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## What Herbert Armstrong Didn't Know [Fourth Section]

**Argument:** As a self-educated theologian, Herbert W. Armstrong as the Pastor-General of the former Radio Church of God and Worldwide Church of God, never understood the basic construction of Hebraic poetics, that the visible, physical things of this world reveal and precede the invisible spiritual things of God, with outwardly circumcised Israel forming the chiral (or left hand) image of circumcised of heart Israel, the assembly of inner selves born of spirit through the indwelling of Christ Jesus. Because Armstrong never understood theological chirality, Armstrong placed importance on the surfaces of things and people; importance on appearances, gender, skin color, and genealogy. He therefore prevented himself from understanding the mysteries of God, and was and remained a spiritual novice throughout his ministry that extended from 1934 to 1986.

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Nearly 90 years ago, Herbert Armstrong's wife, Loma, became convinced she needed to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Armstrong sought to prove her wrong—I sought to prove my Seventh Day Adventist stepfather wrong about the Sabbath—and Armstrong engaged in an extensive self-directed study of the Bible and soon realized that Christians were to keep the Sabbath, one link of the Royal Law. But he didn't end his self-directed study with keeping the Law: within a short while he encountered J.H. Allen's book, *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright*. And apparently from Allen's book, Armstrong came to believe that the English speaking peoples possessed Joseph's birthright, including the "right" to be identified as end-time Israel. He concluded that the *key of David* was understanding that the stone under throne of Great Britain was King David's throne; that the English speaking peoples of Great Britain, the Commonwealth nations, and the United States of America were endtime Israel.

He was wrong about what the *key of David* was.

King David was a poet and a very good poet who composed his psalms in Hebraic thought-couplets—

As a Semitic language, Hebrew like Aramaic and Arabic is written without vowels. Only consonants are inscribed or written. And consonants represent interruptions of the vowel stream; consonants "tend" toward silence. So to read Hebrew text, the reader has to "know" what word the inscribed cluster of consonants is supposed to represent so that the appropriate vowel stream can be uttered. Unlike Greek or English that is written with vowels or "breath" included in the inscription of the word (only "meaning" has to be added to words), the meaning of the Hebrew consonant cluster has to be

known before vowels or “breath” can be added to the inscribed consonant clusters. It is for this reason that Moses is told, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Ex 17:14 emphasis added) ... Joshua needed to “hear” what vowels Moses inserted between the consonants of the clusters he wrote; for in hearing Moses recite the words, Joshua would memorize the vowels and know the meaning of the inscribed consonant clusters.

Not every reader of Hebrew has the luxury of hearing the author of a text recite what the author writes in the hearing of future readers; so Hebrew poetry developed that has a concept or a thing said twice, and with the double delivery of the concept, the likelihood of assigning the appropriate vowels in greatly increased for the context will now eliminate some meanings and point readers toward most likely meanings ... the inclusion of vowels in Hebrew script didn’t appear until the 6<sup>th</sup>-Century CE or thereabouts. In the modern nation-state of Israel, vowels for words are only included through third-grade texts. Beyond third grade, students are expected to know what vowels belong in the words of a text.

King David, using the structure of Hebraic doubling in poetic discourse, used the first presentation of an idea or concept to represent the physical presentation of the concept—as expressed in darkness, death, distance—and then used the second presentation of the same concept as the spiritual presentation, as expressed by light, life, the inner self of a person.

The Apostle Paul understood how David and especially Isaiah and the prophets used Hebraic doubling to create thought-couplets from the physical presentation of an idea followed by the spiritual presentation of the same idea. Hence Paul wrote that the visible physical things of this world—the things that have been made—reveal the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20) and the physical precedes the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46). And this understanding is the *key of David*.

