

19 Year Times Cycles & the Church of God

In the day of Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God, He and Herman Hoeh devised a 19 year time cycle scenario, resulting in the booklet "1975 in Prophecy". They believed that they would go to Petra by 1972, and Jesus would return by 1975. Now today, many of the Armstrongites continue with this chronology. If people follow this again, will it cause the same fall out as it did in the 20th century?

By Peter Salemi

The effects in 1972-75

When the Biblical scenario did not pan out for HWA and Herman Hoeh, they had to do a lot of damage control in the Church of God back in those days. The scenario went like this according to Herman Hoeh in his True History of the True Church, "God gave the Apostolic Church JUST TWO nineteen-year cycles to carry the gospel to the Old World. He opened a DOOR to the apostle Paul AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND NINETEEN-YEAR CYCLE by which the gospel went to Europe (Acts 16:9; 11 Cor. 2:12-13).

"So now, just before the second coming of Jesus Christ, God has given His Church -THIS CHURCH-JUST TWO nineteen-year cycles in which to carry the gospel to the world!

"The first cycle PASSED. Then God suddenly opened the door for the second cycle in January 1953, and the gospel is now going to all the world!" (p.27, emphasis his).

For the Philadelphia era (as they called it) the first 19 year time cycle began specifically on January 7, 1934 with the first regular broadcast of the Radio Church of God, later renamed the World Tomorrow. One 19 year time cycle later, on January 7, 1953 HWA and the World Tomorrow began broadcasting to Europe. The next cycle will end January 7, 1972. Since the Apostolic Church had to flee to 'a place of safety' (see *ibid*, pp.10-11) at the end of their two 19 year time cycles it naturally follows that the Radio Church of God will flee to the place of safety after their two 19 year time cycles ended on January 7, 1972.

And so after using all those ideas then comes the following timeline:

31-50: Church preaches to Jews.

50-69: Church preaches to Gentiles.

69: Church flees to 'place of safety' (Pella).

1934-1953: Church preaches to USA.

1953-1972: Church preaches to world.

1972-1975: Church flees to Petra in 1972 and world endures Great Tribulation ending with the Second Coming in 1975.

In His booklet 1975 in prophecy he writes on page 10, “But *the indications of prophecy* are that this drought...will strike sooner than 1975-probably between 1965 and 1972!

“*This will be the very beginning, as Jesus said, of the Great Tribulation*” (p.10, emphasis his and mine). 1972 begins the tribulation. The tribulation is 3 ½ years then comes the second coming of Jesus in 1975. Why does he make this statement? For the simple reason, he believed in the two 19 year time cycle scenarios. It’s interesting when he says, “the indications of prophecy.” 19 year times cycles is NOT BIBLICAL PROPHECY!

But the church in 1972 did not flee into a place of safety (*For the Truth about the Place of Safety read our booklet on the Subject at British-Israel.ca*). So HWA had to do a lot of damage control due to this failure of predicting the second coming of Jesus. In the Magazine “Tomorrow’s World” Feb 1972 HWA explains, “Emphatically I am NOT a prophet, in the sense of one to whom God speaks specially and directly, revealing personally a future event to happen or new truth, or new and special instruction direct from God — separate from, and apart from what is contained in the Bible. And I never have claimed to be.

“THERE IS NO SUCH HUMAN PROPHET LIVING TODAY!

“The Bible is the written Word of God — and, for our time now, it is COMPLETE! Never have I believed or claimed that God reveals to me new truths not contained in the Bible — in addition to, or apart from the Bible.” (The 19-Year Time Cycles - What HAPPENED January 7 - What My Commission IS! p.1, emphasis his). At least HWA admits the truth here that he is not prophet, and that the Bible is *finished* and we do *not* need any more prophecies; God has provided all the prophecies we need for this end time. (*Listen, all, in the Continuing Church of God*).

But what about setting dates? Jesus said, “But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matthew 24:36). Why is that so hard for people to understand? No date setting! No chronologies! I keep seeing this- not just in the church of God, but in other churches as well-Trying to fit the coming of Christ with the feast days on the calendar. It cannot be done; people will fail trying to come up with a chronology that will predict the coming of Christ.

Notice what HWA wrote about his partner in all of this, Herman Hoeh, “In a special group festival held at Belknap Springs, in Oregon, in the autumn of 1951, I was shocked — and so were those there — to hear Herman L. Hoeh, then recently graduated from Ambassador College, say with conviction, as if with authority, ‘Mr. Armstrong IS NOT A PROPHET — but a man called to the same kind of commission as the original evangelists and apostles of the first century Church of God — to proclaim the Message — the Announcement — the Good News of the Kingdom of God — the Message that Christ brought from God and taught His disciples.’

