as this one are trained liars and deceivers. They make a regular habit out of it for their own survival, and to avoid legal prosecution.

Another major event which occurred during that time period was a leadership shake-up referred to as the "RNR". As with many organizations, religious or not, power and money had corrupted some of the upper echelons of the Family of Love structure. It was claimed by Father David that he personally fired some three hundred leaders due to their serious abuse of their flocks. It is also said that many of the regular members who could not adjust to the changes, also abandoned the group. Another reason for the leadership shake-up was to encourage the development of home-grown leadership in each

of the countries where the cult had a presence.

As a result of their controversial doctrines, some of their political views and their aggressive witnessing tactics, some of the cult's colonies in foreign countries were subjected to sweeps by government authorities. Being as much of the cult's leadership at that time was American, this became a problem when government authorities began to deport some of them, as it created a leadership vacuum. Thus, one of the goals of the "RNR" -- or "Reorganization and Naturalization Revolution -- was to correct the situation, so that the cult could continue to survive in those countries, even if all of the American leadership was gone. Local leadership had to be grown.

While the Family of Love claimed that they were now a new organization as a result of the leadership shake-up, their enemies were not so easily fooled, and viewed it as nothing more than an attempt to whitewash the public. As far as they were concerned, as long as Father David was in power, nothing had really changed. In their eyes, Berg was still the primary culprit, being as he was the one who had corrupted their kids with his doctrines of liberal sex, communal living, radical political views and controversial witnessing techniques. Not only that, but they blamed him for turning the kids against their own parents. One thing is certain; from those years and forward, persecution, court cases and deportations became a regular part of the Family of Love way of life. However, cult members were convinced that these things were a direct result of their being obedient to God's Will.

Another foolish claim which was made by David Berg was that it had been revealed to him that he possessed the wisdom of the Prophet Daniel. According to the Book of Daniel, while the Prophet was able to interpret the dreams and visions of the Babylonian kings, when it came to the Endtime visions, even Daniel confessed that he did not understand everything he was being told to write down, as we can easily determine by the following verses:

"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

Daniel 12:8-9, KJV

My skepticism regarding Mr. Berg's prophetic abilities is based on even more concrete evidence. Throughout the course of his ministry, he made some very time-specific prophecies. Primary among these was the prediction of the arrival of the Beast -- who many Christians refer to as the Antichrist -- in 1989. Eighteen years earlier in 1971, Berg had also predicted that his death would occur in the same year that the Beast appeared on the world stage; that is, in 1989. Berg was also convinced, and taught his followers, that Jesus Christ would return by 1993. Word began to circulate within the cult that proof of this claim could be found in the fact that Psalm 93 begins with the words "The LORD reigneth". Obviously, neither of these two events came to pass as Berg had predicted. Not only that, but Father David died at the age of seventy-five in 1994, five years after the date he said he had been given through prophecy many years before.

Similar to other false prophets who have populated our modern times, these were not the only prophetic missteps which were made by Berg. Another very notable failed prediction concerns the comet Kohoutek which graced the Earth's skies in January of 1974. As I mentioned in part two of this series, Jonah was a very reluctant Prophet who did not want to do the Will of the Lord. Thus he tried to flee from the Lord's presence by taking a ship to Tarshish. However, as I have already shared with you, once God dealt with Jonah about his rebellion, the Prophet got wise and went to Nineveh in ancient Assyria and did as the Lord had commanded him to do. Thus we read:

"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."
Jonah 3:4, KJV

In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and the Psalms of David, we also find the following very interesting verses:

"Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."
Isaiah 30:26, KJV

"[To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.] In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?"
Psalms 11:1, KJV

So how do these prophecies and warnings by Jonah, Isaiah and King David relate to the prophecies of David Brandt Berg? As it turns out, prior to the arrival of comet Kohoutek, Berg published one of his famous "Mo Letters" in which he claimed that the comet was a harbinger of the great destruction which would soon befall the United States -- which he referred to as "America the Whore" -- as a result of her sins against the Lord. Berg warned cult members to leave the country if it was at all possible. In his communiqué, Mr. Berg quoted from King David and in fact warned his followers to "flee as a bird to your mountain". In his deception, Berg gave a prophecy which was supposedly from the Lord, in which he wrote that the Sun would shine sevenfold, exactly as the Prophet Isaiah wrote.

Well, once again it is obvious that Berg's prophetic skills proved to be absolutely worthless. The USA was not destroyed in forty days time, and hasn't been yet. This is not to say that it is not going to happen -- after all, it has become a very wicked, violent, ungodly nation -- but it most certainly did not occur in the time frame that Berg had prophesied.

Allow me to share one final example which demonstrates Berg's prophetic illusions. In a "Mo Letter" which was published in 1978, Berg discussed the well-known Two Sackcloth Witnesses who are described in detail in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation. As I discuss in my own article entitled "The Two Sackcloth Witnesses of Revelation 11", similar to a number of other Christian writers and Bible students, I have long theorized that Revelation chapter eleven may possibly be describing Moses and the Prophet Elijah. However, David Berg had a very different understanding regarding the identity of

this enigmatic pair, as he informs us in the following excerpt that is taken from his 1978 letter:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Davidito and Maria are going to be the Endtime witnesses. They are going to have such power they can call down fire from Heaven and devour their enemies."

----- End Quote -----

Contrary to Berg's prediction, while Maria -- Karen Zerby -- continues to be the spiritual leader of the Children of God cult to this day, the life of "Davidito" ended with violence and tragedy. "Davidito" was the Family's name for the only son who was born to Karen Zerby as a result of her engaging in the aforementioned practice of Flirty Fishing. "Davidito" -- whose real name was Richard Peter Rodriguez -- was the heir apparent in the Children of God / Family of Love cult. To David Berg, there was nothing more important than raising this child, and preparing him for his predestined role as the leader of the cult along the side of his mother, Karen Zerby.

As some of the controversial publications of the cult clearly describe, from the time that he was born, "Davidito" -- who assumed the name of "Ricky Rodriguez" after he left the cult -- was raised in a very sexually liberal environment. This included having a number of nannies who voluntarily met his sexual needs from the time that he was extremely young. One of these was Sue Joy Krauten, who had also been his mother's longtime personal assistant. In later years, Rodriguez grew to hate what had been done to him sexually during his many years in the Family of Love cult; not only to himself, but to a number of other young children and teens in the cult also.

Thus, Ricky Rodriguez -- a.k.a. "Davidito" -- wanted revenge against his mother, as well as against the other women who had abused him during his childhood. According to news reports of the time, and various other sources -- such as the free online epub book by Don Lattin entitled "Jesus Freaks: A True Story of Murder and Madness on the Evangelical Edge" -- one January evening in 2005 in Tucson, Arizona, Rodriguez murdered Sue Joy Krauten by slicing her throat, and then later blew out his own brains in his car. Thus ended the life of the heir apparent of the Children of God cult. This is just one example of the bad fruit that eventually resulted from the fleshly lusts of David Brandt Berg, who claimed to be the "Endtime Prophet" of God.

In light of this evidence, and Moses' admonition regarding false prophets which I shared with you in part five, it is rather difficult for me to believe that David Brandt Berg -- or Father David -- was the great Prophet of God which he and his followers claimed him to be. He was just a foolish old man with misguided illusions of grandeur, just like so many other false prophets who have risen during the past century. His mixture of religion and unrestrained sex was a dangerous brew which resulted in serious abuse, violence and death.

While David Berg may have truly loved the Lord and possessed a sincere desire to win lost souls to Jesus Christ, clearly, there was something which was just not right about the man. Not only was he not a real Prophet of God in the truest sense

of the word, but he turned downright evil once he decided to satisfy the lusts of his flesh, and tried to justify his vile actions through the Scriptures, no less. Abandoning his wife -- Jane Miller Berg -- for a much younger woman was merely the beginning of Berg's journey down the road of sin and fleshly lust. As I explain in a few other articles, which I will list at the end of this series, based upon reliable sources and evidence, it is known that Berg basically became a drunk. Not only that, but he encouraged, promoted and practiced incest. As if that was not enough, according to public court records, as well as testimonies from some of his actual victims, Berg engaged in multiple acts of pedophilia as well. This was not a true man of God.

Just as verses from the Book of the Prophet Malachi were used to support the belief that Herbert W. Armstrong, William M. Branham and Mark John Allen were the supposed Prophet Elijah of the Endtime, in similar fashion, members of the Family of Love cult were encouraged to memorize a set of Bible verses which were known as the "David Set", in order to enforce the belief that Father David was the fulfillment of various Old Testament prophecies concerning the re-establishment of the Throne of King David during the Endtime. This group of verses included such Scriptures as the following:

"And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it."
Ezekiel 34:23-24, KJV

"And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever."
Ezekiel 37:24-25, KJV

"But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."
Jeremiah 30:9, KJV

"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."
Hosea 3:4-5, KJV

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:"
Amos 9:11, KJV

Because all of the previous verses were written many hundreds of years after the reign of the Biblical King David, members of the Children of God erroneously assumed that they must be

referring to a future king of the same name; in other words, to their very own David Brandt Berg, a.k.a. Moses David and Father David. However, as I more amply explain in a few other articles, the cult understood these verses out of context. As some of you may already realize, these Scriptures are a direct reference to Jesus Christ, who all three Synoptic Gospels call the "son of David". Tragically, the Children of God are not the only ones who misinterpret the aforementioned verses. As I explain in the series entitled "The Kings of the North and the South", the Orthodox Jews are likewise convinced that they are prophecies regarding their long-awaited messiah, who they refer to as "Moshiach ben David"; that is to say, "Messiah, son of David".

As I mentioned in part five, similar to the other people we have examined in this series, I do believe that Father David founded his organization upon strong Biblical doctrine which included Eternal Salvation through Jesus Christ alone, the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and a vision for worldwide evangelization. This is clearly reflected in many of Berg's articles which I had the opportunity to read decades ago. In fact, you can still find a number of his less controversial articles online today. Furthermore, despite the controversy which surrounds this man and his organization, I must admit that it is because of some of his writings that I too was motivated to dedicate my life to the Lord many years ago. He was not the only force to influence my decision, but he was one of them.

However, in addition to the shameful fact that Berg was not able to keep his sexual appetite in check, which ultimately led to his grievous sins, it appears to me that one of his primary errors was the same one that was committed by the men we have already discussed. In other words, Mr. Berg knowingly allowed and encouraged his followers to set him and his words on a pedestal, and he became the focus of personality cult worship, exactly as I explained in part three. The practice of memorizing the "David Set" is one clear example of this; but it is by no means the only one. The practice of using titles of royalty -- such as "king" -- is another. However, the problem goes even deeper than this, as you will see in a moment.

As I discuss in the article entitled "Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?", The Family International -- as it is now known -- also believes that the writings of David Berg are new scriptures which in certain cases may even supersede the accepted canon of the Bible. In other words, if they happen to not agree with something that is contained in the Bible, then Berg's opinion, as expressed in his letters, will take precedence. As shocking as this may be to some of my readers, this belief can be verified by reading some of Berg's earlier writings, if you are able to find a copy of them.

Please note that finding some of these writings online may prove to be rather difficult, if not impossible, because TFI has gone to great lengths to not only remove some of their controversial material from public circulation, but to even outright destroy it. Such is clearly the case with "The Story of Davidito". This is a Family publication which chronicles the early life of Ricky Rodriguez -- a.k.a "Davidito" -- and includes many of the sexual shenanigans that occurred between

him and his various nannies and helpers.

However, the Children of God aren't alone when it come to the issue of rejecting parts of God's Word. As some of you know, in more recent times, I have learned that there are certain Christian Zionists and Judaizers who have a similar attitude towards the writings of the Apostle Paul. Not only do they heavily criticize Paul, but some of them even claim that Paul was not a real Apostle because he championed the Grace of God through Christ, rather than dependence upon the Mosaic Law in order to obtain one's Salvation. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church has long believed and taught that the opinions of the so-called "church fathers" and the pope take precedence over the Biblical text.

Another practice which points to the degree to which members of the Children of God have idolized their founder, is in the fact that some of them have been known to pray in the name of David. For example, a prayer by a cult member might end with phrases such as "In Jesus' and David's names I pray, amen"; or perhaps "in the name of David I ask, amen", or possibly "in your servant David's name I pray, amen." Obviously, this practice clearly contradicts the Scriptures. As I explain in other articles, Jesus taught us that if we are going to pray in anyone's name, it should be in His name alone, because it is His name alone which has been exalted, as we can determine by the following verses:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Philippians 2:9-11, KJV

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
Acts 4:12, KJV

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"
1 Timothy 2:5, KJV

"And whoso shall receive one such little child IN MY NAME receiveth me."
Matthew 18:5, KJV

"For where two or three are gathered together IN MY NAME, there am I in the midst of them."
Matthew 18:20, KJV

"But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle IN MY NAME, that can lightly speak evil of me."
Mark 9:39, KJV

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink IN MY NAME, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."
Mark 9:41, KJV

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; IN MY NAME shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;"

Mark 16:17, KJV

"And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child IN MY NAME receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."

Luke 9:48, KJV

"And whatsoever ye shall ask IN MY NAME, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing IN MY NAME, I will do it."

John 14:13-14, KJV

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send IN MY NAME, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father IN MY NAME, he may give it you."

