

# Interview with Garner Ted Armstrong – Program 2

By: The John Ankerberg Show  
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By: **Garner Ted Armstrong**; ©1983

According to the Church of God International, he is not God, but only the power or essence of God. Why do they claim that?

Is the Holy Spirit God?

## Introduction

Tonight on the John Ankerberg Show we will be interviewing Garner Ted Armstrong, son of Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of the Worldwide Church of God. Garner Ted is best known as the popular radio and television speaker of the Worldwide Church of God's "The World Tomorrow" broadcast. Before his break with his father, Garner Ted was President of Ambassador College in Pasadena, California; Executive Vice President of The Worldwide Church of God, and Editor-in-Chief of *The Plain Truth* magazine which reached a circulation in 1982 of 5 million. In 1978 Garner Ted broke with his father and founded a new organization, the Church of God International in Tyler, Texas. He is now rebuilding his outreach. Tonight we will examine the teachings of Garner Ted Armstrong in light of the Bible. We will ask him if he still believes God is a family; does he still hold that every believer is a potential God; does he still believe that the Holy Spirit is not a person but a divine force and that the new birth occurs after believers have died and are recreated for eternal life. Join us for this discussion.

## Program 2

**Ankerberg:** We are glad you joined in tonight. We have as our guest Garner Ted Armstrong. It is a privilege for us to have him here. Garner Ted, you have talked about the God family and yet in your writings you say pointblank that the Holy Spirit of God is not God, He is the power or essence of God. Do you still hold to that?

**Armstrong:** Absolutely. First John 5:7 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%205.7>) is the only Scripture in the entirety of the New Testament that alleges a trinity. Others you could possibly deduce that.

**Ankerberg:** What about Matthew 28:19 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2028.19>) where it would say, "baptize in the name of (and then, the names are singular) Father, Son and Holy Spirit"? You have the trinity there.

**Armstrong:** The Holy Spirit is mentioned as a personality in the same way that God is mentioned as a personality, almost in an esoteric sense, several times by Christ Himself who calls the Spirit of God "the other Comforter." I cite the first chapter of Luke where "Mary was found," and I am quoting now directly, "with child of **the** Holy Spirit." [Matt. 1:18 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%201.18>)] And you have a little problem there, because if you say the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, then you see Jesus telling us in His sample prayer, "When you pray say, Our Father which art in heaven..." [Matt. 6:9 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%206.9>)] and no Christian has any problem with which one of the Trinity, as they say, is the Father. They have the Father as a distinct personality, then I say people have the wrong Father.

The Greek word *ekeinos* translated "it," or "that one," or "that thing" or "he," but never "she." It is either neuter or masculine and is used in every case where the Holy Spirit is "poured out upon people," the Holy Spirit is likened unto "fire which burns" or "cleanses," in Acts 2, like the fiery crowns that were equally distributed upon the heads of the apostles. [Acts 2:2-3 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%202.2-3>)] It is likened unto "rivers of living water" by Christ Himself. [John 7:38 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%207.38>)] It is likened unto the wind in John 3. [John 3:8 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.8>)] This is not a personality you dealing with, but an essence, a power.

**Ankerberg:** Now before we go on let's go back and make sure that we understand how Garner Ted is using the pronouns concerning the Holy Spirit.

**Armstrong:** The Greek word *ekeinos* is translated "it," or "that one," or "that thing" or "he," but never "she." It is either neuter or masculine and is used in every case where the Holy Spirit....

**Ankerberg:** Now, concerning the use of *ekeinos*. It is definitely masculine and it cannot be translated "it." It must be translated "he." If you wanted to use the word for "it" you would have to come up with another form, the neuter form *ekeinoo*. Second, there are many examples of this usage in John 16 and other passages. In John 16:7 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.7>) we read, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [*ho parakletos*] will not come..." Here it is definitely the masculine singular form "he". This is the same form that is used with *ekeinos* in John 14:26 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2014.26>), John 15:26 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2015.26>), and in John 16:7 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.7>). Here it is used with *auton*, the singular masculine referring to the Holy Spirit "he." Now, if you wanted in John 16:7 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.7>) to have it "it" you would have to use another word for "him," *auton*; you would have to use *autoo*, the neuter singular pronoun "it." But that is not used here.

