

From Rubble to Utopia

The Work of Millennium

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In his book, *The Wonderful World Tomorrow: What it will be Like*, Herbert Armstrong paints a glowing, attractive picture of the Millennium. The Millennium, of course, is the thousand-year reign of Christ that begins with His return to power as King of kings over all the earth. Over the years, many have found Mr. Armstrong's vision of the Millennium to be inspiring and hopeful—and it is. We all remember all the wonderful things that he told us, through the prophecies, are going to occur through that period of time. The Millennium's peace, health, prosperity, and unity are just wonderful, tremendous things to look forward to.

I feel, however, that many in the church have not realistically considered what it is going to *take* to get from here to there. I do not imagine Jesus Christ coming back to this earth waving a magic wand, saying "Abracadabra" and suddenly everything is wonderful and Utopia dawns for this planet Earth. No, it is going to take some time and some work before Utopia springs from the ashes of a demolished planet Earth because that too is in the prophecies in Revelation.

Have you ever counted how many plagues there are in the book of Revelation? Have you ever counted how many wars there are in the book of Revelation? Do you know the devastation that the book of Zechariah, especially the fourteenth chapter, says will occur on this planet because of the Beast and his army coming up against other armies and then finally coming up against the One who will put them down—Jesus Christ Himself?

In fact, the idea of Christ waving a magic wand is entirely alien to the way He and His Father works. Has He ever, regularly let us say, performed miracles to get you out of your fixes? Now, He may actually do that, but in small ways that allow you to incrementally grow. And who ends up doing a lot of the work? You do. And how is it that we grow in character, as we heard in the sermonette today? By years of experience, going through pain, suffering, going through spiritual projects that bring us finally to the point of maturity.

Do you think God is going to change the way He works just because a new day dawns in the Millennium? We may have thought so, but I do not think that is the case. There are too many times in the Scriptures that God Himself says, "I change not."

So, today, we are going to look at the "transition period" between Christ's return and the Utopia, the wonderful world tomorrow that we all imagine in our mind's eye that the Millennium will be like. It *will* be like that. But between here and there, a lot has to happen, and a lot of that which has to happen is a lot of hard work. As Mr. Armstrong used this word, the conditions of the Millennium will not come about by *fiat*. It is going to come about by experience, and work in cooperation with God. And that is what the Millennium is all about, God being here and mankind finally cooperating with Him.

Let us go to Joel 3, and let us see where maybe we get the idea that there is going to be a very

sudden change in the way things are. In a way, you could say it is the fault of the Biblical writers because they looked forward to this to. They did not want to have to deal, necessarily, with the transition between the bad and the good. They often just left it out, allowing us to fill in the gap. It is not a terrible thing. God wanted it this way. But we can see here in Joel 3 where we might have gotten the idea that there is going to be a very clear line of demarcation. Suddenly, on one side there is total utopia, whereas there was total ruin and rubble on the other.

Joel 3:14-18 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again." [Just notice how quick the transition here is.] And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; a fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Acacias.

It sounds as if you take one extra step and, whoop, there you are. Have you ever tried to grow new wine or make new wine? Do you know how long it takes to plant, let us say a grape seed, or take a cutting from a grape plant? Do you know how long you have to allow it to grow and mature so that it finally gets to the point where it is able to produce enough good fruit so that you can get a good squeezing and you can have new wine? It takes several years to do that. It even takes a little while to even ferment that new wine. That is a short time compared to all the rest of it, but it takes a long time to grow vineyards, to make new wine.

You have to remember how the land will be at that point. There will be devastation everywhere. Does it not say it will even take just about seven years to bury all the bodies from all the devastation that is going to take place? How long is it going to take to make plowshares from all those weapons of war? These things take time. They do not happen overnight.

What Joel did here was simply show the result of Christ's return, of making Jerusalem His holy mountain. The results are shown immediately without the intervening work and effort that it is going to take and the time element that is involved in producing the new wine, and the hills flowing with milk, and the brooks being flooded with water.