John 15:16, KJV

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father IN MY NAME, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing IN MY NAME: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask IN MY NAME: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:"

John 16:23-26, KJV

In the Book of Acts, and in the Epistles, we discover that everything was done in the name of Jesus Christ. People were saved in the name of Jesus Christ; people were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; and miracles were performed in the name of Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told to pray in the name of anyone else; not in Mary's name, and certainly not in Father David's name. Thus, while The Family International may not erect physical idols to Father David, it appears that they do hold him as an idol in their hearts, which is just as bad. Now, in all fairness, being as the man has been dead for quite a few years, and I have not closely researched the group in many years, I honestly do not know if any TFI members still pray in this fashion, but some of them did do it at one time, whether they admit to it or not.

Turning to a related issue, just as the Roman Catholic pope and the leaders of other denominations are regarded with a great deal of esteem, and just as the Roman Catholic clergy and other priests adopt the title of "father", the very fact that David Brandt Berg adopted the title of Father David is a clear sign of placing himself above others, and a symptom of self-glorification and self-aggrandizement. Remember again

what Jesus teaches us in the Gospel of Matthew:

"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."

Matthew 23:9, KJV

What does Jesus mean by this? My understanding is that He is not condemning the practice of calling our biological dad "father"; rather, He is stating that we should not reverence any religious authority upon Earth with the same degree of respect that we give to our Father in Heaven. In other words, if a certain religious leader teaches or practices something which we know is clearly against the Scriptures, then it is our obligation to disregard what they do or say, and to give our Heavenly Father and His Word preeminence in our lives. To do otherwise would be to allow this earthly spiritual figure to usurp the position and authority of our Father in Heaven. In my view, the fact that The Family views the writings of David Berg as being equal in status to the Bible makes them guilty of this very thing. By extension, I must wonder how they now view the writings of his heir, Karen Zerby.

Please go to part seven for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART SEVEN

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Mandates Of The Family Charter, Jesus Is Head Of The Church, Divisive Spirit Of Exclusivity, Jesus And Apostles Prayed For Spiritual Unity In Body Of Christ, Serve With Humility Forced Recognition Of Prophets By Some Churches And Cults, Proof Of The Prophet's Calling, With Signs Following, Signs And Miracles Can Happen But Are Not Absolutely Necessarily, We Walk By Faith And Not By Sight, Our Small Daily Miracles, Proof In God's Natural Creation, Carl Sagan: "Extraordinary Claims Require Extraordinary Evidence", Accurate Fulfillment Is The Mark Of A True Prophet Of God, Real Prophecy Or Just Educated Guesses, Deceiving, And Being Deceived, God's Spirit Or A Familiar Spirit, True Prophecy Is A God-Inspired Event, No Hit-And-Miss True Prophets Of God, True Prophecies Bear Positive Fruit And Will Confirm The Office Of A True Prophet

We find another clear example of the exaltation of David Berg and his second "wife" in what is known as The Family Charter. This document -- I don't know if it is still in full force or if it has been updated since I read it years ago -- defines the rules and regulations of The Family International, and

the membership structure as well. In explaining the various requirements for maintaining full-time membership within the group -- which TFI refers to as being a DO, or Disciple Only, member -- the charter begins as follows:

----- Begin Quote -----

"The basic responsibilities of full-time Family members (referred to as DO [Disciples Only] members) in the Family are in brief: They must believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. They must believe that David Berg, and Maria, his wife and successor, are God's Endtime prophets."

----- End of Quote -----

While I am not absolutely certain of this point, being as I haven't researched the group in many years, it is possible that a DO member is now referred to as a CM; that is to say, a Charter Member. At any rate, the first requirement is one which any sincere Christian should easily be able to meet.

However, it is the second requirement which should obviously be of concern to us. If a person possesses an earnest desire to serve Jesus Christ in a full-time capacity, unless he is willing to accept David Berg and his "wife" Maria -- Karen Zerby -- as God's Endtime Prophets, then the clear message is that he should not even consider trying to become a member. In other words, with this rigid requirement to accept Berg and Zerby as Endtime Prophets, the Children of God are placing an insurmountable obstacle before anyone who may have a sincere desire to serve the Lord within their organization. One must truly question if they want their followers to really serve the Lord, or to only serve them.

Some of you will no doubt be wondering if by this requirement, it is meant to be understood that Berg and Zerby are the only Endtime Prophets. While one would hope that it simply means that they view themselves as two of many Christians who have dedicated themselves to the Lord, the sad truth of the matter is that a close examination of their history and publications reveals that they have in fact long believed that they are the only Endtime Prophets on Earth. Clearly, David Berg and Zerby are guilty of the very same spirit of exclusivity that we saw in the other men who we examined earlier in this series.

The demand of Berg and Zerby to be viewed and respected as the Lord's only Endtime Prophets is really no different from the Roman Catholic Church requiring its members to reverence the Pope; or the Eastern Orthodox Church requiring respect for the Patriarch; or the Anglican Communion requiring that its members honor the Archbishop of Canterbury; or Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists believing that they are God's church on Earth; or the Jehovah's Witnesses claiming that they are the 144,000, or the Mormons requiring that their members respect and obey the edicts of their "Twelve Apostles"; or Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God making similar claims; and on and on it goes. In every case, it just amounts to man worship and self-aggrandizement in some form. It is replacing Christ as the only true Head of His Church, with a man, or a woman, or with some other form of leadership. Consider the following verses:

"Which he [God the Father] wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
Ephesians 1:20-23, KJV

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"
Ephesians 4:15, KJV

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."
Ephesians 5:23, KJV

"And he [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."
Colossians 1:18, KJV

"And ye are complete in him [Jesus], which is the head of all principality and power:"
Colossians 2:10, KJV

"Unto you therefore which believe he [Jesus] is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,"
1 Peter 2:7, KJV

Continuing our discussion regarding the spirit of exclusivity which has gripped so many churches, organizations, cults and individuals, I am reminded of something else regarding the Children of God. In the early seventies, one of David Berg's sons named Aaron wrote a song called "We Are the 144,000". This extremely self-righteous song stated in part "We are the 144,000; who else, could be but us?" As I recall, when David Berg became aware of this song, he quickly put a stop to it and banned it from being sung within the group. I believe he made a remark to the effect that some of their members should be thankful if they happened to find themselves amongst the 144,000.

As I mentioned a moment ago, Berg and Zerby became convinced that they are God's Endtime Prophets. It is not surprising then that in one of his earliest "Mo Letters", Berg boasted to his followers "We are the only nation upon this Earth that God recognizes!" Whether he was referring only to the Children of God, or to the Body of Christ in general, is a matter of speculation. However, I believe that Berg meant the former.

While I understand and agree with some of the motivations which cause some of these religious organizations and cults to isolate their members from the world, as I first mentioned in part two, we should be concerned with the way they all go to the extreme in declaring themselves to be the only bearers of the true Word of God. This mentality even runs contrary to what the Lord teaches us in the Gospels. You may recall that when some of the Apostles tried to stop a certain individual

from preaching the Gospel because he was not counted amongst the Lord's immediate followers, Jesus immediately showed them the error in their thinking when He said the following to them:

". . . Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."
Luke 9:50b, KJV

This incident clearly reveals that Satan has been using the same divisive tricks for literally thousands of years. You may recall how I also mentioned in part three that it wasn't long after Jesus returned to Heaven that the Disciples began to coalesce around different leaders of the Church. It was at this point that the fractures began, denominationalism started to take root, and the spirit of exclusivity began to take its toll on the Lord's Church. As we have seen, it is this very same spirit of exclusivity which has deceived many churches, organizations, cults and individuals into thinking that they are God's only chosen voice for the hour; they are the only ones with the proper interpretation of God's Word; they are the ones to whom God has revealed a new truth which has never been shared with the world before. Yes, they may be the ones, but they are the ones who have become deceived.

As can be seen, Jesus simply did not tolerate this attitude of exclusivity which, if we can be honest with ourselves, is fueled by pride and self-righteousness. Quite to the contrary, Jesus prayed that His followers would be united in Spirit and joined together as one in doctrine and purpose, with Himself as our only Shepherd. The First Century Apostles longed for this very same thing. This becomes evident in verses such as the following

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."
John 10:16, KJV

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:"
John 17:11, 21-22, KJV

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Romans 15:6, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

2 Corinthians 13:11, KJV

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."
Ephesians 4:1-3, 14-16, KJV

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"
Philippians 1:27, KJV

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."
Philippians 2:2, KJV

To reiterate my earlier point, while Jesus clearly prayed that there would be one Fold and one Shepherd, He was not referring to a human leader who lorded over an elite church or human organization such as the aforementioned churches, groups and cults. He was in fact referring to Himself as the one true Shepherd, and the global Body of Believers as His Fold. Now, obviously, some level of organization is required in the local Christian body. I discuss this subject more at length in "Where Are the First Century Churches?" and "Are You Just a Baby Huey?". However, these local leaders are to serve -- as in the word "servant" -- with love and humility, as we clearly see by the following verses:

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 18:1-4, KJV

"Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."
Matthew 23:10-12, KJV

"And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than

thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
Luke 14:7-11, KJV

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"
1 Peter 5:2-6, KJV

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
James 4:6-10, KJV

Returning to our discussion regarding the Children of God, while the Lord did in fact establish certain requirements for being full-time Disciples, I don't recall that honoring two people as Endtime Prophets was ever one of them. If we consider that David Berg is now deceased, I must sincerely ask how it is possible for any potential new member of the group to become convinced that Berg was an actual Prophet of God. Is he just supposed to accept it as fact simply because the cult says so? In similar fashion, one must wonder what positive proof his "wife" and heir -- Maria -- can provide which confirms that she is a true Prophetess of the Lord as well. Furthermore, what does this say regarding her second husband Peter -- Stephen Douglas Kelly a.k.a. Christopher Smith -- who is also known as Peter Amsterdam and King Peter within the cult?

On a related note, while I was working on this series this evening, I exchanged a few private messages with one of my Facebook friends. This person is having some problems with the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Without even knowing that I am working on this series, or what I am writing in it, my friend informed me that he was told the following by the pastor in that church. This is verbatim from my friend:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Even if you believe in God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, believe that He is the son of God, died on the cross for our

sins and rose in three days, but do not swear allegiance to prophecy and to our prophet, no pastor in this church will baptize you."

----- End Quote -----

Wow! Mind-boggling! So you see, the Children of God are not the only ones who outright demand veneration -- and basically worship -- of a self-proclaimed prophet or prophetess as a condition for becoming a member of a church or organization.

Earlier in this series, we examined some examples from both the Old and the New Testaments which showed how the Lord had called certain individuals into unique service. As you will recall, this usually involved some clear physical signs in order to increase that person's faith, and to confirm God's calling to them. Not only that, but once these people did accept their calling from God, some of them demonstrated in very clear ways that God was indeed with them. This was most certainly the case with great Prophets like Moses and Elijah. The Lord proved beyond a shadow of a doubt through the many plagues upon Egypt, as well as by the many miracles which He performed in the wilderness, that Moses was indeed His man for the hour; even though the older generation continued to doubt, complain and rebel.

In similar fashion, when it failed to rain for three and a half years in Israel, and when fire came down from Heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the altar, and when the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal were slain, there were few people in Israel who doubted that the Spirit of the Living God rested upon the Prophet Elijah. The Spirit of the Lord was so heavy upon the Prophet Samuel, that at one point, when Samuel went to anoint David as the new king, the elders of Bethlehem timidly inquired of Samuel by saying:

". . . Comest thou peaceably?"

1 Samuel 16:4b, KJV

As I explain in the article entitled "Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?", this is one of the reasons why certain people are given the Gifts of the Spirit. While some are to edify the Body of Christ, others serve as physical proof and a confirmation of a Prophet or Apostle's ministry and Divine Calling from God. For example; the purpose of Divine Healing is not just to heal bodies. It also serves as a very powerful testimony of the existence of the Almighty God. Miracles such as Healing are supposed to boost people's faith so that they will come to believe in and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. When Jesus healed the people of ancient Israel and performed other mighty miracles, He was not only proving the existence of His Father, He was likewise proving that He -- meaning Jesus -- was exactly who He claimed to be; that is, the Son of God.

You may also recall that at the end of the Gospel of Mark, prior to returning to Heaven, Jesus remarked that the word and the work of His followers would be confirmed, or proved, by miraculous signs which would follow, or accompany them. Consider these verses:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In

my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
Mark 16:17-20, KJV

Notice that Jesus specifically says "these signs shall follow them that believe." Then in the final verse we see the actual fulfillment of His words in the phrase "and confirming the word with signs following." I again encourage you to consider reading "Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?", being as I include many Scriptures which highlight the signs which Jesus is referring to in the previous set of verses.

Now, please understand that I am not saying that every single person who enters into some kind of ministry for the Lord has to receive powerful signs of confirmation in order to convince them of their calling. Neither am I saying that once someone has begun a particular ministry, he should be able to perform great miracles like Jesus or the Prophets and Apostles of old. I know that some people believe this -- such as the followers of William M. Brannon, and a few other individuals who I have encountered on Facebook -- but personally, I do not believe this. While such signs and miracles can happen, I find nothing in the Bible which says that they absolutely must happen.