“I shook my head in astonishment that he would make that statement. I KNEW WELL I was not a prophet. I simply knew I had been called to proclaim Christ’s Gospel of the Kingdom of God — to get a job done — but I had no illusions about being an evangelist, or an apostle, or anything more than my own part in proclaiming and publishing this Great NEWS, as a witness, to as many

as I could reach. I had no vision then of a worldwide ministry.” (ibid, p.1, emphasis his). Herman Hoeh was out trying to smooth things over with the church, being all of a sudden humble about the positions in the Church of God, that they are evangelist, and just doing their part in the work.

The article continues, “Now a word about what my Commission is NOT. It is NOT to become an infallible expert on, or to preach, chronology.

“I feel at present that the whole question of chronology is in confusion, and no one can be positively SURE of dates.

“As of the present I, and a majority of our historians in Ambassador College, and researchers in the School of Theology, feel that it is utterly unsafe to try to SET DATES in regard to future prophesied events, especially the return of the living Christ in supreme Power and Glory to rule all nations of the earth.

“But we are only human, and it is natural that we should have been curious to know, as far as possible, how much time we had to GET THE JOB DONE.” (ibid, p.1, emphasis his). But they were so sure in the 1950’s. Now, after 1972, no one is taking responsibility for their actions. I think more people would have respected HWA more if he came clean and said “I made a mistake please forgive me.” But no! No apologies by HWA. In fact he writes in the article, “The sophisticated churches of the world seek leaders who are intellectual, socially cultured, leaders in the community. But when GOD chooses His human instruments, He is more concerned about the sincere and honest of HEART. He calls imperfect (ALL men are, anyway) but sincere and dedicated human instruments. THEY ALL MAKE MISTAKES! This fact needs NO APOLOGY!” (ibid, p.2, emphasis his). Yes they were men all imperfect, because of their shortcomings when it comes to *morality*. It’s got nothing to do with setting dates and prophecy. If one just simply follows God’s instructions about prophecy, like obeying what Jesus said not to set dates and chronologies, one would not make that mistake. Afterwards in the article, he then takes the time to write as he always does, boasting about the work forging ahead and expanding all over the world.

But in this article he still feels they were right on certain things, he does not give up that easily, he says, “Now I want to tell you the TRUTH about the two 19-year time cycles, ending January 7, 1972, with a frank, straightforward explanation of where we were mistaken — and WHERE WE WERE RIGHT!

“In a Co-Worker letter dated May 22nd, 1953, I wrote the following:

“Listen now to an ASTOUNDING fact! God has set time running in cycles of 19 years. Just once in every 19 years the DAYS, divided by the sun; the MONTHS, marked by the new MOON; and the YEARS, divided by the revolution of the earth around the SUN, all come into conjunction.

“It took just ONE COMPLETE CYCLE of 19 years for this Work to grow from nothing until it carried the very Gospel of Jesus all over the North American continent in mighty power! That 19-year time cycle ended, and the second 19-year cycle began, during the first week of the present year, 1953!

“The very start of the second 19-year cycle marked the beginning of proclaiming this Gospel to ALL EUROPE AND THE BRITISH ISLES! It must still go to Asia, Africa, South America, and Australia.”

“But MORE ASTOUNDING than I had noticed, or written then:

“We started on the air on the little station in Eugene, Oregon, the first Sunday in January, 1934. That first Sunday was January 7. For some time I talked of starting also on the air in Europe during the FIRST WEEK of 1953 — 19 years later — not the first Sunday, but the first Wednesday.

“What I did not realize, then, is, that one year from today — or two, or 19 years from today will NOT be the same DAY OF THE WEEK as today!

“Let me add here, THAT I DID NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH setting the DAY on which we started in Europe. I had negotiated to purchase time on that station two or three months earlier — late autumn, 1952. I sent over a transcribed or taped program, but for some reason the contents did not completely conform to technical station requirements. I re-recorded the program and sent over a second transcription. Because of language barriers, I had not understood their technical requirements. Again it was rejected.

“The third time the program was okayed, as were all programs thereafter for years. The station put it on at the first open date thereafter — which happened (?) to be, the first WEDNESDAY in January, 1953.

“But, incredible as it may sound, when later I checked with calendars, that Wednesday was January 7, 1953! 19 years to the exact SAME DAY OF THE YEAR. I checked with the Hebrew calendar. January 7, 1934 was Sunday, Tebeth 20th. Also January 7th, 1953, was Wednesday, Tebeth 20, by the Hebrew calendar! So the door opened in Europe, NOT only the FIRST WEEK in 1953, but on the exact SAME DATE — 19 years TO THE VERY DAY!