Let us go over a few pages to Amos 9. Amos gives a little better idea of the time and the amount of work it is going to take than Joel does. I have nothing against Joel. He was a good man I am sure. But his book was very much about the terrible conditions that will be taking place just before the Day of the LORD and in the Day of the LORD. And the millennial conditions are almost an afterthought. Amos takes a little bit more time with it. Let us just read the first verse and get the feel of what is happening.

Amos 9:1 I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and He said: "Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds may shake, and break them on the heads of them all. I will slay the last of them with the sword. He who flees from them shall not get away, and he who escapes from them shall not be delivered.

He is talking here about the destruction of Israel coming from God. But we can say that this is just the beginning of the things that will be happening at the time of the end. Let us go down to verse 11 now. All the destruction has happened now.

Amos 9:11-15 "On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does this thing. "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.

Now this is a far more realistic scenario than what Joel presented. In verse 11, he speaks about rebuilding the house of David. It is talking about the dynasty. Now how long does it take to rebuild a dynasty? Well, it could take generations to finally get the house of David back to where God wants the house of David to be character-wise, so that those sons of the house of David may be fit to rule His people again.

It says in verse 12, that *in time* they may possess the remnant of Edom and the rest of the Gentiles. Notice the word *may* there. That shows that God is working with the house of David for a period of time so that *eventually* they will have the character to rule over the Edomites and others of the Gentiles.

Verse 13 gives the impression of some time passing before the plowman overtakes the reaper and so forth. It takes time. This is an entire harvest cycle that takes place. And it does not show them miraculously planting, growing, and reaping crops. You see people out in the fields in these verses *doing* these things. There are people working. Verse 14 speaks of building, planting vineyards, making gardens. These are all long-term projects he is talking about here, not instantaneous miracles.

Now, let us think about this for a moment. As I said before, God tells us emphatically in several places (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17), that He does not change. There is no variation of turning in Him. His approach to things does not vary by very much.

Knowing that, do you think that He will work with the people in the Millennium any differently than He is working with you and me right now? If you change the approach, do you not change the outcome? Often times that is the case. So the goal for us and the goal for them will be the same? to become sons and daughters of God in His image. And so He is going to use the exact same process to make that happen with them as He is using with us now. The same goal requires the same approach.

But they will have advantages that we do not have, which I hope will speed the process up for them. For one thing, they are going to have very God as King of kings and Lord of lords right here with them, and a whole army, at least 144,000 of very strong-charactered members of the

God Family to help. That is a tremendous advantage. Remember in one place it says they will have people behind them saying "This is the way. Walk you in it." But they are still going to have to walk the way. We are not going to be doing it for them. And Jesus Christ is not going to be doing it for them. Because if He did, He would not produce the sons and daughters for His Father that the Father requires.

They will also have another advantage that we do not have, and that will be, they will not have the influence of Satan to trip them up. Of course, they will still have their own human nature, the pulls of the flesh, and we know how strong they are. And even without Satan about to pull our strings and push our buttons, it will still be difficult for those people to overcome. We are protected in a great measure from Satan by God, and we still have problems overcoming our flesh. So they are going to have to work on that. And we know that that process is going to take time.

So what method has God used to build godly character in His children? (I think Greg Smith stole my notes! But it is good that he spoke this morning because then I do not have to spend so much time on this.) He uses instruction and experience over a lifetime. It has been all my life, and I am sure for many of you it has been a great chunk of your life. And we are all perfect, are we not? No, we still have a ways to go. And He will allow us to live until He feels that we are done.

Finally, at one point in our life, He will consider to have developed the character sufficient to be in His Kingdom and to be His sons and daughters. And that is the way it is going to work in the Millennium too. We do not know how their lives will end. We do not know if they will die and be resurrected, or how all of that is going to work. It does not say in the Book. But they are going to go through the same type of process we are now except for a few advantages.

And that is why, because they have those advantages, that you and I have a better resurrection. That we are first and we face these trials of life, our flesh, Satan the Devil, without the direct participation of God *on the earth* with us. We had to act in faith, knowing that He was in heaven, invisible. And so, kudos for us if we succeed. And then we will be in the first resurrection and reigning with Him on His throne forever.