I also suspect -- please note that this is simply a personal theory -- that in addition to confirming the ministry of the Apostles, another reason why God performed so many signs and miracles during the First Century, is because the Church was young, and such miracles were necessary in order to plant a strong seed of faith, and so that the fledgling Church would grow quickly in the face of serious persecution by both the Jews and the Romans. Today, however, we should be a strong, mature Church which believes by faith alone, without the need for so many signs and miracles, as I explain in the article "Faith and the Shroud of Turin". In other words, we walk by faith, and not by sight; and as Jesus Himself said to the Apostle Thomas in the Gospel of John:

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."
John 20:29, KJV

"(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)"
2 Corinthians 5:7, KJV

While to my recollection I have never witnessed any kind of major miracle -- such as what we see described in the pages of the Bible -- I do witness and am thankful for the small miracles which occur in my life on a daily basis. I am of course referring to having sufficient food to eat, clothes to wear, a house to live in, a soft bed to sleep in at night, protection from violence and evil men, money to pay my bills, etc. These miracles of provision and blessings demonstrate God's love and care for me, and that is all I really need to be happy . . . well, along with my cats. Lord help us all to

not be like the Scribes and the Pharisees who were constantly asking Jesus for signs to prove His Messiahship, as we see by these verses:

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:"
Matthew 12:38-39, KJV

Even if I never witness any kind of Divine Healing, or see fire fall from the sky, or the Red Sea divide, or the Jordan River part, or someone being raised from the dead, it really does not matter; because as I said, we are supposed to walk by faith, and not by sight. Even without any kind of physical evidence, I am still going to believe, because God has given me the faith to believe. I don't need great miracles to boost my faith in the Lord. Just looking at the beautiful blue sky, the billowy clouds passing by, and the beautiful green trees is enough to convince me that He is real. As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write in his Epistle to the Romans:

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"
Romans 1:20, KJV

Not only have I never experienced any kinds of signs which confirm my particular calling in the Lord, but neither have I ever performed any kind of miracle. However, I know in my heart that this is what God has called me to do. I also know that many people have been blessed by my writing ministry. All I can say, is that God alone knows why He chooses us, as well as in what manner He desires to use each one of us.

Having said that, what I am also saying is the following. If Mark John Allen is going to make the bold claim of being the Endtime Elijah; or if David Berg and Karen Zerby are going to proclaim to the entire world that they are God's two Endtime Prophets, as they have most certainly done for more than four decades through their organization, as well as through their personal writings, then they ought to have some very powerful proof to back up their claims. These people should have some mighty signs following after them to confirm and prove their work, exactly as the Lord did with the First Century leaders of the Church. Where are the signs and miracles which confirm the lofty positions to which these people have each appointed themselves? As famous American astronomer, astrophysicist and cosmologist Carl Sagan customarily remarked, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." Where's the evidence?

This lack of evidence from some of these self-styled prophets and prophetesses presents us with a few other possibilities. The first of these is that unlike Jesus and the Apostles, who were accompanied by many signs and wonders, these people are really not true Prophets of God. Therefore, they do not have that kind of Spirit Anointing. As a result, it is not possible for them to perform any kind of signs and miracles. The second possibility is simply that these charlatans don't possess true faith. Quite frankly, I believe that the former is the actual

answer that we are looking for here. They are all impostors.

As we saw earlier, one of the basic requirements for one to be considered a true Prophet of God, is that he accurately predicts futuristic events. After all, that is what Prophets do; they prophesy. These prophecies should not be something which he was able to concoct through scientific reasoning; or through comparing statistics and figuring out probabilities; or by looking at past records and trends in order to make an educated guess as to where things might be heading. This is basically what stock market analysts, political analysts, meteorologists and some of those so-called New Age psychics often do. It has absolutely nothing to do with God's Spirit. It is all science, mathematics, economics, etc.

As we all know, there are a lot of charlatans in the world; and they come in all kinds of flavors. One of the tricks of their trade is to state their predictions in very general terms so that when certain events do happen, they will make it appear as if they were accurate in their prognostications. I find these deceivers all over the Internet. Some of them are seriously out to lunch. They are so deceived themselves, that they actually convince themselves that their so-called "prophecy" has come true, and then they endeavor to convince other people of the same. As I shared with you in part four, the Apostle Paul wrote the following to Timothy:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

What these liars do is either hi-tech wizardry, or else it is inspired by the forces of darkness. These people have absolutely nothing to do with the true Spirit of God. They may have a spirit, but it certainly is not the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it is a familiar spirit. Now, the predictions of a true Prophet of God normally involve events which could not possibly have been predicted by any means other than through the direct intervention of God's Spirit. In other words, I believe that true prophecy is a God-inspired event. It is the Spirit of God taking over the vessel of the Prophet's body, and using it as a type of divine communication device.

Furthermore, as I stated a moment ago, a true Prophet of God will be very accurate. I have mentioned before that I do not believe that real Prophets of God are hit-and-miss like so many of these wannabe prophets and prophetesses that we see today. Just imagine for a moment if Jeremiah or Isaiah or Daniel had goofed. "Oh, sorry; I thought that was the Lord speaking to me. I guess it wasn't after all. My mistake."

I believe that in one way or another, the prophecies of a true Prophet of God will bring forth positive fruit for the Kingdom of God; such as repentance, for example. When their prophecies do come to pass, they will serve as proof of the Prophet's ministry and Divine Calling. This is exactly what the Prophet Ezekiel wrote in the following verse:

"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."
Ezekiel 33:33, KJV

Please go to part eight for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART EIGHT

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Berg's Prophetic Missteps, Serious Matter To Say "Thus Saith The Lord", Karen Zerby's Devilish Sex-Related Doctrines, TFI Members Engage In Necromancy Contrary To The Holy Scriptures, Danger Of Keeping Statistics, God's Interest In Statistics, God Warns Israelites Regarding Trusting In Arm Of The Flesh, Older Generation Dies In Wilderness Due To Unbelief And Sin, King David's Error: When Strength In Numbers Becomes A Snare, Deadly Census And Humiliation Of A King, God Is Not Limited By Many Or By Few, God Pares Down The Size Of Gideon's Army No Record Of Statistics Being Kept By First Century Church, The Lord Knoweth Them That Are His, Foolishness Of Boasting And Comparing Ourselves To Others, Unwise Lord Lord Group, Danger Of Using Statistics To Boast Of Our Accomplishments, Children Of God: We're Accomplishing This While You Are Not, We Are All Unprofitable Servants, Paul Warns Of An Increase In Wickedness And Deception By Evil Men, Stay Close To Jesus And His Word, Lord Maitreya Buddha And PR Man Benjamin Creme

As I pointed out in part six, while David Berg claimed to be the Endtime Prophet of God, and made a few major predictions during his lifetime -- actually, they should be classified as prophecies, being as he insisted that they came from the Lord -- his prophetic record is extremely dismal to say the least, and consists of one prophetic misstep after the other. While I am not aware of every single prophecy he ever gave, of the ones that I do know about, not one single one of them came to pass. As we saw earlier, God's true Prophet -- Moses -- told us exactly how we should respond to such false prophets and their misguided prophecies. We are to avoid such people, and to disregard what they say, because it is clearly not of the Lord.

In my view, it is a very serious matter to say "Thus saith the Lord". Personally, I never do it. Of course, neither have I ever claimed to be a Prophet of God. To claim to speak for the Creator of the Universe is something which no one should take lightly; yet so many of these self-appointed, wannabe prophets do it all the time. Have they no fear of God? As I thought on this issue, it occurred to me that if David Berg -- a.k.a. Moses David -- had lived during the time of the real Moses, the law would have mandated that he be stoned to death. Wow! Think about that all of you modern false prophets!

While David Berg may have been a wonderful teacher in regards to the Word of God -- that is, if we choose to ignore the way in which he sometimes chose to pervert its meaning in order to justify his wayward doctrines and perverted practices -- and while he may have inspired many of his followers to win literally thousands of souls to Jesus Christ, based on the criteria which we find in the Bible, there is simply no way that we can accept his claim of truly being a Prophet of God, and much less the Prophet of the Endtime.

So what about Berg's lover and successor, Karen Zerby, a.k.a. Maria, a.k.a. Katherine Rianna Smith? Exactly where does she stand as a "prophetess"? To be honest, I am not personally knowledgeable of any prophecies which may have been given by the woman. As such, I can't comment on that particular matter. On the other hand, what I can say without a doubt is that the only things which I have seen coming from her keyboard are a number of very strange, misguided, and to be frank, devilish sex-related doctrines which have no basis in the Scriptures whatsoever. If you do not know what I am referring to, let me encourage you to read my article called "Women Shepherds: The Family Sex Cult Exposed Again!" Trust me; you will be shocked and disgusted.

Speaking of the weird and strange, while I was conducting my research for this series, I also discovered that following the death of David Brandt Berg in Portugal in 1994, certain members of the cult -- I know not who at this point in time -- began to claim that they were in communication with him, and receiving messages from him. This is yet again another blatant contradiction of the Scriptures, which in clear terms condemn the practice of necromancy; that is, endeavoring to communicate with the dead. God's Word states one thing, and The Family International does the exact opposite. Consider the following verses and be warned:

"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."
Leviticus 19:31, KJV

"And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people."
Leviticus 20:6, KJV

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."
Deuteronomy 18:10-11, KJV

"And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."
2 Chronicles 33:6, KJV

"And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."
2 Kings 21:6, KJV

"Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD."
2 Kings 23:24, KJV

"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"
Isaiah 8:19, KJV

"And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards."
Isaiah 19:3, KJV

"But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments . . . Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee."
Isaiah 47:9, 12-13, KJV

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
Galatians 5:19-21, KJV

"Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."
Revelation 9:21, KJV

"And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived."
Revelation 18:23, KJV

At this point in our discussion, we are going to examine yet another way in which some churches, organizations and cults endeavor to exalt themselves above their peers. Believe it

or not, but it involves the practice of keeping statistics. Now, if it is done with the right attitude, there is nothing wrong with keeping a record of certain statistics, such as who has accepted the Lord, their mailing address and phone number, etc. Such information can be useful in developing an effective follow-up program for those hungry sheep who show additional interest in God's Word, and in your work for the Lord. However there is another kind of record keeping which can quickly lead to self-aggrandizement. This is the kind of statistics which involve numbers, such as how many people have accepted the Lord, how many Gospel tracts were passed out, how many Bibles were distributed, etc.

Some people might argue, "Well, isn't God Himself interested in statistics? Didn't He instruct Moses and Joshua to perform a census of the Children of Israel on at least two occasions? Didn't King David also perform a census? Are we not told in the Book of Revelation that exactly twelve thousand members of each of the Tribes of Israel were given the Seal of God?"

All of this is absolutely true. However, a closer reading of the Scriptures will reveal that this is not the full story. Sadly, once the children of Israel realized how mighty of a nation they had become while living under Egyptian bondage, they became rather proud and self-confident. They began to look to themselves, to their own human wisdom, and to their own military might as well. In a word, once they began to grow in numbers, they also began to stray away from God. I discuss this issue in other articles such as "The Fruits of Disobedience" and "The Children of God and Politics". The Lord already knew that this was going to occur. That is why He specifically warned them in advance regarding what would happen to them in such a case, as we see by this verse:

"And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God."
Deuteronomy 28:62, KJV

The previous verse reveals just one of the many curses the Lord said He would carry out if Israel were to turn away from Him. While over six hundred thousand fighting men left Egypt -- not to mention woman, children and old people -- it may interest you to know that after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, their number remained close to the same, because the Lord had afflicted them a number of times due to their sins of rebellion and unbelief. The rest of the older generation -- everyone who was over twenty years of age at the beginning of the forty-year period -- perished due to old age and other causes, and never even made it to the Promised Land.

