

Laodicea's Lamp!

This paper is addressed to those who truly seek to worship God in spirit and in Truth, who therefore do not blindly follow a man and who are wondering about the ongoing schisms in the Church of God. This paper may be freely reproduced and distributed, provided this be done in its entirety, without alterations of any kind and solely for the edification of the true Church of God.

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Laodicea's Lamp!

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses those called to the former Worldwide Church of God or its predecessor the Radio Church of God, which was founded around 1934 by the late Mr Herbert W. Armstrong. Members of the former Worldwide Church of God remember how refreshingly different Mr Armstrong's teaching was. He showed how mainstream Christendom's teaching had departed over the centuries far from the Bible and no longer resembled the Apostolic church of God. Mr Armstrong pointed to mainstream Christendom's replacing God's appointed days of Leviticus chapter 23 with observances like Sunday, Christmas, Good Friday and Easter whose origin is pagan. Also that mainstream Christendom had adopted strange non-biblical doctrines such as the Trinity and a false eschatology based on Dante's Divine Comedy. Mr Armstrong's teaching transformed the Bible from a largely incomprehensible book into a vibrant living one with deep meaning. This applied especially to prophecy which Mr Armstrong interpreted in terms of modern Israel Identity. It was clear to members that Mr Herbert W. Armstrong had been especially chosen to lead the 20th century church of God.

From the events that began overtaking the Worldwide Church of God from about 1970 it can now be seen that all was not well. Mr Armstrong's health declined and it became increasingly difficult for him to oversee all aspects of the Worldwide Church of God and Ambassador College. Ambitious liberal minded younger men arose who began undermining Mr Armstrong's authority and teaching (e.g. the Systematic Theology Project). These included Mr Armstrong's son, the late Mr Garner Ted Armstrong, who was excommunicated from the Worldwide Church of God in 1978. Mr Herbert W. Armstrong was accused of mismanaging church funds, which led to an intervention by the State of California. Mr Armstrong left his Pasadena headquarters for Tucson in the neighbouring state of Arizona till the Californian authorities abandoned their intervention. In 1974 Mr Armstrong introduced some major doctrinal changes (see later) which resulted in early church schisms.

That the work did not fully recover from the tumultuous 1970s can be seen from Mr Armstrong's successor, the late Mr Joseph W. Tkach, and other reformists rejecting during the 1990s all Mr Armstrong teachings. This returned the Worldwide Church of God to a largely Protestant church and resulted in the church splitting into many hundreds of daughter, granddaughter and even great granddaughter churches.

Many remain bewildered over the events that overtook the Worldwide Church of God during the 1990s. Clearly the Worldwide Church of God is no longer being blessed. Mr Armstrong used to say that for every effect there is a cause, and this paper examines the cause of these events and shows the problem goes back a long way.

Mr Armstrong claimed to have led the church of God era called Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13); and during the 1990s it became popular among most daughter churches to claim continuing Mr Armstrong's Philadelphia work. Many of these would charge other daughter churches being Laodicean (Rev 3:14-21). Philadelphia was the preferred option for it has a good write-up in Revelation 3:7-13, whereas Laodicea was universally disdained because its poor write-up in Revelation 3:14-21. There the leader of Laodicea is described as lukewarm and for this being spewed out by our Lord. Not surprisingly many identify Laodicea as something akin to Satan's church rather than God's seventh and final church era.

Section 2.0 shows that Revelation chapters 2 and 3 describe seven consecutive eras of the Church of God by highlighting a number of misconceptions that have arisen over these chapters. Sections 3.0, 4.0 and 5.0 examine in turn three related doctrinal errors discernible from 1974 in Mr Armstrong's teaching. Section 6.0 shows these errors share a common thread of marriage – man's marriage and God's Marriage to Israel. It is shown although these errors did not detract significantly from Mr Armstrong's overall message, their common thread of marriage points to Mr Armstrong having led from 1934 to 1974 God's seventh and final church era of Laodicea and not Philadelphia as had been supposed. Once this is understood the tumultuous events of the 1970s and especially those of the 1990s, take on a completely different aspect. It will be seen that we witnessed prophecy fulfilled before our eyes.

The following are Mr Armstrong's post-1974 errors – the underlined words mark the common thread of marriage:

- That Jesus rather than God the Father was the O.T. Creator God and Husband of Israel,

- The 1974 rejection of God the Father's Garden of Eden Marriage law,
- The incorrect date for Pentecost, the day on which God the Father married Israel.