“That seemed SIGNIFICANT, to say the least!” (ibid, p.4, emphasis his). Isn’t that amazing! The man will not go down without a fight. Trying to say that the previous events were right, of course these events fit into the chronology AFTER THE FACT! Now that 1972 did not come to pass, well then they were wrong. Why is it that they were right on one and wrong in the other? If they were so sure of the *first* time cycle, 1972’s flight into Petra would have happen!

In the end HWA says, “Emphatically, if we — in our dedicated enthusiastic ZEAL to get God’s WARNING of the end of mankind’s world before this sick, sick world — DO, even though we intend not to, appear to set a date, I FEEL I DO NOT NEED TO APOLOGIZE! No one but the enemies of ALL GOOD will accuse!” (ibid, p.31, emphasis his). WOW! Ego, vanity, and pride took over this man, and he would not humble himself before the congregation and apologize for this huge blunder that he and Herman Hoeh preached to the church as absolute truth.

What were the implications of the all of this? “In 1972, when the Church of God failed to flee to a place of safety, which Herbert W. Armstrong had been predicting ever since the middle 1950’s,

many members and ministers became disillusioned. Herbert Armstrong's old booklet, which had been distributed by the millions of copies, entitled 1975 in Prophecy, had in effect foretold the second coming of Jesus Christ by the fall of 1975! But this scenario was obviously not correct and many people were upset, disillusioned, and some were outright disgusted." (Article; Crisis in the Worldwide Church of God, by William F. Dankenbring).

"When the fall of 1972 came and the time to flee to a place of safety did not occur, there was yet another exodus of members." (Wikipedia Grace Communion International). Thousands of people changed their entire lives because of this doctrine. Selling their homes, quitting their jobs all thinking they were going to a place of safety in 1972. *Nowhere in your Bible* does it say to sell everything you have and go hide in a cave somewhere, or turn your life around because the end of the age is coming. Cults do that! Jesus said, "Occupy till I come." (Luke 19:13). To live your life, work, have relationships, have children, build a future, obeying the laws of God. (*Read our booklet Beware of False Prophets for more details*). Spiritually be "ready." If you are "called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev 17:14), you have *nothing to fear* in this end time. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

"...The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb 13:6). Christians should *not* live in fear. God promises protection for his weaker ones right where they are, (read Psalm 91) there is *no reason* for anyone to go anywhere or sell anything.

The ones who are strong in faith, God will allow them to be subject to the *world's* persecution of them, for a "testimony against them" (Matthew 10:18). God has to leave a testimony to warn the nations. The stronger ones know this and they "loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11), sacrificing themselves *for* the world. *The world hates that message and persecutes them*; the church knows this, and that it will cost them their lives; but to lay down their lives to save the world and to glorify Lord is the greatest love. (John 15:13; 21:19). A moment of pain for everlasting glory.

Today's Groups selling the same thing

Today in many of the splinter groups they are still continuing this belief of 19 year time cycles.

In an article by the Trumpet, the Philadelphia Church of God says, "The reason we carefully watch for significant events in January is because of what happened 24 years ago. On Jan. 16, 1986, after preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness to the world for nearly six decades, Herbert W. Armstrong died at the age of 93. The next day, January 17, marked the beginning of the Laodicean era of God's Church—an era characterized by spiritual lethargy, prophetic blindness and gross materialism (Revelation 3:14-22).

"You are going to see the date of Mr. Armstrong's death take on more significance as time goes on. ... *The third 19-year time cycle of the work of the Worldwide Church of God ends in January of 1991—the same month as the anniversary of Mr. Armstrong's death.* Will we see some dramatic event in the world ... then?"

“January 2010 marks the end of the fourth 19-year time cycle since God’s end-time work began in 1934. Should we then be surprised that as of this month, the European constitution is now being fully enforced in Europe? Or that Germany’s high court recently decided to ban Sunday shopping in Germany, effective Jan. 1, 2010?” (Article, Keeping an Eye on January 16 and 17, by Stephen Flurry, emphasis added). Nothing happen then either. But even after the failure of the 19 year time cycle scenario, these Armstrongites are still trying to find prophetic significance with it.

Another group called “COGSR,” they claim that they are “the only ministry that understands the time cycles of the Original Worldwide Church of God.”

This Armstrong church says, “At the end of the 6th church era [after the death of Mr. H.W.Armstrong] we saw the Great Apostasy begin to unfold. During the year 1992 we witnessed the first ‘great exodus’ from the church due to its fall into pagan doctrine.