Concerning King David's census, as I will now explain to you, this was a serious error in judgment which resulted from the king's own pride. Even Joab -- who was the captain of David's army -- warned the king that taking the census was not of the Lord. Despite this warning from one of his most trusted men, David yielded to his pride and took the census anyway, so that he could relish in and boast of his own might, as we see by the following verses:

"For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which

was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel."
2 Samuel 24:2-4, KJV

After the census had been taken, David repented for having yielded to his pride. However, as a result of his desire to keep statistics so that he could boast of his own greatness, and his own military might, the Lord smote seventy thousand men in Israel, as we see by these verses:

"And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly . . . So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men."
2 Samuel 24:10, 15, KJV

What a heavy price to pay due to disobedience and pride. It is interesting to note that at some point in his life, David also authored the following verse which is found in the Book of Psalms:

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."
Psalms 20:7, KJV

As another example which clearly demonstrates that God is not limited by many or by few, let's return to the story of God's hero, Gideon. It is interesting to note that when Gideon first gathered his forces to fight against the Midianites, his army numbered about thirty-two thousand fighting men. However, the Lord informed Gideon that it was too many men, and that as a result of having so great an army, Israel would no doubt try to take credit for any victory which would be wrought, as we see here:

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."
Judges 7:2-3, KJV

After another test, the Lord further reduced their numbers from ten thousand men, to just three hundred men. As crazy as it may have seemed at the time, the Lord used those three hundred faithful men to defeat the Midianite army, which was so large that it could not even be numbered, as we see by

the following verses:

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place . . . And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude . . . Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon."
Judges 7:7, 12, 8:28, KJV

Clearly then, God is not limited by many or by few. He can accomplish His purposes regardless of the number of people He has to work with. What counts with the Lord is that we are faithful to the task to which we have each been called. This is precisely what Jonathan said to his armor bearer when they went against the Philistines, as we see here:

"And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few."
1 Samuel 14:6, KJV

Continuing our discussion regarding keeping statistics, it will also interest you to know that nowhere in the Books of the New Testament do we find any mention of the Lord or His Apostles actively and continuously keeping a record of how many people had made a decision for Salvation. While there are a few general numbers mentioned, such as how many people were fed by the Lord, and how many people joined the Church on a number of occasions in the Book of Acts, we don't find any evidence of any kind of ongoing records being kept. The Lord does not need for us to keep track of such things for Him. We are clearly told that He knows and recognizes those people who belong to Him. In fact, He knows us so well, that the Lord said that even the very hairs of our heads are all numbered, as we see by the following verses:

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."
2 Timothy 2:19, KJV

"But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."
Luke 12:7, KJV

As we have seen from the previous example regarding David foolishly taking a census of the Israelite army, there is a subtle danger in the practice of keeping statistics which can quickly turn into a snare, and trap those people who are not wary of Satan's devices. What may start out as a sincere attempt to monitor the spiritual condition and progress of the flock, may eventually turn into a proud boast in which the church, organization or cult brags of its evangelical accomplishments. Before long, they are comparing themselves

to others, which only serves to inflate their self-righteous ego even further. Let me remind you of the verses which I shared with you in part one of this series:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

2 Corinthians 10:12-17, KJV

To reiterate, if some of these churches, organizations and cults are keeping track of their witnessing statistics, in my view, it really amounts to a proud boast. Soul-winning for them has become an effort in self-righteous works, and their statistics are used to demonstrate how much better they apparently believe they are than everyone else. Such people remind me of the "Lord, Lord" group, whose error is exposed in the following verses:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Matthew 7:21-23, KJV

Please notice to whom the above verses are addressed. Jesus is in fact directing His words to those people who believe in Him. In other words, they are directed to Christians, and not to the unbelieving Jews. After all, most of the Jews do not even believe in His Name, and thus would not do anything in His Name. If we were to modernize the previous verses, we could very easily read them as "Lord, Lord, have we not won twenty thousand souls in thy name? And in thy name passed out one hundred thousand Bibles? And in thy name distributed over ten million Gospel tracts? Look Lord, here are our statistics to prove it! Surely we deserve to be in your Kingdom, Lord."

Doesn't that sound absolutely sickening? Tragically, I know for a fact that the Children of God cult are guilty of this very practice. They have a long history of keeping accurate statistics; and I am convinced by the evidence which I have presented in this series that their practice is at least in part a result of pride, and their desire to boast about what they claim to have accomplished. This becomes so evident when one reads some of their older publications, and sees some of the proud statements which were made in them by their false prophet, David Brandt Berg. Let's review some of them:

- Berg despised other Christians who belonged to the Jesus Revolution of the late 1960's and the early 1970's. In a taped session -- which was later converted into an actual "Mo Letter" -- he claimed that the Children of God had the only real Jesus Revolution on Earth.
- Berg claimed that the Children of God were the only nation that God recognized on Earth.
- Berg and Zerby claimed to be God's Endtime Prophets, and one could not remain a member of the cult unless they fully acknowledged this lie.
- Some members of the Children of God used to sing a song called "We Are the 144,000" until it was banned.
- Berg was convinced that both the church system and the Jesus Revolution had failed, and that the Children of God were the only ones who were really accomplishing anything for the Lord.

In light of the previous points, it is easy to understand how the subtle message which was being conveyed by their extremely meticulous statistics keeping, was "Look at us! Look at what we are doing! We are accomplishing this, while you -- meaning the rest of Christendom -- are not!" It was a proud boast. It was pure self-glorification and self-aggrandizement. The fact of the matter is that the Lord has His own set of Books; and they are much larger, more accurate, and more complete than ours could ever be. We read all about them in the following verse. Clearly, this is one Book that we all definitely want to be in:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Revelation 20:12, KJV

If there is one lesson that I wish to impress upon you, it is that no matter who we are, or where we are, or what we are doing for the Lord, none of us has the right to exalt ourselves beyond our measure. None of us has the right to take the credit for anything positive which may possibly result from our work for the Lord. We must all constantly remind ourselves of our lowly state. We must all constantly remind ourselves that we are nothing but dust. We must all constantly remind ourselves that we are sinners. If there is anything good about us, it is only Jesus. As the Lord said, no matter what we do for Him, in the end, we are all still unprofitable servants, as we see by this verse:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Luke 17:10, KJV

Earlier in this series, we took a brief look at the doctrine regarding the so-called Endtime Elijah. We then examined the lives of three men -- Herbert W. Armstrong, Mark John Allen

and William Marrion Branham -- who all have been claimed to be this Endtime Elijah. At this point in our series, we will now more closely examine the alleged Scriptural basis upon which the Endtime Elijah doctrine is based, and discuss other peripheral issues which are associated with our main topic of discussion.

To begin, I am going to provide a few examples of men who are undoubtedly workers of darkness; even though they have all claimed to be true bearers of the Light. These people are not just men who claimed to be Divine Prophets of the Lord. No, not by any means. These are men who actually had or have the audacity to actually boast that they are Jesus Christ reincarnated here and now. To introduce these vile vipers of the spiritual underworld, let me first share the following verses with you which were written by the Apostle Paul. You will be familiar with the first verse, being as I already shared it with you twice earlier in this series:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;"
2 Timothy 3:13-14, KJV

Notice what Paul is telling Timothy here. As I point out in other articles such as "Lying Wonders of the Endtime" and "Age of Deception, Age of Delusion", Paul seems to be saying that these evil men and seducers, or deceivers, are going to grow in number. The word "wax" simply means to increase or to grow. The verse may also signify that these evil men are going to increase insofar as the degree of their wickedness and deception is concerned. In either case, there should be no doubt that we certainly see this very thing happening in our own time.

But then notice what Paul writes to Timothy. He basically tells him to not worry about what is going on around him, and to simply remain on the path on which he finds himself. Paul encourages Timothy to remember what he has learned, as well as from whom he has learned it, meaning of course, Paul himself. So Paul's basic message to Timothy is to keep the vision, and to not be moved, no matter how evil the times become. That is precisely what we must likewise do in these current evil times as more and more false prophets appear on the horizon. We need to stay close to Jesus and His Word. We need to keep our eyes on the Author and the Finisher of our faith, and on no one else. Period. Furthermore, we must ask the Lord to give us His Wisdom, and His Spirit Discernment, so that we can more easily recognize these deceptive snakes.

The first of these evil seducers who I am going to discuss is a man who some people refer to as Lord Maitreya Buddha. The name "Maitreya" is actually derived from the Sanskrit word "mitra". It means "friend" or "friendship". Maitreya is the name which Buddhists give to the future Buddha; that is, the fifth Buddha, according to their beliefs. This evil and deceptive false prophet would have us believe that he is the current physical manifestation of Jesus Christ. The ridiculous claim of those people who believe in this man is that he will soon reveal himself to the world as the "Master" or "World Teacher". Well, I have some news for Mr. Maitreya.

Consider what the real Jesus Christ has to say:

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:23-24, KJV

Supposedly, this Lord Maitreya Buddha character created quite a stir during the late 1980's when he made what some people claim was a "miraculous" appearance in a small village near Nairobi, Kenya. According to a few newspaper articles of that period, he was immediately recognized as Jesus Christ by the local people. This included the followers of an alleged local "prophetess" whose name I cannot currently remember. She may have been linked to the Roman Catholic Church. According to a number of online sources -- which I personally accept with a large grain of salt -- since that time, Lord Maitreya Buddha has secretly resided in the Asian district of London. Based on comments which have been made by his self-appointed public relations man -- and elderly Scotsman named Benjamin Creme -- Maitreya Buddha is patiently waiting for his day of revelation to the world. The Wikipedia website has this to say regarding Benjamin Creme:

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"He [Creme] asserts that the second coming prophesied by many religions will come in the form of Maitreya the World Teacher. Maitreya is the name Buddhists use for the future Buddha, but Creme claims that Maitreya is the teacher that all religions point towards and hope for. Other names for him, according to Creme, are the Christ, the Imam Mahdi, Krishna, and the Messiah. Creme says Maitreya is the "Avatar for the Aquarian Age" and is currently living in London since 19 July 1977.

----- End Quote -----

On several occasions, Creme has announced that the time of his master's appearance is drawing near. When this happens, it is claimed that he will transmit an important message of peace via all of the television sets in the world. In fact, according to what I have read, these people claim that even if one does not have his television set turned on, he or she will still receive Maitreya's wonderful message. It is also said that Maitreya will provide workable solutions for all of the problems which the world currently faces. This includes hunger, war and disease. Creme's people have a website where they propagate all of their deceptive garbage concerning the world vision that is promoted by Maitreya. In recent years, it appears that the Maitreya fad has been slowly dying out. Benjamin Creme will soon be ninety-one years old, so maybe once he is gone, the Maitreya myth will disappear with him.

Please go to part nine for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART NINE

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Marshall Applewhite And Heavens Gate Cult, Korea's Reverend Sun Myung Moon And The Unification Church, Infatuation With Prophets Prophetesses And Other Charismatic Leaders, Bible Basis For Endtime Elijah Doctrine, Understanding Time Frames Correctly, God's CrossWord Puzzle, Proper Research Methods, Establishing The Time Frame Of Malachi's Prophecy Regarding Elijah, Malachi Wrote About Christ's First Century Arrival, The Prophet Isaiah Describes Sufferings Of The Lamb Of God, Comparing Malachi 3:1 And Malachi 4:5, Elijah = Elias = John The Baptist Who Was The Messenger Who Prepared The Way For Jesus, Simeon And Prophetess Anna Praise God In The Temple Jesus Teaches Performs Miracles And Rebukes In The Temple, Why Jesus Appeared Suddenly In Jerusalem, Jewish Religious Elders Were Both Surprised And Afraid, Jesus And The New Covenant, John The Baptist Is The Messenger Of The Covenant, Isaiah's Prophecy Regarding John The Baptist, Jesus Confirms That John Is The Prophesied Elijah, Angel Gabriel Confirms That John The Baptist Is The Prophesied Elijah Who Is To Come

Maitreya is not alone in making the absurd claim of being Jesus Christ. Marshall Applewhite of the Heaven's Gate UFO cult boasted of the very same thing. In the early years, he and his wife were known as "Ti and Do", or "The Two". For almost twenty years, Applewhite indoctrinated a small group of followers with a religion which was an odd mixture of Christianity, New Age thought, and UFOlogy. During most of that time, the group remained underground, only surfacing on rare occasions in order to try to win new converts to their monastic way of life and odd belief system. In their later years, they also maintained a website which attracted people by the thousands. In the end, Applewhite committed suicide along with thirty-eight of his followers, who all believed that they would be transported to a spacecraft of celestial origin, which followed in the tail of the now-famous Comet Hale-Bopp of early 1997. Since that tragic event, at least one other member of this cult has followed in their suicidal footsteps. I discuss this cult in more detail in "Heaven's Gate, Suicide and Other Death Cults".

Let's discuss one more person who claimed to be the Messiah. After gathering a strong following in the United States in the early 1970's, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon -- who is the founder of the Unification Church -- returned to South Korea as a result of legal charges involving alleged tax evasion. However, although some people did not believe that Moon was guilty of the charges, he returned to the USA where he spent thirteen months in prison of an eighteen-month sentence. In spite of his earlier problems, over the past several decades,

Moon's Unification Church spread out all over the world, much like the Children of God. This is born out by the fact that they have quite a few websites in different languages.

To his followers -- who are commonly referred to as "Moonies" -- Sun Myung Moon was reverently called "Father". As I noted earlier in this series, this directly contradicts Jesus' own words regarding calling any man our father on Earth. I find the practice particularly blasphemous in Moon's case, being as his followers actually believed that he was Jesus Christ in the flesh. Similar to the Children of God, Moon's Church also places a lot of emphasis on sex and marriage. In fact, Moon and his wife -- who are referred to by their followers as "True Parents" -- had a total of sixteen children. Quite frankly, I do not see what possible truth can be found in a man who claimed to be a manifestation of Jesus Christ.

One thing that can be said for Sun Myung Moon is that he was very rich, very powerful, and very influential for being a controversial cult leader. Moon founded the Washington Times newspaper, as well as United Press International and a number of other organizations. Many eyebrows were raised -- and some people embarrassed -- when in June of 2004, the Washington Post reported on a congressional reception that was held in March of that same year, during which Moon was honored due to his work towards achieving global peace. It was what Moon had to say during the ceremony, and how he was treated, which was an embarrassment to some, and raised the ire of others. Here are some excerpts from the 2004 Washington Post article:

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"At the March 23 ceremony in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.) wore white gloves and carried a pillow holding an ornate crown that was placed on Moon's head. The Korean-born businessman and religious leader then delivered a long speech saying he was 'sent to Earth . . . to save the world's six billion people . . . Emperors, kings and presidents . . . have declared to all Heaven and Earth that Reverend Sun Myung Moon is none other than humanity's Savior, Messiah, Returning Lord and True Parent.'"

"Moon has claimed to have spoken in 'the spirit world' with all deceased U.S. presidents, Jesus, Moses, Mohammed and others. At the March 23 event, he said: 'The founders of five great religions and many other leaders in the spirit world, including even Communist leaders such as Marx and Lenin . . . and dictators such as Hitler and Stalin, have found strength in my teachings, mended their ways and been reborn as new persons.'"

----- End Quote -----

Moon died in 2012 at the age of ninety-two and is survived by his wife and fourteen children. I don't know what the current status of the Unification Church is, but I imagine that it is still going very strong.