But understanding the *key of David* doesn’t stop with the physical revealing and preceding the spiritual: King David had the spirit of the God of Abraham with him (see Ps 51:11), but the God of Abraham was the God of living ones, not dead ones (Matt 22:32). The God of Abraham was not the God that raised the dead body of Christ Jesus back to life (Rom 8:11) ... if the God [*Theos*] of the living Abraham is not the God of dead Abraham; is not the God that resurrects the dead, then the God of Abraham cannot be alone as God. There has to be another, the God that resurrected Jesus from death. And this David knew as he reveals what he knows in verse one of Psalm 146, of Psalm 148, of Psalm 149; for David places *Yah* in the physical position of the introductory thought-couplet, and *YHWH* [ $Y^aH^{d-n}W^{ai}H$ ] in the spiritual position.

David was not born of spirit; couldn’t be born of spirit for the spirit had not yet been given. The spirit was not given prior to when the spirit of God [*pneuma Theou*] in the bodily form of a dove descended upon and entered into [*eis* — from Mark 1:10] the man Jesus when raised from baptism. The glorified Jesus then directly transferred the spirit of God in His spirit [*pneuma Christou*] to ten of His first disciples when He breathed on them and said, “Receive *pneuma ’agion*] (John 20:22).

Therefore David had the spirit of the God of Abraham as the physical shadow and type of disciples having the spirit of God in the spirit of Christ in the form of the

indwelling of Christ ... David having the Holy Spirit [for the spirit/breath of the God of Abraham would have been holy breath] forms the physical presentation of a living thought-couplet (analogous to Paul telling the holy ones at Corinth that they were living epistles in the Book of Life), with the spiritual presentation of this living couplet being disciples of Christ Jesus being born of spirit through the indwelling of Christ.

Again, the *key of David* is understanding that the physical things of this world—those things that are not of light and life—reveal and precede the spiritual things of God.

Armstrong repeatedly argued that no human person is truly born of spirit so as to be a spiritual milk drinker; that spiritual birth lay in the future for begotten disciples. What he argued was not true for the Elect. Thus, Armstrong prevented himself from grasping what the *key of David* is and what this key unlocks ... this key unlocks Scripture, thereby allowing Scripture to be read as it was intended to be read.

The *key of David* (from Rev 3:7: Isa 22:22) isn't about earthly thrones—where King David's throne is—or even about earthly Jerusalem. If it were, the metaphorical naming phrase, *valley of vision* (Isa 22:1, 5), wouldn't have been used for Jerusalem, the city of David.

Based on what Herbert Armstrong had come to believe about British Israelism and the people of Britain representing the endtime descendants of the tribe of Ephraim, Armstrong believed knowing the identity of endtime Ephraim and his elder brother Manasseh, whom Armstrong identified as the people of the United States of America, was the mythical *key of David*. Thus for Armstrong, the English speaking peoples of the world were the peoples of endtime *Israel* about whom prophecy had much to say.

As an aside, there are more English language speakers in India than in the United States, Great Britain, and the former Commonwealth nations combined ... Armstrong didn't permit facts to ruin a good story, and he was telling a whopper when it came to the core of British Israelism.

King David as a poet (a very good one) composed his poetry in thought-couplets that in some of his psalms he stacked eight deep, with the first four sets of couplets representing physicality whereas the last four sets of couplets representing the things of God, with physical/spiritual pattern holding for each couplet, each pairing of couplets, and each squaring of couplets whereas Isaiah and other prophets usually wrote in simple thought-couplets or in two deep sets, with squared stacks being about as far as prophets went before moving away from a thought or concept.

What non-poets usually do not know is that the focus of any poetic discourse is not the phenomenon that inspired composition, but the artifice itself: the poem. Words used to communicate information need not be placed in poetry; prose is entirely adequate. By placing words in the structure of a poem, the poet calls attention to the words, not to what caused the poem to be written. Thus for King David to write in psalms to be sung with music, David's words—inscribed consonant clusters—represent the inner self of the person, with the aspiration needed to transform the consonant clusters into vocalized words [the addition of vowel sounds] being as human breath and the accompanying music being as the physical body of a person; as his physical body. And as a man after the Lord's heart, David used his poetry to simultaneously conceal and reveal knowledge of God.