But God's way, God's method, is going to continue the same at that time, in the Millennium. His people will learn and grow in godly character how? What will their projects be? What will "the work" be then? We have read it twice: rebuilding the earth, rebuilding the cities, pulling the society out of the ashes and refashioning it in God's image?not in the image of Satan as it was.

These people who will be alive in the Millennium will have to learn to work together, because, in the past, all work was *competition*. In the Millennium, all work will be *cooperation*. They will have to learn to prioritize properly. In their work, they will have to learn that God comes first and not the work. And that will be helpful because in our work we have to sometimes take a lot of risks to put God first. But then they will have the advantage of a society where God does come first, but they will have to learn that and that will take time.

They will have to learn to share, to learn to live in harmony just as we do. But all of this will be done in the massive planet-wide renewal project that God has in store during the Millennium. In fact, it is my own personal opinion that this planet-wide renewal will occupy most of the

thousand years.

Think about it. How much will have to be done to get this earth back into a condition where it is fit for God? I am not saying that we are going to be doing all of that and that God will not, like it says there at the end of II Peter, "with a fervent heat just destroy everything." But we do have God living on this planet during the Millennium, correct? And it will be the responsibility of the people in cooperation with God, and all the other members of the God Family, to make it a fit place for Him, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let us take this one step further. Do we not know that the Millennium (as we heard in the sermon yesterday morning), is not the end all of civilization, is it? The Millennium is not the goal. It is actually a transition period in itself to another time, the time we know as the Great White Throne Judgment period? a hundred years, we think, tacked on to the end of the Millennium.

And what is going to happen then? Oh, just fifty billion people, or so, suddenly appearing, needing food, clothing, shelter, work, and many other things to do. Do you think this planet could sustain fifty billion people suddenly, right now, the way it is? I do not think so. As a matter of fact, God Himself is going to have to open up areas for them to live that are currently uninhabitable.

And I think a great deal of the millennial period is going to be preparing for that time. These people in the Millennium are going to have to learn to put their own needs second in preparation for the great onslaught of humanity that will come with the Great White Throne period. Preparing them housing, opening up lands for agriculture so that there will be food for fifty billion people day in and day out, enough clothes set by for fifty billion people all at once. And I am sure they are not all going to be dressed in orange prison uniforms.

There are things that have to be done to prepare for that time. And in that preparation, they will be doing the work of God. This is my own projection of what it is going to take to get ready for that number of people, but it is a work of God that is going to have to be accomplished. And I think that in doing that work of God, the people themselves will be prepared for their place in God's Kingdom.

So these dual physical projects, rebuilding civilization from the ashes and preparing for the Great White Throne Judgment, will fill up the thousand years of the Millennium. These things are not going to happen overnight. I was looking at the TV today. They had a few shots of the state of Israel. And that place is a dump. It is a dump now. What do you think it is going to look like after the armies go through there? There has been constant fighting there for generations.

It is probably one of the bloodiest places on the planet. The crossroads between East and West, connector between Africa, Europe, and Asia, armies have gone through there, migrations have gone through there. And the place looks as if it has been rutted from all of the people who have gone through there and just taken their toll on it. The place is barren. It is not the land flowing with milk and honey that we read of in the Scriptures.

The Israeli's have done a wonderful job reclaiming some of that land from the desert, but it is not enough. That place in time *will* look like the Garden of Eden, but it is going to take time.

God will help, but the people will be involved too, as part of the great project, His work, to put the earth in shape.

Let us go to Isaiah 40. I want to show a few things that God will be doing Himself, things that we cannot do, that man cannot do himself.

Isaiah 40:1-5 "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins." [This is the time after Christ has returned. It kind of goes back and forth here because verse 3 seems to imply before He comes back but I may just have the timing off here.] The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [This next verse is what I was getting to] Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

I do not know if many of you know the word "terraforming?" It is a science fiction term. I guess it could be a real science term, but it means "forming the earth," terraforming. It is a massive project, in science fiction it is often used for whole planets where you get the planet ready for human civilization.