NOTE: The reader may wish to reject that Mr Armstrong erred in teaching that Jesus was the Husband of Israel, but that teaching infers that God the Father was an unmarried single Father who begot His Son through His Son's Wife Israel – hardly befitting God's Family! This paper demonstrates that Mr Armstrong's teaching on this needs re-examining.

Unless stated to the contrary, all Scriptures cited refer to the KJV. To save space only some Scriptures are quoted but the reader is urged to read all Scriptures cited.

2.0 THE SEVEN CHURCH ERAS

Mr Armstrong taught there are seven consecutive church eras from the Apostolic church to the close of this Age: but some now deny this: perhaps to avoid the conclusion that Mr Armstrong led from 1934 God's seventh and final church era of Laodicea. That Mr Armstrong's teaching of there being seven consecutive church eras is correct is shown in the short paper Q9, *The Seven Church Eras of Revelation* (see Section 9.0 References). Note that we must neither glorify Philadelphia nor disdain Laodicea for both along with the other five are all God's church eras. In particular do not mistake Laodicea for Satan's era for it is one of God's seven church eras. At any one time God's Lamp will shine in only one era and not in two or more as has been claimed for how can we then tell which is God's church? The paper *The Seven Church Eras of Revelation* explains the false concepts that have arisen over church eras.

3.0 GOD THE FATHER IS NOT A SINGLE FATHER BUT ISRAEL'S HUSBAND!

3.1 An Overview of The O.T. Creator God

The Bible portrays the LORD God of Israel married to Israel. In Jeremiah 3:14, the LORD God addresses Israel as "O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you:..." and in Isaiah 54:5 He reminds His wife, "For thy Maker is thine husband:...". This marriage covenant had been concluded and sealed in blood at Mt. Sinai; see Exodus 19:5 and 24:7-8.

Mr Armstrong taught that Jesus was the Creator, God of Eden, God of Exodus and Husband of the nation of Israel. He claimed support for this from the following NT verses: John 1:3, Ephesians 3:9, Hebrews 1:2, John 1:18, John 8:58 with Exod 3:14 (Christendom's celebrated O.T.-N.T. *I am* link) and 1 Corinthians 10:4. Although such verses appear to support this, it is readily shown this appearance results from either mistranslation (e.g. John 1:3); or Greek textual alterations (e.g. Eph 3:9), or superficial reading (e.g. Christendom's *I am* link) or out of context reading (e.g. 1 Cor 10:4). This paper illustrates through five examples that not Jesus but God the Father is the Creator and God of the O.T. For a detailed explanation the reader is referred to the paper, *God the Father Is the Creator and Husband of Israel* (see Section 9.0).

NOTE: Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, taught that God *is* a Family, which at present comprises God the Father and His Son Jesus, and also that Jesus was the Creator God of the OT and Husband of Israel. I have shown through various papers that rather God the Father was the Creator God of the OT and Husband of Israel. That therefore it is better to say that God the Father *has* a Family, which currently comprises, God the Father, His Wife Israel and their Son Jesus. Although I believe Mr Armstrong did not elaborate on this, I claim that after Jesus agreed to surrender his former Self-existent Godship (Deity) to become incarnate and die as our Passover Lamb, that God the Father remained as the only Self-existent God – if only monotheists (Unitarians and Trinitarians) would recognize this! The aforementioned paper shows that Mr Armstrong had adopted at least in part some of Christendom's 2nd-century Godhead errors.

3.2 Five Examples that God the Father was the OT Creator God and Husband of Israel

The following examples illustrate that not our Lord Jesus but God the Father was the O.T. Creator, God of Eden, God of Exodus, Husband of Israel and was His own Word to the O.T. patriarchs and to the O.T. prophets.

EXAMPLE 1 – Acts 4:24, 27 God the Father Created All Things!

Acts 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.
Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, ...

This passage plainly infers that God the Father is the Creator. The possessive pronoun ‘thy’ in verse 27 points to the God who has a child named Jesus; and so He must be God the Father. Verse 24 identifies Him as the OT Creator God. Note the emphasis on “all that in them is”. Therefore Acts 4:24-27 identifies God the Father as the OT Creator God.

EXAMPLE 2 – The John 1:3 Mistranslation

John 1.3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (KJV)

This KJV translation three times renders the Greek verb ‘ginomai’ (Strong #1096) as ‘made’; despite this verb not even remotely meaning ‘to make’ but rather ‘to become’, or ‘to come about’. Modern translations, such as the NKJV and NIV, have continued this error and so one wonders whether this is done to uphold tradition. Independent translators, such as J.N. Darby and J.B. Rotherham render ‘ginomai’ more truthfully, for example Rotherham:

John 1.3 All things through him came into existence. And without him came into existence not even one thing: That which hath come into existence.” (Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible)

Rotherham’s more literal translation reflects that only through Jesus willingness to surrender His former *Self-Existent Godship* to become incarnate as mankind’s atoning Passover Lamb, could God the Father go ahead and create Adam and Eve.