With all of the examples I have now presented in this series, it should be easy for you to see how the idea of an Endtime Elijah fits right into the mentality which has prevailed for

many decades within the United States of America. Whether we are talking about a recognized church, organization or cult, it seems that so many of them are founded around a prophet, prophetess or other powerful spiritual leader who believers must revere and view as the very voice of God. Furthermore, if the truth be told, I have barely scratched the surface in this series. There are so many of them now, that I'm not even aware of them all, and I most certainly cannot discuss them all. Tragically, as we have seen with even the ones which we have discussed here, so many of these charismatic leaders are terribly misguided, are deceiving their flocks, and in some cases are downright wolves in sheep clothing who are abusing their followers in some very serious ways.

But let's focus our attention again on this widespread belief in a so-called Endtime Elijah. As I explained at the beginning of this series, some of the primary verses which are used to support this wayward doctrine can be found in the prophetic Book of Malachi. Let me share them with you again:

"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 the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
Malachi 4:5-6, KJV

The people who embrace the Endtime Elijah doctrine use the previous verses to basically make two points. The first one is to interpret the verses as referring to the Endtime. The second one is to erroneously claim that these verses aren't referring to a second Elijah -- or Elias -- who lived during the time of Jesus Christ; rather, they are referring to a third Elijah in our modern times. If we read these verses exactly as they are written, it is easy to see that there is absolutely no mention of our current time in them; that is, if one understands them properly. Neither do the two verses mention two additional Elijahs to come. They only mention one. As such, to make such claims, in my view, is clearly to read something into the Scriptures which is simply not there.

As I have mentioned before, unless one is properly prepared, trying to understand the correct time frames of some of the Old Testament prophecies can be an extremely difficult and frustrating experience. I have discovered that in order to arrange events in their proper chronological order, one must possess at least a rudimentary understanding of the ancient history of the Jews. If we fail to do this, we may very well end up with a timeline which is totally inaccurate. Let me again remind you that the Bible is like one great CrossWord puzzle. The Lord has seen fit to provide us with all of the necessary clues so that we can correctly arrange His great puzzle; but it is in knowing how to properly interpret each clue, that we find our greatest challenge.

As we engage in our task to properly interpret the clues of God's CrossWord puzzle, we should first look for similar or related verses in the very same chapter which might help us to understand the riddle. If we are unable to find our answer there, then we should expand our search for similar verses to include the entire Book. If doing that still doesn't serve to confirm what we think a particular verse might mean, then we

should expand our search even further to include the entire Bible. There are many excellent concordances and other Bible research materials which can assist you in your studies. If you happen to own a computer, your work becomes even easier because there are many well-written Bible programs available for different operating systems, such as Windows, Macintosh and Linux. In addition, you also have the Internet at your disposal.

Regarding the time frame of Malachi's prophecy, a number of years ago, I was likewise under the erroneous impression that the Prophet wrote about events concerning our current time, which many Christians refer to as the Endtime. However, just by performing either a manual search or a computer search in the Book of Malachi, you will make an interesting discovery. As it turns out, words and phrases such as "latter years", "latter days", "end of days", "last years", "last days", "end of time", "endtime" and "end time" are nowhere to be found in the entire Book. In light of this fact, we must wonder how it is that some people have arrived at the erroneous conclusion that Malachi was writing about events involving our current time. The answer to this mystery is found in a phrase which is contained in the first verse of the aforementioned two. That phrase is "the great and dreadful day of the LORD."

As I said, years ago, just like so many other Bible students, I erroneously interpreted that phrase as meaning our current time. However, after performing a much more in-depth study of the Scriptures, I am now convinced that this is not what this phrase is referring to whatsoever. It is actually referring to Jesus Christ's arrival on the Earth during the First Century; not as a King who was coming to take charge of His Kingdom, but rather as a Lamb without blemish who was prepared for the slaughter, and who would shed His innocent Blood for the sins of the world. The Prophet Isaiah tells us all about it in the following prophetic verses:

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."
Isaiah 53:7-12, KJV

As you will see shortly, there is ample Scriptural evidence which proves that Malachi was writing about Christ's arrival on the Earth during the First Century. Please recall what I

wrote earlier regarding how important it is to compare one Scripture with another, so that we can arrive at the correct understanding of God's Word. This is a very vital point. It is absolutely essential if we wish to view everything in its proper perspective. If we don't follow this practice, we are going to end up with a faulty interpretation, just like the people who believe in the American Endtime Elijah. If we go back only one chapter in the Book of Malachi -- that is, to chapter three -- we discover that in chapter four, Malachi is simply repeating something which he has already stated in the third chapter. He is simply using different words. Let me place the two verses one after the other, so that you can easily see what I am talking about:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

Malachi 3:1, KJV

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:"

Malachi 4:5, KJV

I am convinced that this messenger who was to prepare the way -- or Elijah, as Malachi calls him in the second verse above -- was none other than John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way before Jesus. These two verses are speaking about the very same event, the very same messenger, and the very same Lord. Who is it who "shall suddenly come to his temple"? The answer is found right before that in the phrase "the Lord, whom ye seek". As you may already understand, for hundreds of years prior to Jesus' birth, the people who knew the words of the Prophets had been anxiously awaiting their Messiah's arrival. It is in fact for this very same reason that in the Gospel of Luke we find the following incidents concerning Simeon and the Prophetess Anna:

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the

temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Luke 2:25-38, KJV

What we see then is that what Malachi is actually prophesying is the arrival of John the Baptist, who will prepare the way before Jesus, who "shall suddenly come to his temple". As the New Testament informs us, that is precisely what Jesus did on more than one occasion during His final week of life. Jesus suddenly came to the Temple at Jerusalem, where He preached the Word of God, performed miracles, and likewise rebuked the moneychangers and other merchants. This is quite evident by the following verses:

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,"

Matthew 21:12, KJV

"In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me."

Matthew 26:55, KJV

"And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve."

Mark 11:11, KJV

"And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?"

Mark 12:35, KJV

"I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled."

Mark 14:49, KJV

"And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions."

Luke 2:45-46, KJV

"And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him. And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?"

Luke 19:47-20:2, KJV

"And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the

mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him."
Luke 21:37-38, KJV

"Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."
Luke 22:52-53, KJV

"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught . . . Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me."
John 7:14, 28-29, KJV

"These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come."
John 8:20, KJV

"The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."
John 18:19-21, KJV

My impression is that until Jesus entered Jerusalem during that last week of His life, He remained outside of the city, because He already knew what awaited Him there, based on the the Old Testament prophecies. That is why "suddenly" -- which is derived from the Hebrew word "pith'owm" -- is a good choice of words. The Scribes and the Pharisees had heard about Jesus and the sermons which He preached, and the miracles which He performed, but now He was suddenly in their very midst. Not only was Jesus in their very midst, but He was exposing their hypocrisy, challenging their authority, and proving to them exactly who He was. That is why Jesus had to wait until that final week to go to Jerusalem, and more specifically, to enter the Temple. As He had warned the Apostles, He already realized how quickly the situation would deteriorate once He began to challenge the corrupt religious leaders of Jerusalem.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word "pith'owm" also means "surprisingly". If we stop to think about it, the Scribes and the Pharisees must have no doubt been extremely surprised by Jesus' sudden appearance in Jerusalem during the final week of His earthly life. They must have been even more surprised by the way that the Lord was received by the common people -- riding on a mule, and draping clothes and tree branches before Him -- and by how He boldly entered the very nerve center of their corrupt system -- the Temple -- and began to rebuke and challenge their authority. No one had done this in recent times, and they were not prepared for it. So again, Jesus came suddenly, and His enemies were quite surprised. They were also very afraid -- particularly

of what the Romans might do -- which is why they decided to put a quick end to the matter by pressuring Pontius Pilate into murdering the Savior of humanity.

Please notice how in Malachi 3:1, the Prophet speaks about "the messenger of the covenant". As I point out in articles such as "The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words" and "Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?", a study of the Epistles reveals that time and time again, the Apostle Paul discusses how Jesus came to establish a New Covenant between God and man. Not the Old Covenant which centered around keeping the rigid Mosaic Law, but a New Covenant which is based on Grace and Mercy, and which Jesus paid for with His own Blood. This becomes evident by verses such as the following. You will find many more related verses in the aforementioned articles. I also discuss this topic regarding the Divine Agreement in the article entitled "Backsliding, Divine Chastisement and the Divine Agreement":

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

Hebrews 8:6-13, KJV

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Hebrews 12:24, KJV

So John the Baptist is "the messenger of the covenant". He was sent to prepare the hearts of the people, and to get them to adopt an attitude of repentance, so that they would be willing to receive the New Covenant, which was about to be put into effect by Jesus. If we turn to the writings of the Prophet Isaiah, we discover yet another prophecy which predicts the coming of John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. While Isaiah does not specifically refer to John as Elijah like the Prophet Malachi does, from verses that we find in the New Testament, we do know that this is precisely who Isaiah was referring to. Please consider the following verses:

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye

the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."
Isaiah 40:3-5, KJV

"For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
Matthew 3:3, KJV

"But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."
Matthew 11:9-14, KJV

Notice how Jesus quotes Malachi almost word for word. Then, to make sure that the people really understand Him, at the very end the Lord says to them "if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Jesus could not have made it any clearer than that. Just as the Lord quoted from the Book of Isaiah in Luke chapter four when He preached in the synagogue in Nazareth and confirmed His own ministry, here we see Him quoting from the Book of Malachi to confirm John the Baptist's ministry as well.

At this point, allow me to offer a word of explanation for those of you who may not be familiar with Hebrew and Greek. Being as the ancient parchments from which our English New Testament is derived were originally written in Greek, we find some of the Old Testament English names transliterated with an "s" ending, usually preceded by one or more vowels. Thus, Isaiah becomes Esaias; Elijah becomes Elias, Jeremiah becomes Jeremias, Zechariah becomes Zacharias, and Eleazar becomes Lazarus. Thus, Elijah = Elias = John the Baptist.

In the very next Gospel, we discover that Mark was even more specific than Matthew. Whereas Matthew only quoted from the Prophet Isaiah, Mark appears to be quoting from both Isaiah and Malachi. Notice that Mark says "prophets" and not just "prophet". He also uses the word "messenger" which is found in Malachi's prophecy, but not in Isaiah's prophecy. Thus, it appears that Mark is combining both of these Old Testament sources:

"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
Mark 1:2-3, KJV

Eight chapters later in Mark chapter nine, the Lord again

confirms that John the Baptist is indeed the Elias -- or Elijah -- who was spoken of by the Prophet Malachi, as we see here:

"And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."

Mark 9:11-13, KJV

If we turn to the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we find that the Angel Gabriel is speaking in the Temple with Zacharias, who is the father of John the Baptist. As Gabriel describes the future ministry of John to Zacharias, notice what he says to him:

"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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 1:17, KJV

As you can see, just like Jesus and the Gospel writers, the Angel Gabriel is quoting directly from the writings of the Prophet Malachi. Let me share those verses with you again so that you can compare them with the previous verse and see the obvious similarity between them:

"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 the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Malachi 4:5-6, KJV

Please go to part ten for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART TEN

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Purpose Of John's Ministry, Call To Repentance, Herod's Sin And John's Death, More Confirmations Regarding The Baptist, Status Quo Of Pax Romana, Possible Reasons Regarding Why John Denied Being The Prophesied Elijah: Fear And Humility, We Are Nothing Without Jesus And God's Spirit, Humility Of Moses, God Uses The Weak And Foolish Things Of The World,

"The Ten Commandments" And "Moses", Molded In The Hands Of The Potter, Anger And Impatience Deny Moses God's Blessing False Claim That Endtime Elijah Will Instruct People To Keep Mosaic Law, We Are Saved By The Blood Of Christ Alone, None Of The Verses In The Gospels Mention A Third Or Final Elijah, Endtime Moses And Endtime Elijah In America Doctrine, Moses Prophesied Regarding Jesus Being The Prophet Who Would Come During The First Century, Moses Liberated Physically, Jesus Is Spiritual Liberator, Intentional Deception By Branham And Other Elijah Supporters, Compare Scripture With Scripture, Teaching The Word Of God Is A Very Serious Responsibility

Clearly, Malachi and the Angel Gabriel are both saying that John the Baptist will turn the hearts of the fathers towards their children, and he will likewise turn the hearts of the children towards their fathers. Thus, as I explained earlier, the overall message is that John the Baptist's ministry was to spiritually prepare the people to receive Jesus by making a call for repentance, and by pointing out to them their need for a Savior. This becomes quite evident in verses such as the following:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
Matthew 3:1-2, KJV

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire . . . I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."
Luke 3:7-9, 16b-17, KJV

It was because of John's boldness in exposing King Herod's sin of adultery -- Herod married his brother Philip's wife while Philip was still alive -- that John eventually found himself in a prison cell. Later, at her mother's vengeful insistence, the daughter of Herodias petitioned King Herod -- who was her step-father -- for the head of the Baptist. Caught in an embarrassing moment because of a foolish boast he had made, Herod conceded to the wicked child's request. You will find a detailed account of this incident in Mark chapter six, verses seventeen through twenty-eight.