I get the impression, mostly from verse four, that God Himself will take on a terraforming project, to lower some of the mountains and to raise some of the valleys. I am sure that rift valley there going through Palestine is going to be raised up to a better level. Places like the "Grand Crayon," as my aunt used to call it. It sits out in the middle of a desert with the little Colorado River running through the bottom of it. That sort of thing will be made arable.

I was watching a television show about a year and a half ago that was on the weather effects of the Himalayan Mountains. They were saying that this huge block of ice there in central Asia regulates the monsoons, puts the monsoons so that they dump *all* their water on Bangladesh every year. And it regulates the climates of all the countries east and south of there to the oceans. And it has even wider ranging effects because of the way the jet stream has to go around that great block of ice.

What happens if you take about twenty thousand feet, about four miles worth, off the top of that mountain? How would that change the weather patterns of the world? That is what they were trying to figure out. Because they said, using the evolutionary thinking, that so many millions or billions of years ago that is how tall they were. And so they were trying to figure out how climate patterns had changed over all these millions of years.

But that is just one part of the earth. What about the Gobi Desert? What about the Sahara Desert? What about some of those other places, the ice caps? There is a huge continent called Antarctica that is uninhabitable because it is so cold. What if that was made fit for human life somehow? I could not do it. I do not think there is a person on earth that could even model how it could be done. But God knows. He has to make this planet able to support fifty billion people over time. He has a great project ahead for Himself, to make this planet fit for that many people.

Let us go Zechariah 14. This is something that is going to happen in the land of Israel itself, particularly Judah, the Judean Hills. Zechariah writes:

Zechariah 14:10 All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: Jerusalem shall be raised, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate to the place of the first gate, and to the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

This is talking about a terraforming project that God has in store for the land of Israel. Geba is about ten miles north of Jerusalem. It is right on the border between the tribal plot of Benjamin and Judah. And Rimmon is about thirty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem, not very far from Beersheba. It is about 10 miles north of Beersheba. And what he says here is that this whole area, the Judean hills south of Jerusalem and somewhat north of Jerusalem, will be made into a plain.

It is all uphill and downhill there now. These areas are going to be lowered. And I get an impression that Jerusalem is going to be like the Space Needle in Seattle; visible for miles around as the tallest thing that one can see. Then He will do some terraforming of Jerusalem itself it says here. He will basically rebuild the city. The implication here is that most of the Holy Land as we see it now will no longer be there. It will be changed somehow to be the fit abode for Jesus Christ and those who sit with Him on His throne and rule for a thousand years as kings and priests.

Back to Isaiah 35. We always seem to come to this verse during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Isaiah 35:1-2, 6-7 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God. . . . For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals [Those are dogs, by the way.], where each lay [It is talking about these jackals live in desolate places, dry places where no one else wants to live.], there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Here are some of the effects of God's terraforming project. A lot of this, as I see it, is reversing the effects of man's sins and the way he has raped the earth. Does it not say there in Revelation that when Christ is back He is going to destroy those who destroy the earth? He is concerned about His creation and about the way man has treated the environment. Sure, God gave man dominion over this earth. He told them to tend and keep, but when has man ever done anything that God has asked him to do? Instead he has used and abused, torn down, for the most part, rather than build up.

It does not say here anywhere in the Bible how God will do these things, just that He will. Just think about how much land could be reclaimed if there was rainfall over the Sahara Desert. It does say in Zechariah 14 that one of the punishments on the Egyptians will be that they will receive no rain. I can just see all of the Egyptians over there laughing, saying, "I don't care if it

rains. It hasn't rained here for three, four, five, six thousand years." That is no punishment for them. They depend upon the water of the Nile.

See, you get the impression that in the Millennium they are going to be depending upon rainfall for agriculture. It would not be a very good punishment if it did not hurt. So somehow, God is going to water the land?not just Judah, not just Israel, but the *whole* earth will blossom as a rose. Springs of water will be where it was dry before and desert. The habitation of jackals will be grassy instead of dusty. There is a lot that is going to have to happen.