NOTE: Today only God the Father remains a Self-Existent God; and for this reason only God the Father could have identified Himself to Moses at the Burning Bush as *I AM* – see Example 4 below.

EXAMPLE 3 – Alienated In Eden From God the Father!

Rom 5.10 For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...
Rom .14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses...

From verse 10 although man was alienated from God the Father, we can be reconciled through Jesus’ death. Verse 14 marks man was alienated from God beginning in Eden. Man was not alienated in Eden from Jesus for then Jesus could not be man’s reconciler. *Therefore God the Father was the God of Eden from whom we were alienated!*

EXAMPLE 4 – God the Father Met Moses At The Burning Bush!

Exod 3.6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.
Acts 3.13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus
...

In Acts 3:13 Peter identifies God the Father, who resurrected (glorified) His Son Jesus, as The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Exodus 3:6 declares that the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob met Moses at the Burning Bush. Therefore God the Father met Moses at the Burning Bush!

NOTE: The O.T.-N.T. The God of Abraham, of Isaac of Jacob link from Exodus 3:6-Acts 3:13 not only identifies God the Father as the God of Exodus but also contradicts mainstream Christendom’s celebrated O.T.-N.T. I am link from Exodus 3:14-John 8:58, because that identifies Jesus as the God of Exodus. If Christendom’s *I am* link were valid, then the Bible would contradict itself through Peter’s contrary but rock solid O.T.-N.T. The God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob link from Exodus 3:6 to Acts 3:13. The Bible can not contradict itself (John 17:17) and so Christendom’s I am link must be rejected as shown in the paper P2, *God the Father is the Creator and Husband of Israel* (Section 9.0 References). From the NOTE of Example 2 above we know that only God the Father

remains a Self-Existent God and so only to God the Father can the title *I am* of Exodus 3:14 apply and not to Jesus as most of Christendom mistakenly claims.

EXAMPLE 5 – Surely a Father must have a Wife!

The following would be the unfortunate consequences had Jesus married the nation of Israel at Mt Sinai, as Mr Armstrong taught:

- God the Father would be a single or unmarried Father,
- God the Father would have no real Family, just a Son,
- God the Father would have begotten His Son by His Son's wife,
- Jesus would be the Husband of His Mother,

None of these problems arise once it is understood that God the Father is the Husband of Israel.

These examples show that Mr Armstrong's teaching that Jesus was the OT Creator, the God of Eden, the God of Exodus, the Husband of Israel and the OT Word of God to the patriarchs and to the prophets needs to be re-examined. The paper *God the Father is the O.T. Creator and Husband of Israel* does so in detail by showing each of Mr Armstrong's 'proof' verses is invalid and pointing to dozens of OT and NT scriptures and passages showing that God the Father was indeed the OT Creator God. Then the reader should be in no doubt that Mr Armstrong erred inadvertently in claiming that Jesus was the Creator, God of Eden, God of Exodus, and Husband of Israel.

4.0 THE 1974 REJECTION OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN MARRIAGE LAW

Mr Armstrong had received through the preceding church eras from the Apostolic church perhaps the most pivotal of all laws, which I have coined the *Garden of Eden Marriage law* (G.E.M. law). This law forbids both divorce from a consummated lawful biblical marriage and subsequent remarriage for as long as one's former spouse lives. Until the end of the 1960s most people in Christendom understood that marriage was for life but all this began to change during the 1970s when belief in God began to wane sharply in Western society. Then governments made divorce far easier to obtain.

In 1974 and apparently in line with the times, Mr Armstrong rejected from the Church of God the *Garden of Eden Marriage law*. Mr Armstrong then allowed remarriage after divorce from non-church marriages but today the situation has become even more liberal and divorce and remarriage is quite common place.

Mr Armstrong claimed to have received 'new understanding' to justify his rejection of the *Garden of Eden Marriage law* but in truth he repeated the very error to which Jesus referred the Pharisees when answering them in Mark 10:2-9. That this was not new understanding but a gross error is discussed in detail in the paper P3, *The Garden of Eden No-Divorce & No-Remarriage Law* (see References at the end of this paper). The reader should study this paper for it is beyond the scope of this paper to do more than highlight the key issues.

In Mark 10 we find Jesus answering the Pharisees after they asked whether it was lawful to put away one's wife.

- Mk 10.2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him.
.3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?
.4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.

Jesus quickly put them in their place.