Returning to the birth of John the Baptist in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, when Zacharias prophesied over his son, he also referred back to the Old Testament prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah, as we see here:

"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;"
Luke 1:76, KJV

Two chapters later, Luke himself likewise testified that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah when the Prophet wrote about "the voice of one crying in the wilderness", as we see by the following verses :

"As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."
Luke 3:4-6, KJV

In the seventh chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus again made it very clear that John the Baptist was indeed the one who had been prophesied in the Book of Malachi when He said the following:

". . . What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."
Luke 7:24b-27, KJV

Finally, in the Gospel of John we find John the Baptist's own testimony when certain priests and Levites arrived from Jerusalem in order to question him concerning his identity and ministry:

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."
John 1:19-28, KJV

This account reveals a number of important points. First of all, as in the previous Gospels, we see that the Sanhedrin -- the Jewish religious council of seventy elders -- was in fact fully aware of the ancient prophecies. King Herod was

obviously also familiar with them as well. This is why Herod feared that Jesus might actually be John the Baptist who had returned from the dead, as we see by the following verse:

"But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."

Mark 6:16, KJV

The point is that both the political as well as the religious leadership of Israel realized that the Prophet Elijah would return some day, even if they did not quite understand how it would happen. Furthermore, they also understood that when he did arrive, just as he had done hundreds of years before, he would expose their false religious and political systems; and they certainly were not about to allow that to happen. As I explain in other articles, both King Herod and the Sanhedrin had a cozy relationship with the Roman government. Herod had in fact been appointed to his position by the Romans, and he did their bidding. Unless I am mistaken, in turn, the high priest was appointed by King Herod.

At any rate, all of these various entities wanted to hang on to their wealth and power for as long as they possibly could. The last thing they wanted was for some kind of troublemaker to come along who would upset the delicate balance which they maintained with Rome. The status quo of "pax romana" was just fine by them. However, that is what John the Baptist started to do, and that is what Jesus surely did when people began to coalesce around Him in large numbers, and utterances of "king" and "Messiah" began to be heard. It was for this reason that Jesus was crucified. As Caiaphas the high priest stated:

". . . Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

John 11:49b-50, KJV

It is also interesting to note that at first, John denied being the Prophet Elijah, and then he turned around and quoted from the Prophet Isaiah. Some people have wondered why John would do this. While I cannot provide a definitive answer to this question, I can offer a few possibilities. It may simply be that John was afraid. If that is the case, he was not that much different from the original Elijah. As you may recall, when the Spirit was upon him, Elijah was as bold as a lion. However, when Elijah was not operating under the anointing of the Spirit, he was quite the coward, just like the rest of us. While Elijah slew the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal and openly mocked them and their false god, afterwards he fled from a mere woman; that is, the evil Queen Jezebel, who was the wife of wicked King Ahab. Consider the following verses:

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there."

1 Kings 19:1-3, KJV

So perhaps John may have initially feared for his life; but then, when the Lord anointed him with the Spirit, John was inspired to quote from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. Maybe the Lord convicted John's conscience to speak the truth, no matter what his flesh may have been experiencing. Another possibility is that John was just a really humble man. Even though he may have known in his heart that he was actually the fulfillment of Isaiah and Malachi's prophecies, it was simply not his nature to boast. Furthermore, perhaps he also realized that no one would believe him anyway, so why even tell them?

As we have seen by way of this series, while there have been a number of foolish individuals who have made similar claims today, I can tell you that if I had been in John's shoes, I would have denied being a Prophet of the Lord as well. As it is, there are occasionally people who post certain comments on my Facebook timeline regarding my person which make me a bit nervous and uncomfortable. My friends, let's all keep our eyes on Jesus, because He is the only good thing about any of us. Without Him, we are all lost and nothing. As Jesus said in the Gospel of John:

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."
John 15:5, KJV

As many of you will know, in Cecil De Mille's classic movie "The Ten Commandments", well-known Hollywood actor Charlton Heston portrays Moses as a bold, flamboyant Prophet of God. However, as I pointed out in part two, this is the furthest thing from the truth. After the Lord had dealt with Moses' pride and vanity -- which were no doubt by-products of being raised amongst Egyptian royalty -- Moses became a very shy, soft-spoken man who tried to evade the special ministry for which the Lord had chosen him. In the Book of Numbers we are told the following:

"(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)"
Numbers 12:3, KJV

It was this very quality of being meek and humble which made Moses prime material for the Lord's Hall of Fame; for as the Apostle Paul wrote in his first Epistle to the Corinthians:

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."
1 Corinthians 1:26-29, KJV

I discuss this topic more at length in such articles as "The Wisdom of God vs the Philosophy of Men", "The Only Credentials You Need", and "So You Really Think You Are So Humble?". As we

learn in the Book of Exodus, Moses had become so timid, that God had to raise up his brother Aaron to be his mouthpiece for him. While I have always enjoyed the pageantry of De Mille's 1956 "The Ten Commandments", I believe that the movie "Moses" -- which stars the excellent British actor Ben Kingsley -- is a much more realistic portrayal of this ancient Prophet of the Lord.

We must all remember that God cannot use people who are full of their own pride and vanity, and who think that they know it all. He has to utterly break and remold them, just like the clay vessel in the potter's hands. This is why the Lord had to break Moses' pride for forty years, and teach him the patience of a Bedouin shepherd before He could take him back to Egypt, where he became the deliverer of the Hebrews.

Despite the way in which God mightily used Moses, the Bible informs us that Moses' impatience was his downfall. Not only did he break the tablets of stone in a moment of rage -- and have to get them replaced -- but he later struck the rock at Meribah twice out of anger against the Israelites, instead of waiting patiently for the Lord to produce the water after he had struck the rock the first time. In other words, he failed to honor the Lord, as a result of his anger, impatience and lack of faith. Furthermore, his actions were a poor testimony to the children of Israel. It was for this reason that neither he or his brother Aaron were permitted to enter the Promised Land, as we can easily determine by the following verses:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them."
Numbers 20:12-13, KJV

"Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah."
Numbers 20:24, KJV

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin."
Numbers 27:12-14, KJV

Returning to the prophecies of Malachi, because they fail to properly understand what the Prophet wrote, some people who promote the American Endtime Elijah doctrine believe that he is going to instruct people to keep the Mosaic Law. In their view, this is what the phrase "turn the heart of the children to the fathers" means. They use this as their argument to refute the belief -- which I personally embrace -- that we are no longer bound by the Mosaic Law insofar as our Salvation is concerned. In other words, we depend solely

on the Blood of Christ to save us. I discuss this issue in considerable detail in a number of other articles such as "The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love", as well as in the others which I mentioned earlier in this series.

At any rate, these people raise the question that if we are no longer bound by the Mosaic Law, then why will this Endtime Elijah encourage everyone to keep it? Obviously, their whole argument falls apart when we realize that the Prophet Malachi was not referring to an Endtime Elijah whatsoever, but rather to John the Baptist, as I have already clearly demonstrated through many Scriptural proofs. To reiterate, as far as I am concerned, there is no such thing as an Endtime Elijah. You may have noticed that in all of the verses which we examined in the Gospels where the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah are discussed, no one -- not Jesus, or John, or any of the Gospel writers themselves -- made any mention whatsoever of another Elijah coming after John the Baptist. Now, if there was such a person, doesn't it seem likely that at least some of them would have mentioned him?

To further add to this confusion concerning a modern-day Elijah in America, sometime ago I discovered that there is also a belief amongst some people who claim that the Lord is going to raise up an Endtime Moses as well. The people who embrace this belief seem to imply that this alleged Endtime Moses will also appear in America. Whether or not David Berg of the Children of God ever tried to latch on to this false doctrine, I do not know. I don't recall having ever read anything to that effect.

Years ago, one man informed me that this Endtime Moses will be similar to the Moses of old, while the Endtime Elijah will serve as his spokesman, just as Aaron was Moses' spokesman in the Old Testament. From what I have gathered, the idea seems to be that this Endtime Moses and Endtime Elijah will work as a team in America, very much like the Two Sackcloth Witnesses who are described in Revelation chapter eleven. While I'm not absolutely certain of this, I suspect that this belief in an Endtime Moses may be based on the following verses which are found in the Book of Deuteronomy:

"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

Deuteronomy 18:15-19, KJV

As I explain in such articles as "Holy Qur'an and Islam: A Doctrine of Devils?" and "The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words", I am absolutely certain that Moses was not implying that a Prophet similar to himself would appear during our current time. He was in fact prophesying about the arrival of Jesus Christ on the Earth during the First Century. You don't have to take my word for it, because the Lord tells

us the very same thing in the Gospels. For example, in one of His rebuttals to His unbelieving Jewish accusers in the Gospel of John, Jesus very clearly stated the following:

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"
John 5:46-47, KJV

In fact, after witnessing the miracles that Jesus performed, the disciples of John the Baptist were convinced that Jesus was indeed the Prophet of whom Moses had prophesied, as we see by the following verse. Please notice in particular how John's disciples refer to Jesus as "that prophet". In other words, they were expecting this Prophet, because they were fully aware of the writings of Moses:

"Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."
John 6:14, KJV

Thus we see that just as Moses of old was the Prophet who God used to liberate the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Jesus Christ is likewise the Prophet of the First Century who came to set free the spiritual captives; that is to say, everyone who is in bondage to sin and death. This He did through His own loving Sacrifice on a Roman Cross.

Considering the preponderance of evidence which I have shared with you in this series, I hope that by now you have come to realize that the concept of an Endtime Elijah in America is based upon faulty assumptions, and a misguided understanding of the Scriptures. As you will recall, in part four of this series, I mentioned William Branham's 1965 book entitled "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages", in which he erroneously sets forth his belief in the so-called "Seven Churches Ages", each of which would supposedly have an Angel -- or according to Branham, a human Prophet -- assigned to it. Allow me to share an excerpt from that book with you:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Jesus called John the Baptist, Elijah. Matthew 17:12, "But I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him what they listed." The reason that he called John Elijah, was because the same Spirit that was upon Elijah had come back upon John, even as that Spirit had come back upon Elisha after the reign of King Ahab. Now once again that Spirit will come back upon another man just before Jesus comes. He will be a prophet."

----- End of Quote -----

As I mentioned earlier, while Branham does not outright say it, anyone who knew him, and his teachings, or who had read his books, understood that with the phrase "another man", he was in fact implying himself. Even though Branham recognized that John was the prophesied Elijah who was to come, he then adds "Now once again that Spirit will come back upon another man". This is utter nonsense. Jesus didn't say that; William Branham did; and others have said it since then. I can only

view this as an act of intentional deception. To give you an example of how far some of these people will go in order to try to convince people of their wayward belief regarding an American Prophet named Elijah, consider the fact that some time ago I visited a website where the standard verses from Malachi chapter four were displayed. These were followed by Jesus' words, as found in Matthew chapter seventeen:

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things."

Matthew 17:10-11, KJV

When the above verses appeared on my screen, I was shocked. My jaw dropped. Why so? I wasn't shocked by what was there, I was shocked because of what wasn't there. I am referring to the very next verse which comes after the eleventh verse of Matthew chapter seventeen, as we see here:

"But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

Matthew 17:12, KJV

As far as I am concerned, the person who maintains that site is intentionally deceiving people by not including the very next verse where Jesus clarifies exactly what He means. If you don't realize how serious of an issue this is, imagine if you are a young Christian who has just recently come to know the Lord. If you happen to visit that website, you are going to be given the false impression that Jesus is saying that another Elijah is yet to come, when that is not what He means whatsoever. God help such deceivers! Is promoting their false doctrine more important than telling the full truth?

As we have already seen, while William Branham acknowledged all of Jesus' words in Matthew chapter seventeen, he totally misinterpreted them. Furthermore, he intentionally added his own words to them, so that they would seem to validate his claim of being the Endtime Elijah. However, there is more. Another way that Branham and other supporters of this false doctrine endeavor to validate their claims is by saying that the opening verses from Malachi chapter three are referring to John the Baptist, while the verses from chapter four are referring to the Endtime Elijah. In other words, as I said earlier, contrary to the evidence which we actually find in the Gospels, they claim that these verses are prophesying the arrival of two different Prophet Elijahs; that is, one during the First Century -- meaning John the Baptist -- and one during our current time as well, meaning William Branham or perhaps someone else.

How these deceivers go about trying to prove their erroneous assumption becomes clear, once we consider a few more things which Branham states in his book "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages". The opening verses to Malachi chapter four describe the coming of the Lord, and state as follows:

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith

the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts."
Malachi 4:1-3, KJV

As I have already stated, these verses are not referring to our current time. The Book of Malachi is not about the Lord returning sometime during the Twenty-First Century. They are prophesying His arrival on the Earth two thousand years ago. Exactly how do people such as William Branham use the above verses to support their Endtime Elijah theory? Believe it or not, they claim that these events simply have not happened yet; thus "proving" in their own minds that verse five has not yet been fulfilled either. Let me share that verse with you again:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:"
Malachi 4:5, KJV

Let me share with you now William Branham's interpretation of the previous verses, as found in his aforementioned book "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages". This is how he and others arrive at their erroneous conclusions, and endeavor to convince other people of the same thing. Quite frankly, I find his explanation very confusing. Please note that where Branham says "this Elijah" in the very first sentence, he is referring to the so-called Endtime Elijah:

----- Begin Quote -----

"See, immediately after the coming of this Elijah, the earth will be cleansed by fire and the wicked burned to ashes. Of course, this did not happen at the time of John (the Elijah for his day). The Spirit of God that prophesied the coming of the messenger in Malachi 3:1 (John) was but reiterating His previous prophetic statement of Isaiah 40:3 made at least three centuries previously. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Now John, by the Holy Ghost, voiced both Isaiah and Malachi in Matthew 3:3, "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." So we can well see from these Scriptures that the prophet in Malachi 3, who was John, was not the prophet of Malachi 4, though indeed, both John and this last-day prophet have upon them the same Spirit Which was upon Elijah."