In John 16:8 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.8>) it continues, "And when he is come [*ekeinos*, "he" the masculine singular form, again not *ekeinoo* which would be the neuter singular form], he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness..."

Dropping down to verse 13, "Howbeit when he..." The word here again is *ekeinos*, not the neuter form *ekeinoo*. In all of these passages of Scripture we find that the grammar tells us the Holy Spirit is a person.

**Armstrong:** ... And is used in every case where the Holy Spirit is "poured out upon people," the Holy Spirit is likened to "fire which burns" or cleanses, in Acts 2, like the fiery crowns that were equally distributed upon the heads of the apostles. It is likened unto "rivers of living water" by Christ Himself. It is likened unto the wind in John 3. This is not a personality you dealing with, but an essence, a power.

**Ankerberg:** Alright the Holy Spirit is disqualified from being a person here because He is talked of metaphorically. But because we talk of Jesus metaphorically, is He disqualified from being a person? For example, in John 1:37 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%201.37>) we find Jesus described as the "Lamb of God." In John 6 He is called "Bread." In John 10 He is a "Door." In John 14 He is the "Way," He is the "Truth," He is "Life." In John 10:11 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2010.11>) He is called the "Good Shepherd." In John 11:25 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2011.25>) He is called the "Resurrection and Life." In John 15 he is called a "Vine." In John 2 He is called a "Temple." In Luke 13 Jesus Himself likens Himself to a "mother hen." Now because Jesus is talked of metaphorically in this way, is He disqualified from being a person? No. And neither is the Holy Spirit disqualified from being a person because we refer to Him in some places metaphorically.

**Armstrong:** Something that, I confess, my human mind only barely tries to understand. I see someone in a bowling alley and he's got the ball and he hurls the ball with all of his force and he stands there and just as the ball smashes the pins he clenches his fist and dances up on one leg and says, "Pow!" Well, this is a way by which a human being tries to project his power away from himself. And it is almost as if in some way he is still connected to the bowling ball and he is with his fist knocking down those pins. Well, we can't do that, but He is able to project His power and the vehicle... if this were the nuclear age when the Bible were written we wouldn't have the analogy, I don't believe, of fire and water. I think we would have the analogy of nuclear energy or electricity.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, I sure appreciate your thoughts, and folks out there in the audience, we want them to know that we have decided ahead of time that we were going to disagree, but you and I, we are going to be really good friends. And I really appreciate you just telling us....

**Armstrong:** But you can't disagree with what I just said. There's no way you can disagree with that.

**Ankerberg:** Well, let's just read to you what Jesus Himself thought about the Holy Spirit which I am sure you are well acquainted with. In John 16:7 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2016.7>) he says, "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Then he says, verse 8, with an emphatic demonstrative masculine pronoun, "...when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgement." Jesus said in verse 13, "when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you..." apparently He is able to guide; "...whatsoever He shall hear, that shall he speak." He can speak, for the Holy Spirit "will teach you." [John 14:26 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2014.26>)]

**Armstrong:** Right.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, what I am saying is that we've got in this passage here, let me just read you one of the most famous English speaking Greek scholars we have ever had, A. T. Roberson whom I am sure you are familiar with. He said about *ekeinos*, which you brought up, that "in grammar the placing of a word or expression beside another [talking about the apposition that this is in right now], the second explains and has the same grammatical

construction as the first." *Pneuma*, the spirit there is neuter, but it goes back and it takes from this masculine pronoun the personhood of "he," not of "it." That's what we are saying.

Not only does the grammar go along with it but the fact of other places in Scripture. For example not only does the Holy Spirit speak, but in John 16 we have him "he will guide" and "he will speak what he hears." In Acts 13:2 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2013.2>) he calls missionaries. In Acts 28 he give commands. In Acts 13:2 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2013.2>) the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me..." Not an "it," "Set apart for **me** Barnabas and Saul for the work which **I** have called them."