Again, to unlock what David wrote in his psalms, endtime disciples need the *key of David*, which again isn't knowledge of where the authority [the throne] of David resides in this world today—contrary to what Pharisees believed, the Messiah will not be of David but of the roots of Jesse as new growth from these roots—but knowledge that the Apostle Paul gave to born-of-spirit disciples:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For *what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.* So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Rom 1:16–23 emphasis added)

And,

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "*The first man Adam became a living being*"; *the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.* The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Cor 15:42–49 emphasis added)

God gave the *key of David* to Hebrews in the composition of their poetry, but God also took this *key* away as Isaiah reports, saying that he, Isaiah, was commissioned to blind the people and prevent the people from hearing the words of the Lord lest Israel turn to the Lord and be healed of its transgressions.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me [Isaiah], having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." And He said, "Go, and say to this people: "*Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.*" Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And He said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and [YHWH] removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump. (Isa 6:6–13 emphasis added)

Now, consider the question, in the days of the prophet Isaiah was the Lord trying to save Israel or had the Lord already determined that Israel was to be destroyed?

*The holy seed is its stump*—the house of King David, the house of Jesse, was already cut off, felled, with only the stump of Jesse remaining, and that stump burned with fire in the vision of Isaiah ...

What importance should be placed on the stone under the throne of Queen Elizabeth II? Absolutely none! The glorified King David will not sit on that stone. No spiritual being will ever sit on an earthly throne.

In applying the *key of David*, David's life as a man, as king, as a repentant sinner represents the physical life he lived. What the prophet Ezekiel writes will represent the spiritual man:

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord [YHWH]: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am [YHWH], when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am [YHWH]; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares [YHWH]." The word of [YHWH] came to me: "Son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.' And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. And when your people say to you, 'Will you not tell us what you mean by these?' say to them, Thus says the Lord [YHWH]: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, then say to them, Thus says the Lord [YHWH]: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. And *I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.* They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and *David my servant shall be their prince forever.*" (Ezek 37:11–25 emphasis added)

The glorified David—not the earthly man—shall reign over the united kingdom of resurrected Israel as the man David ruled first over Judah from Hebron for seven years and six months, then over all of Israel for thirty-three years from Jerusalem. As David's earthly reign from Hebron formed a type of the entirety of his earthly reign, David's earthly reign from Jerusalem formed a type of David's reign over resurrected Israel; thus making David into a living thought-couplet occupying the physical position of a doubled couplet while he lived physically, with the glorified David ruling over resurrected Israel here on earth during the Millennium occupying the physical position in the spiritual couplet that will now have the glorified David reigning as king in New

Jerusalem when this Bride of Christ comes to the new earth that is not physical following the end of the Millennium.

In the man David is seen the *key of David*, a living doubled thought-couplet. For in the lives of disciples there is a physical portion when the inner self of the person is spiritually dead and there is a spiritual portion when the inner self is resurrected from death and lives spiritually through the indwelling of Christ Jesus. Then there will be another couplet stacked over the first, with this second couplet occupying the spiritual portion of the doubled couplet. And in the physical position of this second couplet, the born-from-above disciple will be “filled” with spirit and thereby liberated from indwelling sin and death. In the spiritual position, the glorified inner person receives a glorified body and is received in heaven as a son of the Most High God.

Twice glorified *Philadelphians* will be pillars in the temple. They will not come and go but will reign as pillars, support columns, forming the backbone of New Jerusalem.

The glorified Christ Jesus, when dominion over the single kingdom of this world is taken from the Adversary and his angels and given to the Son of Man, Head and Body, will sit for the Thousand Years on the throne presently occupied by the still-reigning prince of this world. This will be spiritually analogous to David ruling from Hebron; whereas the Adversary’s reign over the single kingdom of this world has been as Saul’s reign was over Israel, with Saul having an evil spirit after the spirit of the God of Abraham left him and went to David (1 Sam 16:13–14). Then after the Thousand Years, the coming of the new heavens and new earth, the coming of New Jerusalem, the glorified Christ will reign as God the Father has, with this reign being analogous to David reigning from earthly Jerusalem.

