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## **Commentary – From the Margins The Mating of Medium, Message, and Market**

Mid-December 1979, I returned to the mainland from Dutch Harbor, Alaska. I had sold a business on the Kenai Peninsula the previous spring, had purchased a small boat, and had fished commercially out of first Kodiak, then Dutch. I had made a little money, but I had lost everything I had left on the mainland. Acquaintances heard I had drowned at sea, and several of them had picked through possessions I had left in storage, taking whatever the person found of interest. More of what I had interested some of them than they could easily lug home, so those possessions were left piled outside in the weather. Bob Clucas learned of what had occurred, and saved as much as he could. He was really the only good guy to emerge from many friends and acquaintances.

I spent the spring of 1980 in Anchorage, without a vehicle that ran. My wife was working for the Department of Motor Vehicles – and she had to take a city bus across town, making a transfer in the downtown bus station where a newsstand offered copies of the free *Plain Truth* magazine. When she arrived in the mornings, the newsstand was empty, and the magazines that had been on the stand were in the garbage can. When she returned in the evenings, the stand had again been filled. She knew the person who was servicing the stand, and she was a little surprised when the person enthusiastically mentioned how many copies of the *Plain Truth* magazine were being distributed to the residents of Anchorage. After that, she would retrieve, if not too badly soiled, the copies that had been trashed. The distribution numbers decreased sharply, and eventually the stand was removed from the bus station.

When Jesus sent His disciples to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:6), He instructed them to proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 7). They were to freely give what they had received free (v. 8). They were to acquire no gold, silver, or copper for their money belts – they were not to sell the good news committed to them – and they were to take no bag, for the laborer deserves his food (vv. 9-10).

Herbert Armstrong identified the United States and Britain as the descendants of the lost house of Israel, so it was primarily to the English-speaking world that he took the good news of the soon-coming kingdom of God. He freely distributed this good news through the massive distribution of the *Plain Truth* magazine as a follow up to his radio (and later, televisions) broadcasts. His focus was on the physical descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel, and on the physical arrival of Christ's Millennium reign. In fact, everything about Herbert Armstrong's work was physically focused. He had no understanding of the spiritual birth process. He utterly lacked any understanding of endtime biblical prophecies. And the tithes and offerings of a hundred-plus thousand members, along with many more co-workers, ended up in the trashcan of history. His work was tried by fire, and was consumed by a double handful of senior ministers who built spiritual homes for themselves.

The Apostle John is in vision on the Lord's day (Rev 1:10), the spiritual Sabbath or seventh day of the spiritual creation week. Seven named churches, plus an eighth co-exist, just as their visible, physical shadows co-existed along a Roman mail route through Asia Minor in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century. These churches are not eras of one true church as has been

taught within certain sects. Rather, they are contemporary collections of saints, grouped together because of states of mind. The physical characteristics of each of the physical churches along that Roman mail route becomes descriptive of the spiritual characteristics of these seven spiritual collections of saints at the beginning of the Lord's day. All seven of these churches are Sabbath-keeping fellowships. All seven stem from reforms made to the Roman Church in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. All seven are part of the remnant of spiritual Israel that left spiritual Babylon to rebuild the spiritual temple and the walls of spiritual Jerusalem. And without apologies being offered, I will here state that the Sabbath-keeping splinters of Herbert Armstrong's ministry constitute the spiritual church in Laodicea. This is intentionally provocative and not at all what some of those splinters want to hear, especially Gerald Flurry and Rod Meredith, both of whom head ministries producing large quantities of slick magazines that look like the old *Plain Truth* magazine. I will retrieve their magazines from trashcans if the opportunity arises. They deserved to be read before their work is discarded for being without love and without spiritual understanding.

When Jesus sent out the Twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He sent out six pairs of disciples. His physical ministry was the shadow of His endtime spiritual ministry – Christ came as His own shadow, just as Satan comes as the little horn of Daniel chapter 7, comes possessing the man of perdition, comes as the shadow of him coming as the true antiChrist when he is involuntarily cast into time to drown. And endtime Israel is the greater Christian Church. All of humanity will become Israel when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all of flesh (Joel 2:28) when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Messiah (Rev 11:15). [Everyone who then endures to the end will be saved](#) (Matt 10:22 & 24:13). This is the good news that must be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt 24:14).

The physical message taken by Jesus' twelve physical disciples to the physical lost sheep of the house of Israel is that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. That message was taken to the world by the physically-minded Worldwide Church of God in its radio and television broadcasts, and in its printed magazines and booklets. An annual budget of multiple millions was spent to deliver this physical message to the physical descendants of the lost house of Israel.

