

Rescued from the Clutches of H.W. Armstrong, and Bible Verses for Avoiding Similar Traps

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“Scholars have internalized, de-temporalized, dehistoricized, cosmologized, spiritualized, allegorized, mysticized, psychologized, philosophized and sociologized the concept of the Kingdom of God.”

— G.W. Buchanan, *The Consequences of the Covenant*, 1970, p. 55

This is a missions conference. I remind us all that missions are 24 hours a day wherever you are. No need to cross borders. We are always training and always on mission, to quote from Matt Sacra.

What you have to do is to help people to think, to ask questions, because most people do not do this instinctively and must be prodded or challenged. I have learned almost everything by being challenged for 60 years.

I went to a “get saved” meeting in Oxford in the 1960’s, and have had some 60 years to think about what that meant! It was the beginning of a lifelong search for truth. My journey has been -- looking back – an ideal one, in terms of all the amazing people I have crossed paths with.

My early religious experience was strictly formal. We sang the hymns, but never once discussed the Bible: that would have been a regrettably American Bible thumping thing to do. So it was a rude awakening when in 1955 on Radio Luxembourg I heard the stentorian voice of Herbert W. Armstrong. Guess what? He was talking about the Kingdom of God, about the Golden Age which is yet to come on earth, when nations will beat their swords into ploughshares and nobody will ever again build a tank or threaten others with death.

Little did I realize how ignorant and gullible I was. Armstrong simply pointed me to the 10 Commandments and asked me why I was not observing the fourth one correctly. Seeing that obedience (Heb. 5:9) was the necessary response to what God had revealed, I became a devoted Sabbath keeper. My parents were always long-suffering, though they had to accept my refusal to attend a wedding on Saturday. I began to go off to London every Sabbath to attend a small meeting of Armstrongites.

Meeting Barbara at Ambassador College, we finally left when the serial adultery of the leadership became public, and then we said “Now what?” It became perfectly obvious that no group in England could tolerate us, unless we kept our mouths shut and asked

no questions. When we said we thought the dead were in the grave sleeping, we were invited to leave and given the infamous left foot of fellowship, a painful, but invaluable experience.

God has used a number of key people in my life to question what I believed. A kind Christadelphian asked me why I thought that Jesus pre-existed his birth. I learned that the “rock that followed them” was a type -- not to be taken literally. He then told me that we were all the Devil, and I had to become an expert on that subject!

The Billy Graham quotes I show you now encapsulate the core problem facing us all. When I met Clyde Randall of the Church of God in 1981 he said this to me: “I advise you, Anthony, never to link arms with the popular evangelical system. I tried it and I repent of that and am very sorry for the damage I caused. I want to be remembered on my gravestone as a preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom.”

Billy Graham, *How to be Born Again*, pp. 148-149, 168:

“I have a friend who is a missionary in the Congo. He works among the Pygmies, people with little capacity for understanding. If, in order to become a Christian, we had to understand the gospel message, how could these simple people ever be blessed?... The gospel message doesn’t have to be understood by the seeking soul, only to be received in simple faith. It isn’t fully understanding the gospel that gives me the blessing, but simply believing and receiving it.

“First you must recognize what God did: that He loved you so much He gave His Son to die on the cross (John 3:16)...Second, you must repent or you will perish (Luke 13:3). Jesus said “repent and believe” (Mark 1:15). It’s not enough to be sorry. Repentance is that turnabout from sin that is emphasized.”

(One chapter is titled “The Man Who Is God”!)

The world of church and Bible study is a veritable minefield and a chaotic one. I refer to Ellen White and Isaiah 24:6, which says, “The inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few people are left.” But she writes, “The inhabitants of the earth are burned . . .” !

I warn against false prophets as Jesus did constantly. Jesus was not so much against the atheists and agnostics as he was against those claiming to be Christians, falsely so-called. Nothing is more dangerous than a watered down form of the faith. It is untrue that “Jesus came to do three days’ work.” Jesus came rather to fulfill his own mission statement which is found in Luke 4:43. To say that Jesus did three days work effectively cancels the entire mission of Jesus.

The mistake is to want to be like everyone else. It was established religion in the time of Jesus which urged the state to kill him. A half-truth is likely to be a whole lie. Jesus wondered in Luke 18:8 whether the faith would even be alive when he returned.

We must either fight or surrender. The right course is to struggle as Paul said in Ephesians 6 against the “cosmocratic” supernatural powers. Error and lies are aggressive and must be opposed with an equal “love of the truth in order to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10). We must be constantly “abounding in the work of God” as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “So then, brothers and sisters, don’t let anyone move you off the foundation of your faith. Always excel in the work you do for the Lord. You know that the hard work you do for the Lord is not pointless.”

Some Key Points

Here are some of the key things I have learned from the mass of discussion with lots of people, on Bible issues:

1. Unitarians are often disoriented when it comes to understanding the two covenants. Some have regrettably consigned Jesus to the old, now defunct covenant. A debater with Carlos recently said that he did not know what the Torah/Law of Messiah was! The simple fact is that the Torah of Messiah is the teaching of Jesus, and the teaching of Jesus is the non-negotiable barrier and safeguard against being rejected at the resurrection (1 Timothy 6:3 and 2 John 7). These should be refrigerator verses. According to 1 Corinthians 1:10 we are all to speak the same thing and be perfectly united in one mind. We are far from that ideal.

2. I suggest that Mark 3:23 presents “Satan” as the proper name of the person: “How can **Satan** cast out **Satan**?”

3. I suggest too that Daniel 12:1-2 locates the great tribulation as a short time of intense suffering just prior to the Parousia. (Mark 13:14 and Revelation 13:14 can be easily remembered as Acts 8:12 which was the slogan foundational Scripture for the entire Abrahamic faith movement in the 1800’s.) Daniel 12:1-2 should prevent anyone from imagining that the great tribulation is already some 2000 years long. It is rather a brief period of intense suffering just prior to the second coming. Daniel 12:11 cannot possibly refer to a period of 1290 years. If that were so, one could have calculated the date of the second coming 1290 years ago!

4. Daniel 9:26b should be rendered as “**his** end.” This shows that Titus is not mentioned there. He did not come to “his end” in AD 70. Daniel 9:27 should read “he will come” not “one will come.” It is the same abomination, the antichrist (a proper noun in I John 2:18) who will fulfill the prophecy.

5. The key to Matthew 24 (Mark 13, Luke 21) has eluded many. Jesus and the disciples obviously thought of the Parousia and end of the age (24:3) as closely linked to trouble in the Temple. **As it turns out** — and Jesus himself did not know the day and hour (24:36) — the AD 70 temple was not the temple in question, because the Parousia did NOT follow “immediately after” (24:29) the trouble *in that* Temple.

6. Unitarians of adventist persuasion would do well to say much more about what Christian destiny in the future kingdom is. Otherwise our future is not much better than the vague heaven going and “polishing rainbows and preparing heavenly dishes” (Billy Graham) accepted uncritically by the public. Psalm 149 does not get much attention! Nor Luke 19:27! The parable of the nobleman should get maximum coverage, as also the parable of the sower, as Jesus said: If this parable is not understood, none of the parables will be understood (Mark 4:13). And Jesus made sure that his students had understood: “Have you understood all these things?” They replied, “Yes” (Matt. 13:51).

7. We must not forget that the King James Version is disastrously misleading in Luke 17:21 when it speaks of the kingdom of God “within you.”

This will help us to see that the task of re-educating the public is a huge one, but as Christians we are committed to that task, our mission, 24 hours a day.