The legends associated with the stone under the throne of the British monarchy make for an interesting story, but so too does the beheading game played in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca mid 14<sup>th</sup>-Century), and in *Sir Gawain*, the men of Troy end up in Britain and with King Arthur’s throne. In British Israelism, the men of Troy represent the tribe of Dan and come to Ireland where they defeat the Celtic King Arthur. In both stories, migration occurred from Asia Minor to the British Isles, but in the case of *Sir Gawain*, the Troy link is actually to Virgil and the *Aeneid*, with the author comparing himself to Virgil [justified by the quality of his work], thus making *Sir Gawain* the Christian or spiritual reality of its pagan ancestor, *Aeneid*, which was set in ancient Carthage: the main action in *Sir Gawain* occurs in *faerie*, the mythical landscape of Northern European oral cultures where the rules of reality and normality are suspended, and *Sir Gawain* as a person is the personification of righteousness.

Herbert Armstrong claimed that Ambassador College[s] offered a Liberal Arts education to its students, but it taught no literature. When my wife was a student there in 1967, she asked why no literature. Garner Ted told her that the authors were dead and no one could ask them why they wrote what they had or what their writings meant ... as a midlife graduate student in UAF’s graduate writing program, taking a course on Medieval Literature, I had to write a publishable end-of-semester paper. Instead of writing criticism, I chose to write in the style, grammar, and voice of a late 15<sup>th</sup>-Century pamphleteer, producing a piece titled “Whorish Pamphleteering” that mocked the religious pamphlets of the transition into the modern era. I wrote the paper late at night, with the paper due in the morning, and at the end of the paper I had my protagonist run

down one side of a hedge and the mounted scarlet knight chasing him took the other side of the hedge, which, without thinking I labeled as Osage orange. But after taking a break and returning to the piece, I realized that Osage orange is a thorny North American scrub tree, and that I needed to change the hedge to another plant. Not having time to research what plants were used for hedges in Britain, I changed Osage orange to roses and submitted the paper.

The professor liked the piece and graded it accordingly, but why I'm relaying this story is that professor identified the rose hedge as a symbol for the War of Roses, which I had not even considered when I changed Osage orange to roses. I reread the paper to see if it really supported that reading of the rose hedge—and it did. I got credit for having put more into the paper than I consciously inserted. And so it is with most pieces of literary writing: "criticism" as a writing genre is itself creative.

If Armstrong had made Literature part of Ambassador College's curriculum, there is no guarantee that Hebraic poetics would have been understood. But by excluding Literature, at least in the early days of Ambassador College (AC), Armstrong guaranteed that Isaiah's commission would remain firmly in place: "Israel" would be spiritually blind and deaf, with the non-poetic Authorized King James' Translation reinforcing this blindness and deafness.

What Herbert Armstrong didn't know about the Bible as literature—about the Bible being the spiritually lifeless word of God—puts Armstrong in the position of being a blind and deaf representative of spiritual Israel in a similar way that the natural descendants of Israel were blind and deaf because of their idolatry that produced the commission of the prophet Isaiah. That should be a scary thought, especially so when Armstrong borrowed much of what he taught about the visions of the prophet Daniel from Ellen G. White, also spiritually blind and deaf.

In fairness to both Armstrong and White as well as Andrew Dugger, Daniel's visions were sealed and kept secret until the time of the end, which Paul mistakenly thought had come upon the humanity in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE (see 1 Cor 10:11; 1 Thess 4:15, 17). What had come upon humanity was the reality of the First Unleavened (from Matt 26:17 — take out the extra words added by translators), the Preparation Day for the Great Sabbath of the Sabbath (from John 19:31), with the *Great Sabbath of the Sabbath* casting as its shadow outwardly circumcised Israel under Moses leaving Egypt on the dark portion of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, journeying the short distance from Rameses to Succoth (Ex 12:37) by the light of the full moon. The reality of this *Great Sabbath* will be the Second Passover liberation of spiritual Israel from indwelling sin and death, this liberation to occur on the dark portion of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second month, a Thursday on the weekly calendar. *The Sabbath* for Christians will now be the seven endtime years when no work is done; for the New Covenant has the Lord placing the Law inside Israel and writing it on the hearts of Israel so that all of Israel *knows the Lord*: no one shall teach, "each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know [the Lord], from the least of them to the greatest" (Heb 8:11, also Jer 31:34).