For all of these reasons and more such as the Trinitarian concept in Matthew 28:19 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2028.19>), "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel,... baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit." It seems like the evidence, now we are not talking about what I want or what you want, we are talking about what does Jesus and the apostles, what do they tell us. Does that make sense that we would hold that the Holy Spirit is just as much God because He has personality, He can speak, think, we can grieve Him, we can lie to Him?

**Armstrong:** Yes, absolutely. The Holy Spirit is divine. If I am dealing with you as a human being, I am dealing not with you just as a temporal form or a fleshly being, but I am dealing in a sense with your psyche, with your personal dynamic, with your personality and with your character. Let me go back to state that from the book of Genesis chapter one throughout the entirety of the book of Revelation we find nothing but duality.

**Ankerberg:** I find a Trinity.

**Armstrong:** The only triumvirate that I see in the entire structure of the divine hierarchy, if you will, is one in which one of the leading members fell and became corrupted and became Satan the devil. The only three archangels, although the word (technically) archangel is nowhere mentioned in the Bible, are Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer. Lucifer fell and became Satan the devil.

God the Father and Christ the Son are mentioned time and time again in conjunction together. In the first and second chapters of Genesis God said, "Let us make man in **our** image" not three but only two revealed. [Gen. 1:26 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen.%201.26>)] There are two sexes, there is north and south, there are two magnetic poles, there is cause and effect, there are two opposites, things can be juxtaposed. You have two nostrils, two eyes, two arms, two legs. There is duality, as I said, in the sexes and I see throughout the entire creational pattern of God duality rather than a triumvirate.

Now I don't know, John, that perfect understanding on that subject is something which would keep someone out of the kingdom of God, so let's really get right down to the nitty-gritty and understand what I am saying. I am not certain at all that someone who had been taught all their lives about the trinity, but who repented of sin and wanted to receive Christ as their personal Savior and really live a clean and a righteous life and wanted to serve God, and wanted to be in His kingdom, but just didn't know what I feel I do know about that subject that that would deny him salvation. I am not sure of that at all. I think that he would come to an understanding because I think the Holy Spirit would show it to him.

For example, going back to what I said earlier, Jesus Christ **had** the Holy Spirit. There is a very difficult, very, shall we say spiritual, concept with which we are dealing which is very difficult to build like so many children's blocks. How can the Holy Spirit at once fill the being of Christ and yet be a separate personality?

**Ankerberg:** Garner Ted in his book *The Real Jesus* answers how a spirit being could invade and possess a person's life. He talks on page 118 of demons. He says, "Evil, supernatural beings do exist. They are created beings. Created out of spiritual essence and given spirit life through a divine act of the Creator God. They, therefore, will exist in perpetuity. The Bible reveals Satan as eternal and will not be destroyed in the sense of human or physical destruction but will apparently live on for all eternity in the blackness of darkness forever."

After he says that these beings do exist he tells us where they can exist. On page 119 he says, "Throughout his ministry Jesus continually encountered those who were afflicted, tormented, tortured, bothered or even possessed by Satan's demons. Judas Iscariot allowed himself to be possessed of Satan himself and this brought about Jesus' betrayal, arrest and crucifixion."

On page 121 he says, "Demons are individual creatures and spirit beings who have different kinds of personality and different degrees of stubbornness and strength."

And finally on page 124 he says, "Demons desperately want to possess and inhabit, like a spiritual parasite, either humans or animals." Obviously we don't know **how** they do it, but apparently they can do it. If demons can do it, can't God?

**Armstrong:** Yet it says, “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” [Col. 3:3 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col.%203.3>)] It says in Galatians 2, “The life which I now have (or the faith), I have by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me,” [Gal. 2:20 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal.%202.20>)] and “Christ in us the hope of glory.” [Col. 1:27 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col.%201.27>)] So it also says that Christ Himself is to abide or dwell or live within us. His one personality is to come in and dwell with us. That has got to be by an agency. By some arms-length power that we can only try to define.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, we are going to take another break right here and then we are going to wrap up with questions here, so stay with us.