----- End of Quote -----

The previous explanation is utter nonsense and contradicts what we actually find in the New Testament. Either Branham is truly ignorant of the Scriptural facts -- which I doubt -- or else he is purposely picking and choosing only those verses which seem to support his doctrine. Branham is not honestly comparing Scripture with Scripture so that he can

arrive at a balanced conclusion. As I have explained to my readers before, when I come across something in the Bible which I do not fully understand, which troubles me, or which challenges my current beliefs, I stop and ask the Lord to help me to understand. If I am wrong about something, I want to know about it. I take teaching others very seriously; and I want to do my best to teach them the truth to the best of my knowledge and ability. After all, God's Word informs us that someday we are all going to be held accountable for every single word we have ever spoken, as we see here:

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Matthew 12:36, KJV

". . . for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ . . . So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Romans 14:10b, 12, KJV

Please go to part eleven for the continuation of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART ELEVEN

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The Fiery Ministry Of Jesus Christ, Branham's Intentional Deception By Omission, The Fiery Destruction Of The Wicked, Famous Forties In The Bible, Jesus Appears For Forty Days, Fiery Destruction Of Jerusalem And Temple By General Titus, Branham Perverts Jesus' Warning Concerning False Prophets Test Of A True Prophet, Partial List Of Failed Predictions Regarding Christ's Return, A Troublesome And Contradictory Picture, How Many Endtime Prophets Are There?, Irony Of The False Prophets Warning Their Followers To Beware Of False Prophets, Deceived But Not Realizing It, Preaching Darkness For Light, Rightly Dividing God's Word, Safety In Multiple Counsellors, We Must Each Be Fully Persuaded In Our Own Mind

In the previous excerpt from his book, Branham states that following the ministry of John the Baptist, the Earth was not cleansed and purged by fire as per the words of Malachi. Based on this erroneous assumption, Branham claims that the purported third Elijah has not come yet. If he were to have dug a little deeper into the Scriptures, Mr. Branham would have discovered that this is precisely what happened during Jesus' short Ministry on Earth, and in an even more literal

sense a number of years later, as I will explain momentarily. In fact, John the Baptist said so himself, as we read here:

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matthew 3:10-12, KJV

The first thing I want you to notice here is that these verses are taken from the third chapter of Matthew. If you go back and re-read Mr. Branham's interpretation of the verses from Malachi chapter four, you will see that he also quotes from Matthew chapter three. However, please notice that just like the person I mentioned earlier who maintains that website, Branham stops short of telling the full truth. He doesn't even quote the above verses that come next which totally expose his faulty interpretation. I view this as intentional deception by omission. It is twisting the Word to make it say what we want it to say.

Notice the similarities between John's description of Jesus' earthly Ministry, and the words of the Prophet Malachi. By trying to convince his followers that Malachi was referring to the physical burning up of the wicked at the end of the world, Branham adds even more false support to his erroneous claims, while at the same time ignoring the true spiritual significance of the Prophet's words.

The truth of the matter is that Jesus' Ministry did in fact expose and burn up the false Jewish religious system. John the Baptist, the Prophet Malachi, and Jesus used the very same symbolism of fire to describe the Lord's Ministry on Earth. The fire they were all referring to was the Spirit of the Living God which was upon and in Jesus Christ. While it is likewise true that the end of this present world will be characterized by physical fire, and that the incorrigibles will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire, personally, I am not convinced that this is what Malachi was referring to. Consider now some verses from the New Testament:

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Matthew 7:18-19, KJV

"The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear . . . So shall it be at the

end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 13:39-43, 49-50, KJV

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

Matthew 25:41, KJV

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?"

Luke 12:49, KJV

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

John 15:6, KJV

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."

Acts 2:3, KJV

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

John 4:24, KJV

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God . . . For our God is a consuming fire."

Hebrews 10:31, 12:29, KJV

From examining the previous verses, it is very easy to see that Jesus' Ministry was indeed a ministry of fire; because with His fiery presence, and the words which He spoke, Jesus destroyed the lies and the deceptions of His enemies; that is, the unbelieving Jews. Not only that, but as we read in the Book of Acts, Jesus also anointed the Apostles with the very same Baptism of Fire -- that is, with the Holy Ghost -- so that they could continue His work on Earth. However, even this does not fully explain some of the previous verses. How so?

As I mentioned a moment ago, Malachi's prophecy regarding the day which would come that "shall burn as an oven", in which the wicked "shall be stubble" and "shall be ashes under the soles of your feet", was likewise fulfilled in a very literal manner as well. This did not happen in John's day. Neither did it even happen in Jesus' day. It in fact occurred approximately forty years after Jesus was cruelly crucified on a Roman Cross, after which He returned to the Heavenly Realm. This seems very significant to me. Let me tell you why. If you have read my article "Famous Forties in the Bible", then you will know that the Lord seems to like the number forty quite a lot. Let me mention some examples which prove this point, which I also discuss in that article:

- It rained for forty days and forty nights, thus resulting in the great Flood in the days of the Patriarch Noah.
- Moses spent forty days on the summit of Mount Horeb -- or Sinai, if you prefer -- while he received the Commandments

from the Lord.

- Joshua, Caleb and their companions spied out the land of Canaan for a period of forty days. Due to their lack of faith in claiming the land, the Israelites were then made to wander in the wilderness for a period of forty years, one year for each day that they spent in Canaan.
- Goliath challenged the Israelites for a period of forty days.
- The Prophet Elijah ate Angel's Food and then fasted for forty days and forty nights as he traveled to Mount Horeb.
- The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied against Israel for a period of forty years before the military forces of Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar finally destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.
- The Prophet Ezekiel laid on his right side for a period of forty days to bear the sins of Judah.
- The Prophet Jonah prophesied against Nineveh for a period of forty days.
- Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for a period of forty days.

Now, here is how this all relates to Malachi's prophecy. You see, following His Resurrection from the Dead, Jesus likewise ministered to His brethren -- that is, the Apostles -- for a period of forty days. He did not immediately return to Heaven as some people may be inclined to believe. This is evident by the following verses:

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:"
Acts 1:1-3, KJV

Just as each day that the spies spent in Canaan was counted for a year during their forty years of wandering, it appears that each day that Jesus spent on the Earth with the Apostles after His Resurrection also counted for a year, for a total of forty years. So what happened at the end of those forty years? As many of you will know, according to the historical record, in 70 AD during the middle of the first Jewish-Roman War, and under the command of General Titus, who was the son of Emperor Vespasian, the Roman legions destroyed both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The Temple was burned down to the ground, and the great blocks which formed it were cast down. Jerusalem was laid to ruin and ashes. It has been said that up to one million Jews perished during the seven years that the war endured, as a result of the war itself, and due to crucifixion, disease and famine. Countless bodies must have been burned in the Valley of Hinnom during that time, in order to limit the spread of disease.

All of these things happened exactly as Jesus had warned they

would occur in the Gospels, which I likewise discuss in other articles. Now, go back and re-read what the Prophet Malachi had to say regarding the day burning as an oven, the wicked being stubble, and being ashes under the soles of their feet. Don't forget that God's children were not present, because Jesus had warned them to flee to the mountains; remember? So my point is this: Contrary to William Branham's claim that this part of Malachi's prophecy has not been fulfilled yet, it was indeed fulfilled, both in a spiritual sense, as well as in a very literal sense. As such, he -- and others like him -- have absolutely no grounds on which to support their misguided Endtime Elijah doctrine. It is bogus, my friends.

Let me share another excerpt from William M. Branham's book, "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages", which demonstrates how he purposely distorts and adds to the Scriptures in order to try to validate his claim regarding the so-called Endtime Elijah. In this case, Branham is discussing Jesus' admonition concerning false prophets. Notice how he twists the verses so that he can apply them to his Endtime Elijah doctrine:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Now this last-day prophet-messenger will have such power before the Lord that there will be those who mistake him for the Lord Jesus. (There will be a spirit in the world at the end time that will seduce some and make them believe this. Matthew 24:23-26, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.") But don't you believe it. He is not Jesus Christ. He is not the Son of God. He is one of the brethren, a prophet, a messenger, a servant of God. He needs no greater honor bestowed upon him than that which John received when he was the voice that cried, "I am not He, but He is coming after me."

----- End of Quote -----

Let me remind you again that Branham was not speaking about someone else being the Endtime Elijah. He was referring to himself. His writings and testimonies reveal that he honestly believed that he would be here to greet Jesus Christ at his Coming -- supposedly in 1977 -- as the Endtime Elijah. If we consider that he published his book in 1965, and that he also believed that Jesus would return in 1977, then it becomes all the more evident that Branham was talking about himself. The Endtime Elijah was already on the scene, in Branham's mind.

William Branham was more than aware that some people viewed him as a false prophet. The previous excerpt seems to be a subtle attempt to totally pervert and neutralize the true meaning behind Jesus' warning regarding false prophets. The Lord did not say that these false prophets would be "one of the brethren, a prophet, a messenger, a servant of God" as Branham claims. Jesus said that they would be false Christs and false prophets, period! Anything more than that is Mr. Branham's own fabrication, which he has added to the verses in order to try to strengthen his argument and delusion. Let

me again remind you of Jesus' stern warning regarding false prophets, which we find in the seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

As the previous verses clearly reveal, the ultimate test in determining whether or not a person is truly a man or woman of God -- and in particular, a true Prophet of God -- is by looking at the fruit they have born in their lives. In the case of a person who claims to actually be a Prophet of God, as opposed to just being a regular servant of the Lord, as we have seen, the test is rather simple. Do their prophecies come to pass exactly as they predict them? If not, then as Moses advised us to do, we should simply ignore them.

If we apply the previous rule to the individuals which we have examined in this series, some of them fall flat on their faces right from the start. While some of them were not examined in this series, following is a partial list of people who do not pass the test, because their predictions or prophecies regarding Christ's Return have failed to materialize. Please note that there are other people who have made similar claims. However, because they are not as widely known, or are not Christian, I have not included them in this list. The year on the left indicates when they claimed Jesus would return, unless otherwise noted:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1844 | William Miller: Millerite Movement. |
| 1874 | Charles Taze Russell: First president of what is now the Watchtower Society of the Jehovah's Witnesses. |
| 1891 | Joseph Smith: Mormon Church, according to a prophecy he gave in 1835. |
| 1914 | Jehovah's Witnesses: Believe 1914 marked the beginning of Christ's invisible presence and Armageddon will mark His physical presence. |
| 1975 | Herbert W. Armstrong: Suggested by his 1956 book title "1975 in Prophecy!" |
| 1977 | William Marrion Branham: Christian minister and faith healer. |
| 1993 | David Brand Berg: Children of God cult. |
| 1999 to 2009 | Jerry Falwell: Predicted in 1999 that Second Coming would probably occur within 10 years. |
| 1994-09-06 | Harold Camping: Family Radio |

2011-05-21	Harold Camping: Family Radio
2011-10-21	Harold Camping: Family Radio
2011	Ronald Weinland: Church of God - PKG, Ohio, USA
2012-05-27	Ronald Weinland: Church of God - PKG, Ohio, USA
2013-05-19	Ronald Weinland: Church of God - PKG, Ohio, USA
2012	Jack Van Impe: Televangelist, Rapture will occur.
2019	Jack Van Impe: Televangelist, Christ will return.

As you can see, we are left with a rather troubling, and in some cases, contradictory picture. Now, I will be honest. I have never personally met any of the aforementioned people, or any of the other individuals who I have named in this series. The opinions I have formed concerning them are based on their writings, on articles which have been written about them, and in some cases, through actually communicating with or fellowshiping with some of their followers. Overall, it appears that some of the individuals who are named in this series have directly or indirectly led many people to Jesus Christ. In fact, in certain cases, if their statistics are to be believed, they have been instrumental in leading thousands or millions of souls to the Lord; and yet, some of them are clearly false prophets who have led many people astray with their erroneous predictions.

Of the followers I have communicated with or met personally, most of them have been very sincere, and have demonstrated a genuine dedication to the Lord's work. Concerning Mark John Allen, I am not familiar enough with his ministry to really make a fair determination. In the case of Karen Zerby -- the successor to David Berg -- while I have never met her, many years ago I did hear her voice on a cassette. Zerby sounded very sincere, and was in fact leading the listener in what we Christians refer to as a Salvation prayer. However, then we have all of that devilish sexual crap that she has spewed forth in recent decades. In thinking again about the Children of God, it almost seems as if there are two versions of the cult. One is the sincere Christian group which truly wants to be a witness for Jesus Christ, while the other is like the evil twin which is filled with all of the sexual lust and other weirdness.