- Mk 10.5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.
.6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.
.7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;
.8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.
.9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

God had not granted Israel the right to divorce and remarry but Moses had been forced to grant this and presumably to stop the people rebelling. Jesus by quoting from Genesis 2:24, reminded the Pharisees that

from the beginning (Garden of Eden) God had wanted a man and a woman to leave their parents and become one flesh in marriage and that this union may not be dissolved. What the Pharisees had assumed to apply was no law at all for Moses had granted this without God's permission. Moses had been forced to do this for *the hardness of their heart*. In 1974 Mr Armstrong followed Moses example by granting remarriage in the church after a secular divorce for the hardness of our hearts!

In Mark 10:10-12 Jesus explains to His disciples in private that if a man or woman puts away their spouse and then marries another, they commit adultery *against* their (former) spouse. From this we know that in God's view the previous marriage remains in force and can not be dissolved. Although Jesus appears to give in Matthew 5:32 an exception; the aforementioned paper shows this is not an exception and that a *consummated lawful* marriage may not be dissolved.

- Mk 10.10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*.
.11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.
.12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Mr Armstrong also claimed that Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 gives an exception permitting remarriage after a secular divorce but the aforementioned paper again shows this to be a false claim. It is worth noting how Paul concludes this chapter that a woman may not remarry as long as her husband lives; which teaching parallels our Lord's teaching of Mark 10: 12.

- 1 Cor 7.39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

It should be plain from verse 39 that whatever Paul taught in verses 1 to 38 of this chapter, this can not contradict his teaching of verse 39 and Jesus' teaching of Mark 10:11-12, that we may not remarry after divorce for as long as our original lawful spouse lives. Let there be no mistake, God's Word clearly forbids both divorce from a *consummated lawful* marriage and a subsequent remarriage for as long as the divorced spouse lives.

In 1974 Mr Armstrong took a similar unilateral action to that of Moses: but with this difference, Israel under Moses did not receive God's holy enabling spirit, whereas those called to God's N.T. church did. With God's enabling holy spirit the N.T. church ought to have been able to live by God's *Garden of Eden Marriage* law and so Mr Armstrong's 1974 rejection of this law is all the more shocking.

5.0 SIVAN 7 IS PENTECOST!

5.1 An Overview of Pentecost Observance

Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks is unique amongst the seven biblical holy days in that the Bible does not give a definite date. Instead instructions for determining this day are related to days associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread but these instructions are spread over a number of O.T. books and are not at all straight forward. As a result it is easy to go wrong determining Pentecost. Through his long ministry Mr Armstrong observed Pentecost by reckoning in three different ways. He began by observing Pentecost on the sixth day of the third biblical month, which is Sivan 6 and the day Judaism observes this feast. During the mid-1930s Mr Armstrong departed from this day and attempted to follow the biblical instructions for counting Pentecost, which resulted in a fixed second day of the week (Monday) Pentecost. In 1974 he modified his reckoning slightly and from then observed Pentecost on the first day of the week (Sunday). It will be illustrated below that none of these three reckonings were correct. For a complete biblical demonstration that Pentecost is always on the fixed date of Sivan 7 the reader is referred to my paper P4, *On Sivan 7 Pentecost was Fully Come!* (see Section 9.0 *References*).

5.2 A Preliminary Examination

Judaism observes Pentecost on Sivan 6 but adds to this Sivan 7 apparently as a 'just-in-case' day. In Acts 2:1 in connection with the Apostles' observance of their first Pentecost after Jesus' Ascension, we find a most significant phrase, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...". To see the significance of this phrase the reader should accept for the moment that the true Pentecost is indeed Sivan 7. The Jews would have

observed Pentecost one day earlier on Sivan 6; and so the Apostles would have waited beyond Sivan 6 till Sivan 7 when “the day of Pentecost was fully come”.

Mr Herbert W. Armstrong’s original Sivan 6 observance was that of Judaism and does not at all fit this Acts 2:1 phrase, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, ...”, and so Sivan 6 is unlikely to be the correct date. Anyway Mr Armstrong did reject Sivan 6 during the 1930s.

Mr Armstrong’s final choice was a Sunday Pentecost observance and this fell depending on the year on either Sivan 5, 6, 8 or 10. For the Crucifixion year the Passover was on a Wednesday and so Mr Herbert W. Armstrong’s reckoning would have given a ‘Sunday’ Sivan 8 Pentecost. Had this been the correct observance, then the disciples would have observed Pentecost on Sivan 8. This means they would have had to wait two days beyond Judaism’s Sivan 6 observance before this alleged true date of Sivan 8 came. This date does not fit that Acts 2:1 phrase as well as Sivan 7 does. Incidentally Mr Armstrong’s former ‘Monday’ Pentecost reckoning would have given for the Crucifixion year a Monday Sivan 9 Pentecost and that would have been an even worse fit for that Acts 2:1 phrase.