**Armstrong:** Do you believe in a **closed** Godhead? Meaning that there can never be four or a dozen or a billion or a trillion gods?

**Ankerberg:** Certainly. That’s right and I am glad you brought it up because I don’t believe that someday we are going to become God.

**Armstrong:** How can you believe then that we are going to be “co-heirs with Christ” and do you believe that He is the firstborn among many brethren?

**Ankerberg:** Oh, because I am an American, the thing is, I can enjoy the benefits of America without being America itself. I can enjoy the benefits that God...

**Armstrong:** But you are an equal with other Americans, are you not?

**Ankerberg:** That’s true, but I am not equal with God.

**Armstrong:** If there are other children in your family and you have a family name...

**Ankerberg:** Yes, but you are saying that we are actually equal with. ...

**Armstrong:** ...then you are equal with those other children and you are a member of that family.

**Ankerberg:** Oh, well then, let me ask you this, then are you simply saying that we can become immutable, omniscient, omnipresent like God himself?

**Armstrong:** I believe the Bible very clearly shows that we will achieve a status far above angels. It says, “Know you not that we shall judge angels?” [1 Cor. 6:2 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor.%206.2>)] And it does show that we will be “born of God” [John 1:13 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%201.13>)] and it says that we will become “co-heirs with Christ.” [Rom. 8:17 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%208.17>)] Now what does Christ inherit? You know, it says you will sit with Him in His throne. Pretty big seat apparently. You are going to be sitting there beside him in His throne, Revelation 2:21 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev%202.21>).

**Ankerberg:** You are taking these like there is no other option in those words. For example, the fact to be a co-heir doesn’t mean I have to actually be **Him**.

**Armstrong:** No, of course not. I am not saying that. But you can certainly be a very member of His family.

**Ankerberg:** To be a part of His throne is to be a part of His entourage, to be in fact, one of His servants.

**Armstrong:** I think all we are expressing is your inability to accept or to believe what I believe. That’s all we are expressing, so we might as well go on to the next question.

**Audience:** Yes, you mentioned the dual form of *Elohim*. The dual would be *Elohayim*, and the form that is always used in the Scripture in the Hebrew is *Elohim*. Would you come back with this and explain that please?

**Armstrong:** I don’t know which Scripture you are referring to. Are you talking about Genesis 1:2 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201.2>)? “In the beginning God” the word God is *Elohim*?

**Audience:** *Elohim*.

**Ankerberg:** The question, I mean our people are saying out there, “What happened?” You know, what are we talking about here? We are talking about the word, and you rephrased it a bit strong, “God.”

**Audience:** The word “God.” “In the beginning God (*Elohim*) created the heavens and the earth.” [Gen. 1:1 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen.%201.1>)] And everytime you see this....

**Armstrong:** Means more than one. I don’t think you can say it’s only two.



**Audience:** Only two in the Hebrew would be *Elohayim*. It's a very specific term, it's the dual. This is always *Elohim* which means three or more.

**Armstrong:** I have never heard that before, and I doubt that very much.

**Audience:** It's in the grammar books.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, a few points about Hebrew grammar. Check out *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, page 244 and you will find the use of the dual. It states, "The dual in Hebrew, however, is almost exclusively used to denote those objects which naturally occur in pairs." So this is used of "two." If you wanted one, or a singular, you would use the word *El* for God. If you were using the dual it would be *Elohayim*. If you were using the plural, three or more, you would use *Elohim*. Now in the Old Testament 2,249 times we find the word *Elohim* for the word "God." We never find the use of the dual.

Now *Elohim* with the plural stresses that you have a unity: the one God manifest in at least three persons. We must remember that this does not support polytheism, namely that there are many gods there. Why? Take an example like Genesis 2:7 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%202.7>). The English Bible reads, "And Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground." The literal reading is *Yahweh*, which is in the singular, *Elohim* for God in the plural, and then you have a singular verb with the plural use of "God." So you have a unity of one.