“Now please understand this; after the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong on January 1986 the Great Apostasy began to take hold with much strength.

“COGSR Appears after 19-Year Time-Cycle

“After Mr.H.W.Armstrong’s death in January of 1986 many began leaving the Worldwide Church of God because of the Great Apostasy which broke out. A great many people left during the year 1992 and continued through 1993 to 1995. As a result of this many splinter and offshoot groups began to take shape. Approximately 19 years later starting with the first dispersion [1992] caused by the Great Apostasy comes the year 2011, *the start of COGSR ministries.*

“It is interesting to note that God began calling Mr.H.W.Armstrong and preparing him in the year 1931 to formally begin the Philadelphia era of the Church in October of 1933. *It was in October of 2011 at the end of a 19-year cycle that COGSR ministries came forth to shine bright to all nations via internet and literature and online audio sermons by Mr.E.W.King.* The first COGSR books were published to the world on April 29th, 2012.

“*Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was the sixth messenger in the sixth church age. Who is the Seventh Messenger? It is this Seventh Messenger who is to give the Church ‘meat in due season.’ [Matthew 24:45-47] [Meaning their organization]”* (Article; Understanding the Worldwide Church of God Time cycles, by Eric W. King, emphasis added). These groups are trying to fit what they are doing into the 19 year time cycle scenario, then what? Are they going to try to convince people to sell their homes and businesses again because they are going to go to Petra? I pray God’s people see through this deception and error and not to fall into this trap, but to come out of this Armstrongism and into the true worship of Jesus Christ and the Father. Following a man or men, can only lead to disaster.

What is 19 year time cycles?

A brief comparison of the Gregorian and the Hebrew calendars will help us understand this subject.

The solar-based calendar commonly used today is of Roman origin. It contains about 365 1/4 days. And though the word month means “moon,” the months are not governed by its phases. They are of arbitrary beginning and length.

On the other hand, the Hebrew calendar is luni-solar, that is, based on both the sun and the moon. The length of the year differs significantly, and the months are directly related to the phases of the moon.

In the Hebrew calendar, twelve lunar months result in a year that has about 354 days (about eleven days shorter than a solar year). Such common years, as they are called, are regularly balanced by leap years, which contain thirteen months each. Leap years are about 384 days in length (about nineteen days longer than a solar year). Notice how these lunar months are related to the solar year.

Every nineteen solar years, the moon revolves around the earth 235 times. In other words, 235 lunar months equals about nineteen solar years. This remarkable astronomical relationship makes it possible to combine twelve common Hebrew years (of twelve months each) and seven leap years (of thirteen months each) together every nineteen years. This means that the solar (Roman) calendar and the luni-solar (Hebrew) calendar very nearly coincide as the sun, moon and earth return to their approximate position of alignment with each other *every nineteen years*. Hence because of this, people see some sort of prophetic significance in this, when there is none.

Scholars Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, in their paper *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 45*, (The University of Chicago Press 1942), indicated that the Babylonians had been using a calendar system which used a cycle of 235 lunar months in a period of 19 years. They also indicated that the extra month lunar years were distributed in a cycle that is familiar to us today. That calendar knowledge apparently preceded Meton’s discoveries by a number of years.

The ancient Greek astronomer Meton (c. 5th cent. b.c.e.) observed that 235 lunation periods practically equaled 19 solar years. He therefore suggested a cyclical method of distributing 7 extra lunar months into every period of 19 lunar years. It is not known if he borrowed the idea from the ancient Babylonians or determined that independently. Also, it is not really known how Meton actually distributed the extra month lunar years within this synchronized period of time.

This metonic cycle was used in the church of God by HWA. Even though they did not call it that, this is exactly what it is. But I will not in this booklet go into detail about the calendar.

But what is the prophetic significance of 19 time cycles? HWA and his adherents thought there was some sort of prophetic significance to it. The RCG claims, “The concept of 19-year cycles is based on sound observation of patterns in Church and secular history.” (The Truth about God’s Calendar, David Pack). Really, is that what God says? Or is it man adding to God’s religion?

Is there anywhere in the Bible that says 19 year time cycles are prophetic? NO! People are adding to God's religion! "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Deut 12:32). This is exactly what man has done, and this is how man made religions start. This is no different than trying to work into the Bible, the immortal soul, Hell, Heaven, or the Rapture. Preconceived Ideas, traditions, myths, and legends, and adding them into the scriptures.

Let's stop making these mistakes and adhere to the word of God alone!