

# CEM encouraging Christian renewal Lessons from our past

LEXINGTON, Ky.—“That the Man of God May be Equipped for Every Good Work” was the theme of the weekend sponsored by the Lexington, Ky., Independent Church of God.

The first activity on Friday night, March 14, was a potluck dinner and social organized by Jeanette and James Hicks at the Best Western Regency Inn, the usual meeting place for the host group.

About 50 attended.

Saturday and Sunday sessions were at the Continental Inn with 129 in attendance.

## Essential work

CEM founder Ron Dart reminded the audience that evangelism is an essential Christian work, but that spreading the “good news” centers on

the lifting of heavy burdens, not on making trouble for those listening.

Ray Wooten, founder of United Christian Ministries and pastor of the United Church of God Birmingham, focused on renewal.

Even the best of people, individuals or organizations, can become “weary in well-doing,” he said.

Mr. Wooten added that Christians require the invigorating power of God’s Spirit flowing through them in Christian action to revitalize them.

Jim O’Brien of the Lexington United Church of God reminded the group that a wrong attitude can undermine even the best action.

For God to use people effectively, they must allow the mind of Christ in them to be expressed as humility and a desire to serve, he said.

Mike Linacre of the Active Bible Church of God, Chicago, encouraged those attending to think about where they are and where they want to go in God’s service.

## Worse than unprofitable

Unless people of God are growing, developing and becoming more effective as people and Christians, there is a danger that they can become unprofitable servants or worse, he said.

Larry Keenan of Moorhead, Ky., and Gary Cain of Birmingham, Ala., contributed to a program of musical worship.

Mr. Cain sang “He Is!” Mr. Keenan played a combination of “Blessed Assurance” and “Chariots of Fire,” then on Saturday night performed “Exodus Fantasy” on the organ.

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Hooser’s to be written and preached from the pulpit. All of us need to take responsibility for our own past actions and seek reconciliation.

Both individually and as a church, we need to acknowledge our sins and repent. There’s been too much glossing over the past. Unless we see what was wrong, then we are bound to repeat the same mistakes. This is what many of those tens of thousands who have left are concerned about. It’s why they don’t even want to visit a breakaway church.

Ignoring the past and those who were affected by it won’t bring reconciliation. Not understanding what went wrong in the WCG or acknowledging our own sins won’t bring reconciliation, for indeed it is our *sin* that continues to separate us.

One leader in the United Church of

God proudly told his new United congregation in May 1995 that nobody knew where he stood until after he left the WCG.

He still doesn’t understand what a minister of Jesus Christ is. I pray that he will. Then he can teach transgressors God’s way and sinners can be converted. Then some of those tens of thousands of brethren who are home alone may find it easier to see Christ in him and want to fellowship. Then the heart of that minister would be turned to the hearts of the brethren and vice versa as they become one in Christ.

Then he can be part of a ministry of reconciliation by showing others how to reconcile. Then he will know, those around him will know and God will know what and who he is: a minister of Jesus Christ.

Then we can all leave those things

# Writer urges consideration of Ezekiel message

The writer is director of *Friends of the Sabbath in Australia*.

By Craig Martin White

SYDNEY, Australia — Many years ago a major branch of the Sabbatarian Churches of God taught the “Ezekiel message” and believed that it was commissioned to be a “watchman.”

Yet it appears that few today remember it or have regard for this doctrine. Fewer still really understand the concept.

What exactly is the Ezekiel message? Were the Ezekiel watchman’s proclamations the ravings of that church’s leader? Did we place too much emphasis on it? Should it be proclaimed again today? Do you understand it?

Don’t be too sure that you do. Here is some information on this subject never before formally articulated. The author also suggests a new title for this doctrine.

Ezekiel? The very name conjures up thoughts of an Old Testament prophet’s ill-humored railing against a sinful nation—a man whose message is studded with condemnations and wild visions unable to be understood, warnings about long periods of disease, famine, slavery, mysterious visions about chariots, rods, Gog and Magog, a millennial temple.