**Armstrong:** I have never heard that before and I doubt that very much.

**Audience:** It's in the grammar books.

**Ankerberg:** Another thing, Garner Ted, along with this, besides what he is pointing out in the grammar books, is what do you do with the words that God says, "I am He and besides me there is no other"? [Isa. 45:5-6 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa.%2045.5-6>)] And the thing is there was no God before me and there's not going to be any after me.

**Armstrong:** Well, He doesn't even include Christ the Son in that case, does He?

**Ankerberg:** Well, unless your definition doesn't include Jesus as being true God as John 1:1 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%201.1>) says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God..."

**Armstrong:** You are pointing out another alleged contradiction.

**Ankerberg:** Oh, no, all it is simply saying is this is where we get to the trinitarian belief that God exists as one person with three personalities, if you wish.

**Armstrong:** Let's come back and answer for me one of the most cogent questions to me on the subject: that Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit. How do you handle that?

**Ankerberg:** What's the problem? Are you trying... I mean, I mostly hear Mormons at that point.

**Armstrong:** Okay, John we are going to deal with the human analogy. We have John and Harry.

**Ankerberg:** Let me put it for the audience out there.

**Armstrong:** Mary is found with child of Harry, but John is the father.

**Ankerberg:** Yes, but Mormons would say God the Holy Spirit is a different God all together and because she was conceived of the Holy Spirit that Jesus then would be the son of the Holy Spirit. Is that what you are saying?

**Armstrong:** Of course, of course. He came to reveal the Father, you are trying to tell me the Father is one separate being, right?

**Ankerberg:** That's right, I am saying that...

**Armstrong:** And the Holy Spirit is a separate personality and Christ is the third personality? I am telling you that Christ said that if "you've seen me you've seen the Father." [John 14:9 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2014.9>)] He came to reveal the Father. He said, "The Father who dwelleth in me doeth the works." [John 14:10 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2014.10>)]

**Ankerberg:** Yes. The problem with the word "one" ...

**Armstrong:** And He was begotten of the Holy Spirit. [Matt. 1:18 (<https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%201.18>)]

**Ankerberg:** Okay the problem here, and with most people that deny the trinity is with the word “one.” And for example, when the Bible says “the two [male and female] shall become one flesh.” [Gen. 2:24 (https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen.%202.24)] Do you see two there?

**Armstrong:** Of course. And God is one and I see two there.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, but then the thing is, why can’t one include...

**Armstrong:** It does include. It could, but it doesn’t, you know. It’s not my fault.

**Ankerberg:** Well, you see what I am saying. ...

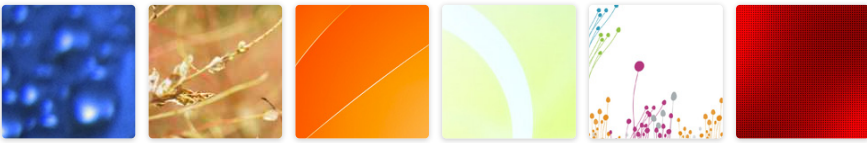
**Armstrong:** You are never going to convince me of the trinity. We can stay here for a month and a half and you will never convince me of that.