It is clear that Mr Herbert W. Armstrong’s Pentecost reckoning is in need of a thorough check and the following examination shows that Mr Herbert W. Armstrong always reckoned Pentecost incorrectly.

5.3 Exodus Chapter 19 Precludes both a Monday and a Sunday Pentecost!

It is a generally accepted fact that the Assembly at Mt. Sinai described in Exodus chapters 19 and 20 was the first Pentecost. For the moment the reader is asked to accept this and note the consequences this has on Mr Herbert W. Armstrong’s pre-1974 Monday and his post-1974 Sunday observance.

The reader is urged to read Exodus chapter 19 and note that verses 10 and 11 mark three specific days, which I will label Day-1, Day-2 and Day-3. Day-3 was the day of the Assembly at Mt Sinai on which Israel received the Ten Commandments. It was also the day of Israel’s marriage to God the Father, and it was Pentecost!

The reader is urged to note how God instructed Moses in verses 10 and 11 that Israel wash their clothes and erect barriers around Mt Sinai on Day-1 and Day-2 in preparation for the Day-3 Assembly. The morning of Day-1 was occupied with Moses going back and forth between God and the people to secure their agreement to God’s proposal for the Marriage covenant between God and Israel. This left only the afternoon of Day-1 and the whole of Day-2 for these preparations.

Let us now match Day-3, the day of the Assembly or Pentecost, in turn to Mr Armstrong’s pre-1974 Monday and his post-1974 Sunday Pentecost observance. When Day-3 is the pre-1974 Monday, then Day-1 is the weekly Sabbath; but when Day-3 is the post-1974 Sunday, then Day-2 will be the weekly Sabbath. In either case God would have instructed Israel to work on the weekly Sabbath to wash their clothes and erect a fence around the mountain. This is unlikely for God in Exodus chapter 16 God taught Israel to observe the seventh day Sabbath through ruling out even the collection of manna on the Sabbath. As a result we see another and even more compelling reason for questioning Mr Armstrong’s Pentecost observance.

5.4 The Confusion of Twin Reckoning Rules

Mr Herbert W. Armstrong observed ‘Sunday’ Pentecost on Sivan 6, 8 or 10 by counting 50 days from the day after the weekly Sabbath within the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

For some years that weekly Sabbath falls on the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is the holyday of Abib 21. For such years Mr Herbert W. Armstrong invoked a second rule to prevent counting being from outside the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He decided, albeit without any Bible justification, to count from the day after Passover because for such years the Passover (Abib 14) is also a weekly Sabbath. By counting from the day following that Passover weekly Sabbath, Mr Herbert W. Armstrong would be counting from within the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That day is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and is the holyday of Abib 15.

This confused second rule always gives the unlikely date of Sivan 5 for Pentecost and points to there being yet another difficulty with Mr Armstrong’s Pentecost reckoning rules.

5.5 In Summary

It is beyond the scope of this paper to show from the Bible that Sivan 7 is the date of Pentecost. This is done in detail in the paper P4, *On Sivan 7 Pentecost had fully come!* (See Section 9.0 References).

6.0 MR ARMSTRONG’S CHURCH ERA REVIEWED

6.1 The Sign Post to Laodicea

It has now been established that by 1974 Mr Armstrong had three major doctrinal errors, which shared the common thread of marriage – man’s marriage and God the Father’s Marriage to Israel. These errors were: (1) not knowing that God the Father was the Creator and *Husband* of Israel; (2) the 1974 rejection of the *Garden of Eden Marriage* law; and (3) not knowing the correct date of Pentecost on which day God the Father married Israel. When we consider this thread of marriage (man’s and God the Father’s) shared by these errors in the light of Mr Armstrong’s otherwise amazing and edifying teachings, two conclusions suggest themselves.

First it must be concluded that these three errors do not detract greatly from Mr Armstrong’s overall message. For example, his Pentecost date error does not detract from his teaching on the holy days of Leviticus chapter 23. Therefore these errors do not deny Mr Armstrong having been God’s 20th-century messenger.

Second it must be concluded that these three errors point through their common thread of marriage to Mr Armstrong not having truly known God the Father. There appears to have been some barrier between God the Father and Mr Armstrong with the result that Mr Armstrong was not been granted to see who was the O.T. Creator God and Husband of Israel and the date of His Marriage. Quite extraordinary!