The Return of Christ aside, there are still those who claim to be Endtime Prophets of God. In fact, as we have already seen, some of them have claimed to be THE Endtime Prophet of God; thus not only setting themselves above each other, but also above every other Christian on the face of the planet. Either that, or they have claimed that their organization or church is the only one which God recognizes at this current time. Following is another excerpt from William Branham's "An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages" where he makes it very clear that he is convinced that God only raises up one Prophet and Messenger for each age. As you read it, bear in mind that the lives of all of the people we have discussed at length have overlapped each other, some more than others:

----- Begin Quote -----

". . . this age will have one Prophet-Messenger. Revelation 10:7, says, "When he (singular) shall begin to sound." There has never been an age where God gave His people two major

prophets at one time. He gave Enoch (alone); He gave Noah (alone); He gave Moses (he alone had the Word though others prophesied); John the Baptist came alone. Now in this last day there is to be a prophet . . . and the infallible Word says that he (the prophet) will reveal the mysteries to the end-time people . . . I do not deny that people will prophesy in this last age and their ministries can and will be correct. I do not deny that there will be prophets even as in the days of Paul when there was "one Agabus a prophet who prophesied of a famine." I agree that is so. But I deny upon the infallible evidence of the Word that there is more than one major prophet-messenger who will reveal the mysteries as contained in the Word, and who has the ministry to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers . . . It will be a prophet as thoroughly vindicated, or even more thoroughly vindicated than was any prophet in all the ages from Enoch to this day, because this man will of necessity have the capstone prophetic ministry . . ."

----- End of Quote -----

In light of the extreme spirit of exclusivity which has been adopted by some of the aforementioned individuals, how can we possibly reconcile their claims? As I said earlier, they cannot all be telling the truth. If one of them is -- or was -- the true Endtime Prophet of God, then all of the rest of them must be liars. So who is it? Armstrong? Branham? Berg? Allen? White? Zerby? Or is it perhaps someone who I have not even mentioned in this series? The irony of this situation is that another factor which is common to these self-proclaimed prophets is that every one of them has warned their followers to watch out for false prophets, while at the very same time, they convince their faithful flocks that they are not a false prophet themselves. William M. Branham warns his followers in the following fashion:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Now in every case you will notice that a false prophet is one who is outside the Word. Just as we showed you that 'antichrist' means 'anti-Word', so these false prophets come perverting the Word, giving it a meaning that fits their own devilish ends . . . There were four hundred of them and all of them were in agreement; and by them all saying the same thing, they fooled the people. But one prophet --- just one --- was right, and all the rest wrong because God had committed the revelation to only one."

----- End of Quote -----

As a matter of clarification, in the second half of this excerpt, Branham is referring to the story of God's Prophet Micaiah, and the four hundred false prophets who counseled King Ahab. You will find the story in chapter twenty-two of 1 Kings. I share this same story in several other articles where I discuss lying spirits. Branham's comments highlight the danger of such men who mix partial truths in with their wayward doctrines. While it is probably already evident to you, by making the previous comments, Branham convinces his followers that, like Prophet Micaiah of old, he is the one true Prophet of God amongst the many false prophets of our modern day. As I mentioned earlier, some of these men are

so deceived themselves, that they don't even realize that they are deceived. They don't even realize that while they accuse others of distorting the Scriptures, they are doing the very same thing themselves. Let me remind you again of a verse that I shared with you in part two:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
Isaiah 5:20, KJV

That is what some of these false prophets and false teachers do. They are so confused themselves, that they cannot even see that what they promote as light, is in fact spiritual darkness. While they have fooled themselves into believing that they are being led by God, the sad truth of the matter is that they may actually be inspired by the father of lies, and the author of confusion, Satan himself. That vile snake has one modus operandi, and that is to tell a lie that is so big, that very few people will doubt that it is true. Thus, as I have already stated several times now, it is imperative that we take the time to diligently study the Word of God so that we don't become deceived by Satan's false apostles and evil emissaries who pose as angels of light and ministers of righteousness. As the Apostle Paul admonished his spiritual son Timothy to do:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

Through a systematic study of the Scriptures, as well as by closely scrutinizing some of the things which have been said and taught by certain of these modern-age "prophets", this is precisely what we have done in this series. We have rightly divided the word of truth, so that we can hopefully separate the real wheat from the chaff, and the sheep from the wolves. The question is, insofar as the persons named herein, who are the sheep and who are the wolves? Or better said, who are the genuine shepherds of the Lord, and who are false shepherds? There is a reason that Jesus said "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing." If they looked like false prophets, then they would be easily recognized, and we would not be so easily deceived by them. However, they come dressed in "sheep's clothing". In other words, they may look like a Christian, talk like a Christian, and even act like a Christian, but are they really?

In making any kind of important decision, God's Word advises us to seek counsel from multiple witnesses. In fact, since the time of the Old Testament era, this is precisely how the Jewish legal system operated. A person could not be accused based on the opinion of one person. Consider the following verses:

"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."
Proverbs 11:14, KJV

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every

word may be established."
Matthew 18:16, KJV

"This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."
2 Corinthians 13:1, KJV

Considering this advice, allow me to remind you of the many witnesses whom I have quoted throughout this series, which have contributed to our discussion: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the Angel Gabriel, Zacharias, John the Baptist, the Prophets Moses, Isaiah and Malachi, and Jesus Himself. All of these witnesses indicate that the Prophet Malachi wasn't referring to our current time. Rather, he wrote about events which occurred during the First Century. The primary event was the ministry of John the Baptist. None of our witnesses gave any indication that another Prophet would arrive after John the Baptist, who would be anointed with the same Spirit as the Old Testament Prophet Elijah.

In my opinion, the Scriptures have spoken clearly regarding this issue. There is no modern-day, or third, Elijah who is going to appear in America. Neither do I believe that there is going to be an American Prophet Moses either. As far as I can tell, these are both the doctrines of men, which appear to have been concocted by people who were motivated by a kind of self-glorification, or self-aggrandizement, and not really by the Spirit of God. As with all of my writings, I leave it up to you, the reader, to come to your own conclusions, based on the Scriptural evidence which I have provided herein. As I have often said, we must all be persuaded of what we want to believe, as we see by this verse:

". . . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."
Romans 14:5b, KJV

The main consideration is that we are persuaded by the full Word of God, and not just by one or two verses, the correct meaning of which has been totally twisted and distorted by certain individuals, such as those who have been named in this series.

Please go to part twelve for the conclusion of this series.

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ELIJAH : WHERE ARE THE TRUE PROPHETS OF GOD? : PART TWELVE

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Be On Guard Against Deception, Questions For Self-Proclaimed Prophets, Seriousness Of Causing Others To Lose The Faith,

Understanding My Perspective, Wisdom And Discernment Gained Through Age And Experience, Humility In Our Understanding, Obligation To Protect Friends From Deception, I Am Of Christ, Every Wind Of Doctrine, Closing Remarks, Reading Resources

At this point, let me emphasize that the purpose of this series has not been to attack the individuals named herein. Rather, it is to expose the lies and subtle deceptions by which we can all be overcome, if we do not totally submit ourselves to the Lord, and prayerfully and carefully study His Word. None of us are immune to these temptations, myself included. We all have problems with our pride, and it can be our own downfall if we are not careful. While I am more than willing to embrace anyone who possesses a sincere burden for lost souls, given my current understanding of God's Word, I can't possibly accept any of the persons named herein as the Endtime Prophet that they claim to be.

For those of you who may possibly still be alive, allow me to ask you a number of questions. Believe me; I do not ask them sarcastically or in a spirit of haughtiness. Rather, I ask them in a spirit of humility, and truly desire to understand how it is that you can possibly believe the things that you do. Why do you feel a need to place yourself above everyone else? What Bible-based, positive proof can you provide which validates your claim of being the Endtime Prophet of God, or even any kind of Prophet at all? While you insist that God has chosen you for such a lofty position, where are the signs and wonders which confirm your calling and ministry as His Prophet? If you are the greatest prophet or prophetess of all time, or at least of our current time, why don't you possess Spiritual Gifts like the Apostles of the First Century? After all, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
Hebrews 13:8, KJV

As I mentioned earlier, claiming to be a Prophet of God, and claiming to speak in His Name, is very serious business. I for one would never do it. In his Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote the following:

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."
Romans 14:7, KJV

In modern English, this verse basically means that no man is an island. In other words, we all affect each other, whether we realize it or not. With that thought in mind, allow me to ask you another big question. What if your claim of being the Endtime Prophet of God is wrong? Do you honestly realize the serious consequences which can result from making such a false claim? Do you honestly realize what happens to those people who lead the Lord's sheep astray? Allow me to share with you Jesus' own words regarding this issue:

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Matthew 18:6, KJV

As I explain in a few other articles, in the previous verse, the English word "offend" is actually derived from the Greek word "skandalizo". Pronounced skan-dal-id'-zo, it means to put a stumbling block or an impediment in the way of someone so that it causes them to trip and fall away. In particular, Jesus is talking about people who cause others to fall away and lose their faith. Clearly, this is a very serious matter with the Lord which He does not take lightly. Considering the gravity of making such boastful claims of being the Endtime Prophet of God, don't you think it is wise to reconsider your position? If someday God exposes you for the fraud that you no doubt are, just think about how many people are going to be negatively affected, because they have placed their faith in you. Even if you are not a so-called "prophet", just the fact that you are a deceived follower who tries to convince others to believe in your "prophet" as you do, may someday get you in serious trouble with the Lord. Please consider my words.

With these thoughts, it is time to bring this lengthy series to its conclusion. Now that you have read it, I hope that it has provided you with better insight regarding my personal perspective when it comes to modern false prophets and their misguided prophecies. I hope that you can better understand why I get tired of encountering so many false prophets and prophetesses, and self-proclaimed apostles who plague the web from one end to the other, including on social networks such as Facebook. Perhaps you can better understand the impatience that I sometimes display whenever well-meaning but obviously misguided friends post comments on my Facebook timeline in which they claim that "the Rapture is at hand", or that "Jesus is coming very soon!".

You see, while some of you may be new to our Christian faith, and young in your personal walk with the Lord, and may not yet possess a strong foundation in God's Word, and while you may possibly be hearing these predictions regarding Christ's Return for the very first time, as an older man who has been around for a while, and who has studied God's Word for a lot longer than you have, and who has watched over the years as one false prophet after the other has made predictions which have failed to come to pass, I have acquired something which many of you do not yet possess. I have gained experience, Spiritual Discernment and Wisdom. Please don't misunderstand me. I am most certainly not saying that I understand it all, or that I know it all. Quite to the contrary. In my article entitled "Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word", I say the exact opposite.

In other words, I don't know it all. However, I do believe that I know and understand more than the people who come to my timeline and claim that Jesus is coming back very soon and that the Rapture is at hand. I also know how to spot the many prideful false prophets and prophetesses who, quite frankly, are not only deceived themselves, but are busily engaged in deceiving others as well, whether they realize it or not. As I have mentioned before, insofar as my online public friends are concerned, I believe that I have an obligation to protect them from false utterances when they are made on my timeline. Thus, I endeavor to be the calm voice of reason in the midst

of so much prophetic madness, even if some people do become offended when I choose to publicly question their remarks, or delete their comments if I feel that they are misguided and may lead others astray.

So what about you, dear reader? Do you say "I am of Paul", or "I am of Apollos", or "I am of Cephas"? How about "I am of Herbert W. Armstrong", or "I am of William M. Branham", or "I am of Moses David" or "I am of Ellen G. White", or "I am of Pope Francis", or "I am of Lord Maitreya Buddha", or "I am of Reverend Sun Myung Moon"? Do you see my point? No matter what name we insert there -- and there are many more which we can use -- they are all wrong. My hope is that like the Apostle Paul, the only thing that you are willing to say is "I am of Christ". Even better than that, I hope that you will say "I am IN Christ", as we see by the following verse:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:1, KJV

Rather than be tossed about by the crazy, misguided wind of every false doctrine that comes along -- such as those which claim that the Rapture is at hand, or that Jesus is coming very very soon -- I hope that you are firmly grounded and rooted in the truth of God's Word. I hope that you have not become mesmerized by the deceptive words of one of those modern, self-glorifying false prophets. My hope is that you now better understand that such personality cult worship and denominationalism are divisive and of the Devil. Please stay away from them. Keep your eyes on Jesus only, because He alone is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. Amen?

With these thoughts I will bring this series to a close. I trust that you have found it informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this series, or which are related to this series, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server. The articles in this first list are most directly related to this current series, being as they also discuss misguided false prophets, false prophecies and dangerous cults:

Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?
Heaven's Gate, Suicide and Other Death Cults
Modern False Prophets and Worldly Ecumenism
Sorry . . . Jesus is Not Coming at Any Moment!
The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping
The Office of a Prophet
To Tell the Truth: Moshiach, Mahdi or the Messiah?
Women Shepherds: The Family Sex Cult Exposed Again!

The following articles also contain information which relates to some of the topics which were discussed in this series:

Age of Deception, Age of Delusion
Are Christians Obligated to Keep the Sabbath?
Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?
Are You Just a Baby Huey?
Backsliding, Divine Chastisement and the Divine Agreement
Faith and the Shroud of Turin
Free Will and Personal Choice
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word
Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?
Lying Wonders of the Endtime
Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism
Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon
MP3's, Commercialized Christianity and Christian Hypocrisy
Revelation's Babylon the Great
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Satan: King of Tyrus, King of Empires!
So You Really Think You Are So Humble?
The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words
The Children of God and Politics
The Earth is Under Seven Thousand Years Old!
The Fruits of Disobedience
The Kings of the North and the South
The Only Credentials You Need!
The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love
The Two Sackcloth Witnesses of Revelation 11
The Wisdom of God vs the Philosophy of Men
What is God's Will for My Life?
Where Are the First Century Churches?
Who is Hindering the Antichrist?
Who is Who?: Defining Important Endtime Terms

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