What do these mean? Why should the church of the 20th century take the book of Ezekiel seriously? Surely Ezekiel’s message at best was just a message for his time or at worst the ramblings of a weird old man.

Is this really the case or are these perceptions about Ezekiel unfounded? Can his prophecies be understood today? Do his writings bear any relevance to us who live in the midst of a pulsating, secular, humanistic and godless Western world?

## How the idea came to Mr. Armstrong

To understand precisely what the Ezekiel Message really is, we need to:

- Gain a knowledge of the historical roots of the Ezekiel message.
- Provide an adequate and exact definition of it. This would require focus on the subject matter.
- Glean an understanding of how it was presented over the years.
- Examine the contents of the material we have access to that proclaims it.
- Determine if (and perhaps how) it should be proclaimed again today.

The person whom God raised up to lead a major branch of the end-time Church of God was Herbert W. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong and his wife, Loma, fervently searched through God’s Word for many years, basing their belief system on the branch of the Church of God they fellowshiped with, the Church of God (Seventh Day).

In 1931 Mr. Armstrong was

ordained an elder of that church by the laying on of hands of the presbytery and members. He continued as an elder until his credentials were revoked in 1938 over two matters: holy-day observance and so-called British-Israelism.

He maintained contact with the Church of God (Seventh Day), but relationships dimmed until finally, in 1945, virtually all contact between him and them ceased.

However, many newer members of the Radio Church of God (which he founded in 1933) visited with and attended the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the early 1950s until this was unfortunately discontinued sometime that decade.

From the earliest days of Mr. Armstrong’s ministry, he had an intense interest in Bible prophecy and came to see that the system used by Satan over the centuries was a revival of the Roman Empire known as the Holy Roman Empire. He strongly warned for years before World War II of the darkening war clouds on the horizon, singling out Hitler and Mussolini for special attention.

Prophecy is indeed a major portion of the Bible. J. Barton Payne in his famous and authoritative *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* states that the Bible is 27 percent predictive, including types. But he does not include many of the types and “hidden” prophetic messages.

So at least 33 percent of the Bible is prophecy. Payne lists Ezekiel as the most predictive book in the Bible, with 821 verses devoted to the foretelling.

Returning to Mr. Armstrong’s interest in prophecy: He was not cognizant of the unique message contained within the book of Ezekiel for the end-time House of Israel at that time. Here is Mr. Armstrong’s own account of how he was later awakened by God to the incredible Ezekiel message:

In the January 1962 *Plain Truth* in installment No. 41 of the series running at the time called “The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong,” he writes under the sub-heading “New Consciousness of Mission” (pages 12-13), which developed about May 1941:

“About this time God impressed on our mind His real meaning of the prophecies in Ezekiel 33:1-19, and 3:17-21. The true significance of the entire Book of Ezekiel had been revealed for some time. But now, suddenly it took on immediate, and specific and personal significance.

“I had seen that Ezekiel was a prophet with a message for the future. He himself was in the captivity of the House of Judah . . . But he was not sent a prophet with a message to these people at all . . .

“Ezekiel was made a prophet to [the House of Israel] . . . His message was a warning of invasion and total

destruction of the nation’s cities. That invasion was for the future. That prophecy came more than 120 years after Israel already had been invaded and conquered . . .”

Note that the emphasis was on national invasion of the House of Israel and mass destruction of its civilization. This is the crux of the matter; here is the heart and core of the Message:

“So now I saw Ezekiel was set a watchman—to watch international conditions as well as God’s prophecies—and when this invasion is preparing, and near, shortly prior to Christ’s coming to rule the world, he is to warn the people who had migrated, in Ezekiel’s day, to northwestern Europe and the British Isles! But Ezekiel never carried that warning! It was not for his time! He was used primarily to WRITE IT! It now became plain to me that God was to use a modern 20th-century ‘Ezekiel’ to shout this warning . . .”