It is this paper’s central thesis that this barrier between God the Father and Mr Armstrong resulted from Mr Armstrong always having been lukewarm to God the Father’s *Garden of Eden Marriage* law – even when prior to 1974 he taught this law. It seems God having seen a lukewarm attitude in Mr Armstrong’s heart towards this important law, did not grant Mr Armstrong full understanding of Himself. The *Garden of Eden Marriage* law is like a foundation stone for God’s very own Family. It is a major key to understanding the very spirit of the Bible. This key Mr Armstrong rejected in 1974. The Bible is about three marriage covenants: (1) man’s marriage covenant that began in Eden, (2) God the Father’s Marriage Covenant to Israel that began at Mt Sinai and (3) our Lord Jesus’s coming Marriage Covenant to His Bride the Church of God. Man’s marriage is an image of God the Father’s Marriage to Israel and indeed also of our Lord’s coming marriage to His Bride.

When all prophecy has been fulfilled and God has pronounced His judgments, *there will remain God the Father’s Family*. Our journey begins as carnal children born to carnal human parents; but as Mr Armstrong so beautifully taught, *we have the incredible potential of being born-again as literal spirit children of God the Father*. For this God the Father’s *Garden of Eden Marriage* law is pivotal. This law is the very foundation of God the Father’s Plan for His Family and this law Mr Armstrong rejected in 1974.

Mr Armstrong’s 1974 rejection of God’s pivotal *Garden of Eden Marriage* law shows that Mr Armstrong had always been lukewarm on the most fundamental issue of all! Although he had taught this law before 1974, he had never been truly committed to this law. We will see that this marks Mr Armstrong as having led from 1934 to 1974/79 God’s seventh and final era of Laodicea.

- Rev 3.14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;
- .15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
- .16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

NOTE: Some think that Mr Joseph Tkach was the lukewarm leader of Laodice because during the 1990s he rejected the entirety of Mr Armstrong’s teaching. That was not lukewarmness but ice coldness towards God’s biblical Truth! A lukewarm successor would not have rejected the entirety of Truth and returned the Worldwide Church of God to mainstream Christendom’s teaching. Many may find it difficult to accept lukewarmness as a valid descriptor of Mr Armstrong but that is what his 1974 rejection of the *Garden of Eden Marriage* shows.

6.2 Other Signs Of Mr Armstrong Being Lukewarm

Mr Armstrong’s 1977 marriage to the divorcee Mrs Ramona Martin, whose husband was still alive, is another sign of his having been lukewarm to God’s *Garden of Eden Marriage* law. That marriage was not only contrary to God’s *Garden of Eden Marriage* law (Mark 10:11-12; 1 Cor 7:39); but also contrary to God’s law for priests (Levi 21:7, 14). After all Mr Armstrong as pastor general to the Worldwide Church of God was also its priest. Besides that marriage shows a lack of wisdom for the 39-year old Mrs Martin was young enough to have been the 85-year old Mr Armstrong’s granddaughter. Not surprisingly that marriage ended in divorce in 1984. In the light of Mr Armstrong’s pre-1974 no remarriage after divorce teaching, it is difficult

to comprehend how he could have married a divorcee. It all points to Mr Armstrong being lukewarm to God's *Garden of Eden Marriage* law.

Another sign of Mr Armstrong having been lukewarm to God's *Garden of Eden Marriage* law is found in his Autobiography. When Mr Armstrong's first wife Mrs Loma Armstrong embraced the 7th-day weekly Sabbath, he "boiled over with anger" and "threatened to *divorce* his wife"! This is what he wrote on page 290 of volume 1 of the paperback edition of his Autobiography (emphasis mine):

QUOTE "I even threatened divorce, if my wife refused to give up this fanaticism, though in my heart I did not really mean it. In our family divorce was a thing unheard of- and beside, I was very much in love with my wife-though at the moment I was boiling over with anger"

Mr Armstrong claims not to have meant it but he did utter the threat and during the 1920s divorce was a major threat to a mother of two daughters. He writes that in his family divorce was unheard of, and this makes it all the more remarkable that he made this threat. It seems he was not really against divorce. It is true that he made the threat before his conversion but even that is significant for it shows that he always was less than committed to the *Garden of Eden Marriage* law. The events of the 1970s show that divorce and remarriage were not abhorrent to Mr Armstrong. *In other words he had always been lukewarm to God's Garden of Eden Marriage law.*

6.3 Laodicea Fits Mr Armstrong's Era

The descriptions for Laodicea of Revelation 3:14-21 fit Mr Armstrong's era well: indeed far better than those of Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13), which Mr Armstrong was fond of applying to the Worldwide Church of God.