But the endtime house of Israel is the [Christian Church](#), not any physically identifiable descendants of the patriarch Jacob. The lost sheep of the endtime house of Israel are the billions of Christians presently in bondage to the spiritual king of Babylon. They will be liberated from their spiritual or mental bondage to sin following the [second Passover](#) slaughter of firstborns not covered by the blood of the Lamb of God. The false shepherds of these lost sheep will then try to keep these sheep from escaping the murderous Cross. The task of the six pairs of endtime disciples will be to gather as many of these sheep as will hear Christ's voice into spiritual Eden, the walls of which are the laws of God that have been written on the hearts and minds of all born-from-above disciples. And the good news that these six pairs of endtime disciples take to the lost sheep is that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13), for all of humanity will become Israel – and these lost sheep need to become the teachers of the other half of humanity when the world is baptized with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11).

Thus, the message that must be delivered to the lost sheep of Israel is Christ's words about patient endurance (combine Matt 10:22 with 24:13-14 and Rev 3:10). The market or audience is the lost sheep of spiritual Israel, or the greater Christian Church. And because the [Philadelphia Church](#) delivers these words of Christ to these lost sheep of spiritual Israel, Christ will keep this church from the hour of trial coming to try all who dwell on earth.

Herbert Armstrong primarily used radio to deliver his message of physical salvation to physical descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel. A person could, during the 1960s, drive across the United States, hearing his voice all night long. A person could, during the 1970s, find a *Plain Truth* magazine in most doctor offices and hospital waiting rooms. The *Plain Truth* was advertised in *Readers' Digest*, as well as in a host of other publications. In the United States, it was hard to escape hearing either Herbert Armstrong's voice, or seeing the magazine he founded. Yet his message fell on far more deaf ears than receptive ones. More magazines were thrown away unread than were ever read. Still the organization that supported his ministry continued to crank out broadcasts and booklets in its effort to take a message of physical deliverance to a largely non-responsive audience. The organization was accused of teaching a gospel of works. Certainly, the organization taught that salvation was a process, which is a major theological error. Salvation is a gift, given when a disciple receives the Holy Spirit. Disciples are called to do an out-of-season work; they are not called for salvation. They are called to proclaim a gospel. In the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century, this gospel was a message about the mighty works of Christ Jesus (1 Pet 2:9). And this is still a valid gospel that must be delivered to all peoples. But the endtime good news that must be proclaimed to the world is a message about enduring to the conclusion of the age. And this message is focused at the lost sheep of Israel who have the Holy Spirit and who are no longer hostile to God (Rom 8:7).

Radio and television broadcasts are literally just that, the wide spread sowing over a geographical area of an ephemeral message as if the messages were cast seed landing on both good soil and asphalt highways. Most of this seed will never develop. But the broadcasts go forth in hope that some crop might someday be produced. Time is purchased based upon geographical area of coverage and the physical size of the station's audience. Effectiveness becomes a numbers game – and there seems little about radio and television that isn't physical. A physical message delivered over a physical region to a physical audience at an extremely high physical price: broadcasting a religious program is expensive, especially when the message is not familiar or not a popular one.

The Internet has emerged as a targeted medium by which messages are held in abeyance until they are called forth from a search engine. The audience has an interest in the subject material in order to cause the search engine to call forth the archived files and sites. There is little wasted sowing of seed. Money isn't broadly cast into many trashcans. The area of coverage is global. The message, while still ephemeral, has the permanency of print. It isn't broadcast for a few minutes, then gone as if it had never occurred. Rather, it lingers on servers' hard drives, ever ready to be called forth whenever a person is ready to receive the message. And the cost to deliver the message is minimal.

The objection to the Internet as a means of spreading the gospel is that the medium hasn't yielded much fruit for the ministries focusing on computers. But the focus of these

ministries has been to use the Net as another advertising tool that directs new contacts to the ministries' print or tape disciple-development strategies. This was how Herbert Armstrong used radio, and how his derivative splinters use all ephemeral messaging. Once a person has initiated contact with the splinter, the person is directed to a geographical hub where a congregation of like-minded individuals are taught through the folly of preaching by a headquarters educated and directed minister. The person becomes, literally, a light hidden under a basket as the person severs ties with family and community in a cult-like manner.

Jesus told the Twelve to freely give what they had freely received – the Internet has emerged as a medium that celebrates giving away information. The more a disciple has to give, the more easily the disciple can be found on the Net. The disciple is rewarded for putting up information. *Spiders* find and archive that information so when a query is initiated, the search engine can direct the person to an appropriate file or site.

The spiritual Church in Philadelphia delivers to the lost sheep of Israel Jesus' words about patient endurance. That is its primary task. That is not all the church does, but the church will be kept from the hour of trial coming upon the world because it has done this one task well enough that Christ will make the synagogue of Satan acknowledge that Christ has loved this little-strength work from its inception.

Eventually, all of humanity will become Israel. All of humanity will need to hear that everyone who endures to the end shall be saved – they will be saved if they endure in faith, spurning the Cross and its tattoo. And when the market is ready to hear this message about patient endurance, the medium of computers and robot search engines will deliver it in a mating of uncommon efficiency. To Christ will go all the glory, which is as it should be.

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