*Perhaps there will be a loose confederation of Churches of God whose major aim would be to undertake a large international work by laying aside petty differences in service to the Master. Currently the differences between several of these groups are small and primarily personality-based.*

Mr. Armstrong continues:

“I had no illusions that I was chosen to be the ‘modern Ezekiel’ to proclaim this message. But I did know that no one was sounding this alarm. I did plainly see this sword of destruction and punishment coming. I knew the time was near. Perhaps, with World War II well under way, it was even then upon us. We could not, then, foresee that God would grant another recess period in the series of world wars before the final round to end at ‘Armageddon.’

“And I did see plainly, that God said: ‘If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned’ that God would require the blood of the people—and now whole peoples—at the watchman’s hand!

“That was a stern warning to me. At least I was one of the watchmen who did see it coming! God had already placed the broadcasting facilities of three radio stations at my disposal.”

The above account of how the Ezekiel message came to Mr. Armstrong provides us with a fascinating insight into the historical background to this doctrine and exactly what it is: a warning to the House of Israel of impending doom with the church’s function today being not unlike that of the prophets of old.

Mr. Armstrong’s use of the term “Ezekiel’s message” was not to refer to the entire message of the book, but

a particular feature or aspect of it: specifically warnings of soon-coming invasions (with consequent death camps that will be set up by invading hostile enemy armies) bent on wiping out the House of Israel.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s as well as for a short period in 1973 and again from about 1979-82, the Ezekiel message became the right arm of the Worldwide Church of God’s mission and message, after the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Please note: The Ezekiel message is not (in fact, never has been) a replacement for the true gospel. During the end time it is a tool to warn our peoples, wake up the nation and bring the repentant into the Church of God.

Here they can securely practice their religion and keep God’s laws in accordance with the repeated efforts of the prophets to Israel to repent and turn to God’s law.

A list of many of the articles used over the years in the mold of the Ezekiel message appear at the end of this article.

In a riveting article published in 1977, Mr. Armstrong wrote about “How I came to be going to Kings and Heads of Government” (*The Plain Truth*, March 1977). This article reveals how God was dealing with the church in different phases this century. In the article he writes:

“In those early days I was especially interested in the book of Ezekiel. A special reason was that I saw Ezekiel was first given God’s message in prophecy, while he was a Jewish slave . . . Now this was close to 120 years after the House of Israel had been taken captive to Assyria . . . [Many] were, by Ezekiel’s time, in Britain and Western Europe.

“There is no reason to think his message was ever delivered to the House of Israel in Ezekiel’s time. This message in fact is for today—and contained a warning of things to happen to Britain, America and the Western European nations now in our day.

“I saw clearly, back in those early days, that Ezekiel’s prophecy was a message to be taken by some modern twentieth century servant of God—a ‘modern Ezekiel’ to America, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

“I dwelt in hundreds of broadcasts on this book of Ezekiel and its warn-

ing of things . . . to happen to Britain, the United States and Western Europe . . . and so it was that Christ . . . caused me to put special emphasis on Ezekiel’s warning to our people, in our day.”

We see how this Ezekiel warning to our peoples was emphasized at that time. Mr. Armstrong then relates the parallels between Revelation 10:8-10 with Ezekiel 2:5-10 and 3:1-3, which possibly indicate that the first part of his ministry was to proclaim the message.

But note the original Greek wording in Revelation 10:11: “Again” in the Greek is *palin*, which “carries through the idea of oscillatory repetition,” “anew,” “once again,” “once more” (Strong’s No. 3825). From it comes the word *paligonesia* (No. 3824), which means “rebirth,” “spiritual renovation,” “regeneration” (ibid).

Thayer’s lexicon shows it to mean “that restoration of the primal and perfect condition of things” (p. 475).

There may be a hint here of a repetition of the work of by various Churches of God.