- Rev 3.17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
- .18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

It is plain that the many hundreds of daughter and granddaughter churches that came from the former Worldwide Church of God have not understood what overtook them. For this they indeed need eyesalve. They still see themselves as richly endowed because they receive regular church magazines and Mr Armstrong's or similar literature. They are unaware they are wretched, miserable, naked (divorced and remarried!), blind and in need of eye-salve, which our Lord offers but which virtually none will accept! Most will be unable to understand this paper because they need eye-salve but which they refuse because they have become spiritually blinded.

6.4 The Natures of Philadelphia and Laodicea

Another pointer to Mr Armstrong having led from 1934 to 1974/79 Laodicea rather than Philadelphia are the names of these eras. The Greek for Philadelphia (Strong # 5359) is a composite of two Greek roots 'philos' (Strong # 5384) meaning *friend* and 'adelphos' (Strong # 80) meaning *brother*; and so Philadelphia means *Friend of Brother* or *Brotherly Love*. The Greek for Laodicea (Strong # 2993) is also a composite of two Greek roots 'laos' (Strong # 2992) meaning *people* and 'dike' (Strong #1349) meaning *lawsuit* or *judgment*: and so Laodicea means *The People Judged*.

The era led by Mr Armstrong was not noted for friendship or love for brother and so could not have been Philadelphia. Rather it was the era where ministers lorded it over the people. Any member asking awkward questions on doctrine or church governance would be judge as having a bad attitude; worthy of either suspension or excommunication. Anyone questioning an aspect of doctrine with his brothers or sisters in the church ran the risk of being reported to the minister, with similar consequences. Instead of enjoying a spirit of friendship for brother or sister in the church, members learned to play their doctrinal cards close to their chest. Yet the ongoing 1990s schisms show just how deeply divided the former Worldwide Church of God had been – even amongst the ministry!

The rules Paul gave for expelling those guilty of gross misconduct were misapplied to expel those who honestly sought clarification on doctrine. The general presumption was that Mr Armstrong and his ministers could not be wrong and so doctrine must not be questioned by the people. Those that did were judged lacking

in God's holy spirit or having a bad attitude and would soon be thrown to the wolves – hardly a sign of Brotherly Love (Philadelphia)!

The former Worldwide Church of God lacked the characteristics of Philadelphia (Love or Friendship for Brother) but rather had the characteristics of Laodicea (People Judged)!

6.5 Laodicea Spewed Out in 1979!

Revelation 3:14-16 shows that our Lord eventually spewed the messenger to Laodicea from His mouth.

On January 18, 1979 Mr Armstrong wrote a distressed letter to the Brethren and Co-workers from Tuscon in the neighbouring state of Arizona rather than from his California Pasadena Headquarters (Autobiography ppbck Vol 2, pp 600-603). Mr Armstrong had been driven from his Pasadena Headquarters when the State of California laid siege to the Pasadena Headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God. The State sought to investigate the financial affairs of the Worldwide Church of God after a number of ex-members accused the church administration of having improperly used church funds. During this crisis Mr Armstrong's eventual successor, the late Mr Joseph W. Tkach, stood in the breach at Pasadena and prevented the authorities from entering the Administrative building by conducting there ongoing church services. It has been said that Mr Tkach saved the Worldwide Church of God but can the man who during the 1990s trashed the entirety of Mr Armstrong's teachings be considered the saviour of the Worldwide Church of God founded by Mr Armstrong? Hardly! Rather we must conclude that the State of California's intervention, which drove Mr Armstrong from his Pasadena Headquarters, marked our Lord spewing Mr Armstrong and his ministry from His mouth (Rev 3:16).

This is not to be wondered at for in 1974 Mr Armstrong committed perhaps the worst apostasy ever in the Church of God when he rejected the pivotal *Garden of Eden Marriage* law. Instead of repenting of this in 1977 Mr Armstrong worsened his sin by marrying a divorcee whose husband was still alive (1 Cor 7:39). God had given Mr Armstrong several years to repent and he must have been aware that his 1974 rejection of the *Garden of Eden Marriage* law had already led to a major church schism. When we review the history of the Worldwide Church of God from 1979 till Mr Tkach openly declared his hand during the 1990s, it is plain that this church was never the same again. The final collapse was delayed until after Mr Armstrong's 1986 death but subsequent events and accompanying doctrinal confusion amongst the splinter churches indicate that the wheels had come off during the 1970s.