What Armstrong and the remaining splinters of his ministry did not, do not understand is that until the kingdom is given to Christ Jesus—until all authority in heaven and on earth is given to Christ—no one should attempt to make disciples for

Christ Jesus for no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws the person (John 6:44). It is presumptuous for Christian theologians or evangelists to undertake baptism tours among Unbelievers. If God wants the person as His son, God will draw the person from this world and deliver the person to Christ Jesus, who will then call the person in a manner analogous to how He called His first disciples, whom the Father had given Him:

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me*, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. (John 17:6–10 emphasis added)

When God sets His hand to save the world, He'll save the world. He doesn't need the help of an army of theologians teaching spiritual Israel that *grace is sufficient for salvation*, or that *Christians are to keep the Sabbath*. It is human vanity that causes spiritual *Lilliputians* to presume they have to help God if God is going to complete the work He began.

While it is easy for Sabbatarian Christians to see how 8<sup>th</sup>-day Christians are spiritually blind, having figuratively built their houses on the east side of the Jordan, refusing to cross into the Promised Land, the topographical representation of the Sabbath, the Millennium, and heaven itself, it is not so easy for Sabbatarian Christians to see how they and their brothers are also blind and deaf, their blindness coming from the commission given Isaiah. But what was it that the Lord told Isaiah in vision when the prophet asked, *How long shall Israel be blind and deaf?* And the answer given was, *Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste*, burned by the Lord, leaving a tithe of Israel in the land. Then, with this tithe still in the land, the land will be burned again. The land shall be like a stump that remains after the forest has been burned. And the holy seed is this stump. The holy seed grows as a root sucker from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11:1–5). The holy seed is not of David nor from David, but is new growth springing from Obed, the root of Jesse.

For those who do not understand the difference between a branch and a root sucker, in the natural realm a deciduous tree takes in calories as carbohydrates that are stored over winter in the tree's roots. If something happens to the above ground growth of the tree, the stored calories push out from the roots in the form of new growth coming from the stump of the tree or coming from around the stump, growing as new trees from the roots of the felled tree ... Israel's Messiah does not descend from David—to say that David is the ancestor of the Messiah, or that the Messiah will sit on David's throne is to wave the banner of ignorance. The Messiah comes from the roots of the charred stump of Jesse and by extension, David, king of Judah before becoming king of all Israel. And David left this knowledge with Israel when he wrote,

[YHWH] says to my *Adonai*:  
"Sit at my right hand,  
until I make your enemies your footstool."  
[YHWH] sends forth from Zion  
your mighty scepter.  
Rule in the midst of your enemies!



Your people will offer themselves freely  
on the day of your power,  
in holy garments;  
from the womb of the morning,  
the dew of your youth will be yours.  
[YHWH] has sworn  
and will not change His mind,  
"You are a priest forever  
after the order of Melchizedek."  
*Adonai* is at your right hand;  
He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath.  
He will execute judgment among the nations,  
filling them with corpses;  
He will shatter chiefs  
over the wide earth.  
He will drink from the brook by the way;  
therefore He will lift up His head. (Ps 110:1–7 indented lines are spiritual  
portions of thought-couplets)

Unitarian Christians [Arians] contend that the possessive plural <*Adonai*> is a misreading, that the word should be <*Adoni*>, always a human lord and never God because of the absence of the plural /ai/ ending. The plural form <*Adonai*> is explained as *pluralis excellentiae*, when this is not the case. The plural is “plural” because *YHWH* and *Elohim* are plurals representing both the God of living ones (from Matt 22:32) and the unknown God of dead ones that raised Jesus from death (see Rom 8:11; John 1:18; chap 17).

Of the descendants of King David, all that remains is a landscape of stumps. This the author of Matthew’s Gospel knew.

\*

There remains one more installment, a long one, all about prophecy, still to come.

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