This reminds me of the scripture that states:

“O LORD, I have heard thy speech and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2).

Bullinger, in his Companion Bible, notes that “revive [equals] renew, in the sense of repeating, doing over again” (p. 1269). *Strong’s Concordance* states “quicken, recover, repair, restore (to life) . . . save” (No. 2421).

Gesenius’ lexicon has this interpretation: “to live again, to revive . . . to recover health, to be healed . . . to call back to life, to restore life” (p. 274).

Will Ezekiel’s message by the Churches of God be repeated? I think it is a moot point; it has to be! This world cannot be left without a strong prophetic warning in these last days.

Over the centuries God’s scattered church has taught the true gospel, but also alongside that message we find that it emphasized other important matters pertinent to the extant generation. Today we must warn our peoples again of impending captivity and enslavement in foreign lands.

Finally, let us understand what Ezekiel’s message is not and what it is: It is not the Gospel; it does not replace the gospel. It is not an angry

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# Booklet with unfortunate '1975' title summarized message

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fire-and-brimstone proclamation, and it is not just plain prophecy: It is a certain aspect of prophecy relevant to our day.

It is specific to a people, a time and has an application: the House of Israel, the end times and impending slavery for disobedience, respectively. It is trumpeted by a watchman, which we interpret as a branch of the Church of God.

## Defining the Ezekiel message

One of the better ways of labeling the Ezekiel message may be to give it a name: the captivity doctrine. This way it can better be understood by those unfamiliar with the concept. It also succinctly portrays this truth in a manner easily grasped.

Let us take a brief look at some of the material on the subject and carefully analyze some of the relevant material to assist us to ascertain how they were written.

The booklet *1975 in Prophecy* has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by many for 40 long years. It may be viewed as the ultimate condensation of the Ezekiel message. This energetic booklet shocked people out of their complacency.

Its unfortunate title has been a major reason for derision brought upon this doctrine from certain quarters. Yet it contains vital information for us in a brazen way and a style that is becoming more and more acceptable to the community at large. (The type of graphic details portrayed by the late Basil Wolverton are a part of our mass culture today.)

In many ways it was a work ahead of its time. Many other booklets were published that are also strong and useful but are not Ezekiel-message material as such: *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*; *Is this the End Time?*; *Are we Living in the Last Days?*; *The Mark of the Beast*; *The Middle East in Prophecy*; *Who Is the Beast?*; *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!*; *The Modern Romans*; and *How to Understand Prophecy*.

The *1975 in Prophecy* booklet was by far the most stunning and startling. Its title has led to the assumption that Mr. Armstrong taught 1975 as the date of Christ's return. Rather, the booklet was trying to catch people's attention with a sensational title.

I have before me a book, *Famine 1975!*, by William and Paul Paddock

majority positive aspects of it.

- The booklet is not just full of doom and gloom.

- It addresses a subject others did not.

- It discusses the Day of the Lord as a literal event, which few works by this world's groups do.

- The title was unfortunate, but most of the booklet was accurate, exciting and biblically sound.

- No apology is required.

The booklet was laced with startling graphics portraying the end times, tribulation, the Day of the Lord and the wonderful world tomorrow. It woke up many people and led them to Christ.

Let us now attend to another article. In 1980 Mr. Armstrong wrote one of the last articles on the subject that was published in *The Plain Truth*, "America the Beautiful: America the Condemned." Mr. Armstrong commenced the article by stating:

"This is the most seriously in-earnest article I have ever written for

Ministers," "Slave Labor Camps are Coming Back!," "What will the 'Tribulation' Really be Like?" and "Uncovering a 2,500-Year-Old Time Capsule" are all worthy of analysis. But we must speed on to the next section.

## Simple warning

Cruel slaughters on entire populations are foretold in the Scriptures. Terrifying events are on the horizon. Or, as Mr. Armstrong stated in the aforementioned article, "this is to be the most terrible fate ever to happen to any people."