When we take together all these signs and in particular the common thread of marriage of Mr Armstrong's three post-1974 doctrinal errors and the Laodicean (People Judged) rather than Philadelphian (Brotherly Love) nature of the former Worldwide Church of God, and the continuing splintering of the churches of God, we can come to only one conclusion, namely: that from 1934 to 1974/79 Mr Armstrong had led God's seventh and final church era of Laodicea rather than Philadelphia as he had claimed.

7.0 WHERE IS THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD?

Unfortunately many entered the Worldwide Church of God for wrong reasons and these failed to grow in grace and knowledge and so were later readily snared by all manner of false teachings. Wrong reasons for entering the Church of God include: seeking access to a *Place of Safety* during the coming *Tribulations*, glorying in being an Israelite, pride in having superior Bible understanding, etc. *There is only one valid reason for entering the Church of God after receiving one's call and that is a total commitment to God the Father's wish to have His very own Family!*

Reading church literature and doing the correspondence course are fine as introductory studies but the real study begins when we start reading God's Word annually from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 to verify all doctrines and glean what else God's Word contains. Only then do we begin receiving God's Truth in larger measure and do we grow in grace and knowledge. This will not happen when we sit passively through Sabbath sermons and say Amen to whatever is taught.

Above all let us never lose sight of the fact that we were called to promote God the Father's wish for His very own Family. The true church of God are those people who understand and dedicate themselves to God the Father's Family.

We need an answer the question, *Where is God's true church in the days following Laodicea?* Jesus promised that His church would not perish, so where is it? It can not be a fallible human church administration to which we were originally called, for this has been spewed from our Lord's mouth and today we see the spew spreading worldwide.

The true church can only be the *Unity in Truth* with God the Father and with Jesus for which Jesus prayed in John 17:17-23. This *Unity in Truth* is the Church of God, but which is invisible to the world.

The Elect were first called to a human Church of God organization, which in our day was the former Worldwide Church of God led by Mr Herbert W. Armstrong. Through this we received much initial sound teaching. We must grow in grace and knowledge (2Pet 3:18) and for this and post 1979 we should primarily fellowship with our Lord Jesus (Rev 3:20). Our Lord warns in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen": and so we must expect that the invisible church of God will have only *few* members chosen from the *many* called originally.

Compare this with God's final selection of 300 men from Gideon's initial 32,000 (Judges 7). Note especially that those 300 checked before imbibing by drinking from their hand: whereas the rest drank straight from the stream. This is a type of the *many* in the former Worldwide Church of God who uncritically imbibed doctrine instead of first verifying this from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. Human church organizations soon become corrupt; and so we must be ever vigilant. We need to sup with our Lord on solid spiritual food and be weaned from the weak spiritual milk dispensed by ministers. We must accept the Primacy of Jesus rather than the primacy of fallible men.

Those who insist on true doctrine, will soon find themselves cast out of the Churches of God.

8.0 IN CONCLUSION

It was shown that Mr Herbert W. Armstrong, who led the Radio Church of God and the Worldwide Church of God from 1934 till his death in 1986, had from 1974 three doctrinal errors, whose common thread of marriage points to his having lead from 1939 to 1974/79 God's seventh and final church era of Laodicea. Further that the events that overtook the former Worldwide Church of God during the 1970s, 1980s and especially the 1990s, are biblical prophecy concerning Laodicea fulfilled before our eyes but which only few have recognized.

It was shown that the root cause was Mr Armstrong being lukewarm towards God the Father's *Garden of Eden Marriage* law, which he rejected in 1974. As a result Mr Armstrong was not granted to know (1) that God the Father is the Creator, God of Eden, God of Exodus, *Husband of Israel* and His own Word to the O.T. patriarchs and to the O.T. prophets; and (2) the correct date of God the Father's Marriage to Israel.

Members of God's Church must expect to be tested. In earlier eras many were martyred for observing the 7th-day Sabbath. So far our era was tested less severely but tested we were by the events that overtook the Worldwide Church of God during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This caused many to throw the baby out with the bathwater through not understanding what was behind it all. The purpose of this paper is to remind members of the former Worldwide Church of God of the deeper aspects of the events of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It is hoped this paper will lead at least a few to reconsider their decisions made after 1974 and especially during the 1990s.

9.0 REFERENCES

The following papers referred to above are available for downloading from www.rightly-dividing.net or by writing to the address shown on the title page:

- (P2) *God the Father is the Creator and Husband of Israel!*,
- (P3) *The Garden of Eden No-Divorce & No-Remarriage Law,*
- (P4) *On Sivan 7 Pentecost was Fully Come!*,
- (P5) *The Bible Shows Jesus Was A Self-Existent God,*
- (Q9) *The Seven Church Eras of Revelation.*

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