**Ankerberg:** Well, I don’t want to convince you. I am simply saying that I look at Scripture and I see a person...

**Armstrong:** And I will never convince you of the duality of God, so we ought to get on with the next question.

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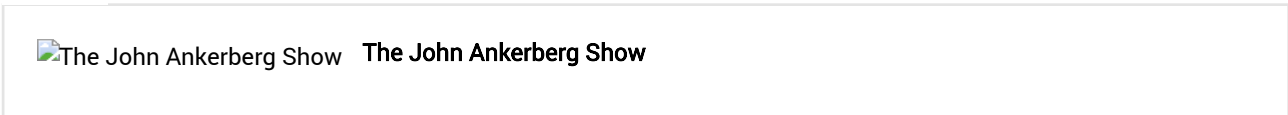
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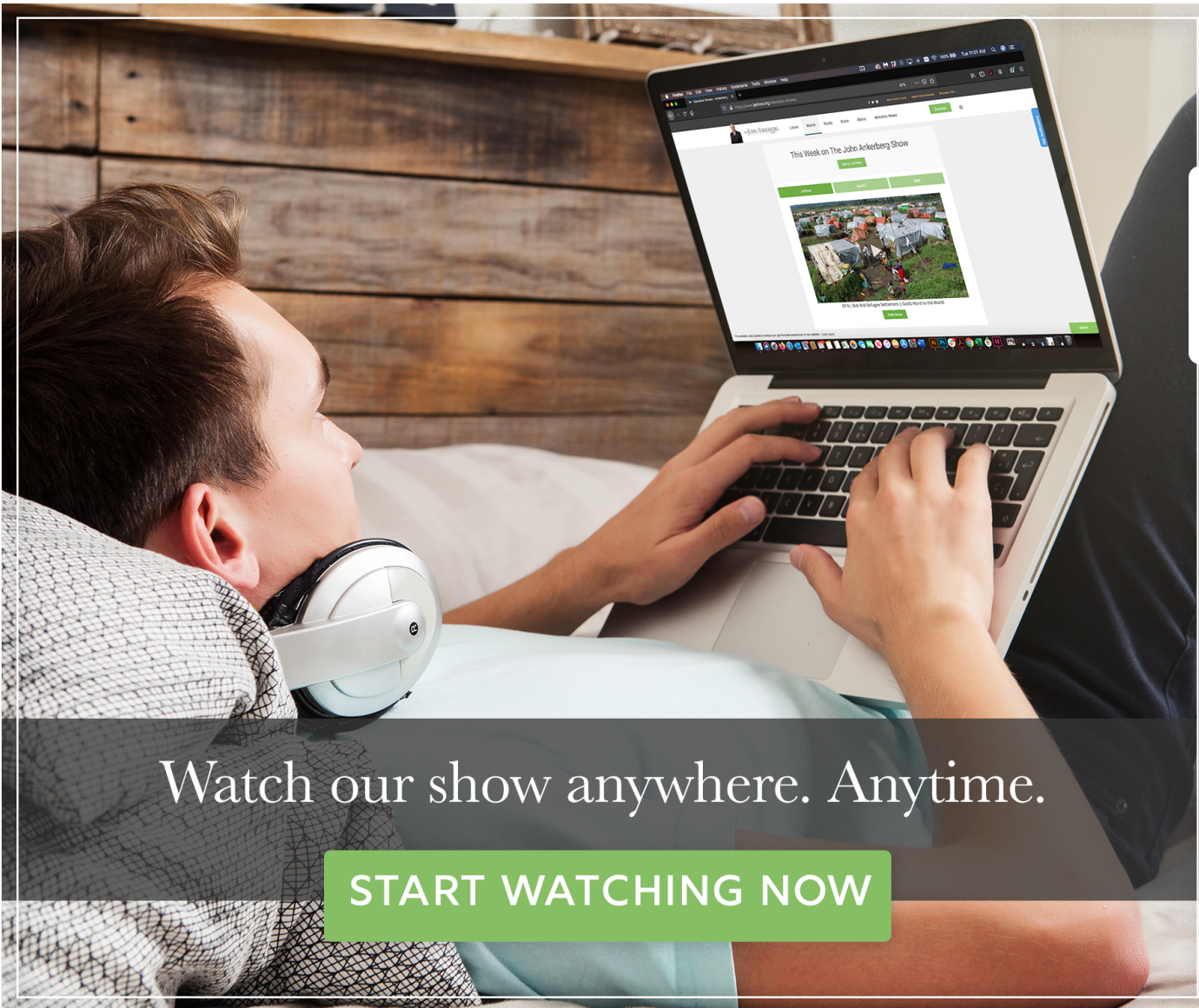
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