He continues to castigate the house of Israel, showing how we inherited the promises to Abraham via the British Empire and the might that is America's.

But the warning is simple: Empires come and go. Yet citizens of those empires sometimes think that they last forever. They don't.

The British Empire has already disappeared into the mists of history.

***The Ezekiel message is not the Gospel; it does not replace the gospel. It is not an angry fire-and-brimstone proclamation, and it is not just plain prophecy: It is a certain aspect of prophecy relevant to our day.***

*The Plain Truth*. Our beloved country—yours and mine—now faces total destruction.

"... A third of our people—white English-speaking people and minorities with us—will die in a disease epidemic such as the world never experienced... I do not know whether in two or three years—or in another decade or more—but sooner than people think!" (So much for Mr. Armstrong supposedly setting dates.)

"Wake up! Readers of *The Plain Truth*! If they [religious leaders of the world] have not the courage to tell you, I have!"

In the article Mr. Armstrong provides an intense and strong warning to the U.S.A., drawing heavily upon the prophecies of Ezekiel. He stresses that, while Ezekiel wrote the prophecies, Israel was already in captivity. It stands to reason, then, that these prophecies are for our day, today. There must be Ezekiel watchmen who take the warning message to the House of Israel.

"The lamentations and woes of the message to be carried to Israel never

The United States of America is structurally in decline, yet she sees it not.

Our nations are gradually being weakened to such an extent that other nations (particularly Germany heading up a United States of Europe and Japan) will fill the vacuum. They will eventually sense an opportunity to strike at the Anglo-Saxon powers. And strike they will! With such sudden devastation that we will not be prepared for it.

Our leaders think that their salvation is in some kind of an international superstructure: a new world order of free trade and the mixing of religions and races to eventually produce one world.

Yet such policies serve to weaken us day by day. The Anglo-Saxon powers are at the helm of the push toward a world superstructure that they hope will produce a world of peace and plenty.

Yet there are other nations that do not share the same vision for a new world order. Their order is far more dictatorial and one that preserves their

may take Hawaii, and Europe will divide up the rest of the continent.

Our nations are heading for the most shocking and terrible times of trial ever before experienced by any people. National captivity is prophesied in our Bible!

Yet, as Mr. Armstrong showed, some will be worthy to escape. He also warns at the end of the article:

"I have not overestimated the seriousness of this! The time has now come for this serious warning to go forth in mighty power! Millions will see this warning in *The Plain Truth*!"

Inexplicably, little was said of it thereafter.

## Back to the future

Today few seem to be interested in representing the true thrust of this doctrine. The Churches of God have more or less forgotten it. Others have quietly dropped it without input from the brethren.

(The preceding paragraph is not to be taken as a negative criticism of

through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself.

"For the traitor appears not traitor! He speaks in the accent familiar to his victims and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation [or church]. He works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city; he infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to be feared."

One gets the impression of a don't-care attitude today. Or "The two witnesses will do the work" so "we can have a nice social club each Sabbath." We of all people have a duty of care and should have a burning desire to warn our peoples. Otherwise our indifference will be noted by God and we will pay the consequences.

Matthew Henry's commentary, written in the 18th century, has an excellent message for us in this regard:

"Lukewarmness [something Mr.

Armstrong warned us against] or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If [true] religion is a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it... If religion is worth anything, it is worth every thing; an indifference here is inexcusable: Why halt you between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal (be God), follow him... Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for him or against him" (*A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol 6, p. 1135).

We need to be earnest as Matthew Henry declares: fired up with real zeal to reach out to warn our peoples before it is too late! We should not be jealous of the zealous ones and denounce them—but supportive of them.

The big question is whether we have love for our national brethren or a lukewarm and lazy attitude of wanting to hide our light under a bushel. Do we want to reach out or to protect our hides? Do we have a giving or a getting attitude?

Remember what our Bible warns us about: Those who wish to save their lives will inevitably lose it.

Now is indeed the time for a thorough and proper Ezekiel message to go forth again to this world, together with the good news of the soon-coming return of our Messiah, Jesus Christ, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

It is this God-given duty that must be trumpeted by the end-time Churches of God collectively, fulfilling the role of the Ezekiel watchman (it is not a commission given to any individual today but to the collective Body of Christ).

***It is this God-given duty that must be trumpeted by the end-time Churches of God collectively, fulfilling the role of the Ezekiel watchman. It is not a commission given to any individual today but to the collective Body of Christ.***

that used similar tactics. Another is *The Coming Plague, or Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance*, by Laurie Garrett.

The booklet took the following outline:

- An introduction.
- Good news of the coming utopia.
- Trends toward German resurgence.
- The prophesied United States of Europe (under German control and leadership).
- Drastic weather changes.
- World War III.
- The great national calamity and why our peoples will be punished.
- Why all life will not be annihilated.
- Americans and Britons to be made slaves.
- The Day of the Lord.
- Divine intervention.
- Satan put away.
- The Millennium.

What is so wrong with the above? From the above we can deduce the following:

- Criticism of the booklet has been unjustified as focus has been on its negative aspects rather than the

occurred in Ezekiel's time or later. They are to strike America and Britain in our time." The watchman "is to watch events as they fulfill prophecies leading up to what Ezekiel is to warn the "lost" 10-tribed Israel about... and warn the 20th century house of Israel when such military invasion is reasonably imminent."

Mr. Armstrong then addresses the central core of the warning message:

"Now what is the very crux of Ezekiel's warning? It is found in chapters 5 and 6."

In brief, it provides a warning to Israel of impending slavery because of their false doctrines and false religions (so-called Christianity and other sins such as humanism and liberalism) and that God will not spare His wrath: One third of Israel will die from horrible disease epidemics, one third from warfare and invasion, and the final third will be taken captive and placed in slave-labor camps (including captivity in strange lands).

There are of course many other articles I would like to analyze, but one has to keep this article within manageable limits. Brilliant articles such as "Now God Speaks to You

identity, culture and religious heritage. They will eventually stand up and galvanize world opinion against the current trends. They will wish to dominate a new world order and eventually come into ideological and religious conflict with the Americans and British.

Two prophecies indicate that the House of Israel will be divided among her enemies: a concept written about in other material by myself and History Research Projects. One in Joel 3:2 speaks of the scattering of Israel and the parting or dividing of Israel among her enemies. Amos 7:17, Micah 2:4 and Daniel 11:39 seem to tell a similar tale.

Australia itself may be divided up by secret agreement between India, Japan and Indonesia. For instance, Japan may take the Eastern states, Indonesia Northern Territory and South Australia, and India Western Australia.

Similarly, Russia may have Alaska returned to her by Europe if she keeps out of the crisis. The Caribbeans may be given the southeastern United States, Mexico the Southwest. Japan

Herbert Armstrong within the various Churches of God. Indeed there may come a nostalgia for the strong meat and truths he taught that are being watered down today.

Perhaps there will eventuate a loose confederation of Churches of God whose major aim would be to undertake a large international work by laying aside petty differences in service to the Master. Currently the differences between several of these groups are small and primarily personality-based.

But there are those who would keep us divided and who water down the truth. Allow me to quote from Cicero, who wrote the following of fifth columnists in 42 B.C.:

"A nation [read church] can survive its fools and even the ambitious [and there are plenty of those again]. But it cannot survive treason from within [like those who water down the truth]. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and he carries his banners openly. But the traitor [like a leader who pretends to be a shepherd] moves among those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling

the war cry of the end-time Church of God Sabbatarians must now be, as we attempt to revive our roots and truths long buried under the rubble of misunderstandings, overreactions, lack of knowledge and gradual watering-down: *Back to the future!*