Now, back a few pages to Isaiah 30: 23, another millennial section about how God will provide.

Isaiah 30:23 Then He will give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground, and bread of the increase of the earth; it will be fat [meaning prosperous] and plentiful. In that day your cattle will feed in large pastures.

I can just imagine North Africa being a quite large pasture land where the Sahara Desert is now. There is not a whole lot of high ground there now, but turn all of those dunes into pasture land, and how many cattle could roam that plain? It is interesting to think about.

Isaiah 30:24 Likewise the oxen and the young donkeys that work the ground will eat cured fodder [not just any old fodder, but cured fodder], which has been winnowed with the shovel and fan.

The implication here is that they are going to eat stuff that we consider fit for human consumption. They will have the best grain to eat themselves, not what we throw off as refuse.

Isaiah 30:25 There will be on every high mountain and on every high hill rivers and streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

It tells you when this is going to take place. It is just after the time that the day of great slaughter will happen that God will begin this process. Have you ever gone up into the mountains and notice how dry it is up in mountains? I go up into the mountains and I turn into parchment or something. My skin starts flaking. There may be snow up there, but even with the snow on top of the mountains, it seems to be dry. At least that is the way I have always had the impression. God says that it is not going to be like that in the Millennium. There will be streams of water on every mountain and on every high hill.

Isaiah 30:26 Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD binds up the bruise of His people and heals the stroke of their wound.

I wonder if this is the answer to why the plowman will overtake the reaper? That somehow God is going to make it so that the earth will be able to produce sevenfold. The implication comes from this is that even the light of the moon will act like the light of the sun in producing crops. Is that not how things grow? Give them water, give them light, give them the right cultivation, the right soil, and they will produce, maybe it is sevenfold. I do not know, but that is what you can infer from those chapters.

Please turn over about thirty chapters to Isaiah 61. This is the series of verses that Christ used to announce His Messiahship, I believe it is in Luke 4. But He stopped halfway through verse

two, because he knew that if he said the rest of it He would be lying. That is not why He had come. The Scriptures that He read were for His first coming, but after that is for His second coming. And so He stopped before He went on to those verses.

Isaiah 61:1-2a "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. . .

And that is where He stopped, I believe. He did not go on because this is what He is going to do when He comes the second time.

Isaiah 61:2b-4 . . . and the day of vengeance of our God [That is what happens first when He returns.]; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.

It says that God will plant the Israelites in the land. And why? It says that He will plant the Israelites in the land, and the very next thing that He says is "that they may be called trees of righteousness." Now what does this say to you? He then says in verse 4 that once they are planted in the land to become trees of righteousness that He gives them something to do. To rebuild the old ruins, raise up the former desolations, repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.

When God puts things back to back, oftentimes they are related somehow. What I got from this was that the two verses, the end of verse 3 and verse 4, are linked. And that verse 4 shows *how*, or by what means, they become trees of righteousness. Just put it this way, that while they are rebuilding the old cities and the ruined places and the desolate places, they will be *becoming* trees of righteousness. That the project that they do and the work of righteousness are connected. The rebuilding is intertwined with their spiritual growth.

Think about it in the sense of your own life. When God calls you to become a tree of righteousness, what does He ask you to do? Does He not ask you to rebuild your entire life? Does He not ask you to correct the desolations of many generations? That is exactly what He is going to ask the people of the Millennium to do, except that they will be doing physical work, but it will have spiritual overtones. And we will be preaching to them these spiritual reasons for why they are doing what they are doing. It is this physical project which will be the work of God that they will do. And who knows how long that work will take?

We have a different work from them. God always has a slightly different work for each period of time. Noah's work was different from Moses' work. Moses' work was different from Joshua's work. Joshua's work was very different from Jephthah's work. And on and on it goes. David had a quite different job than someone like Ezra. And so in the Millennium, their work will be different from our work. They will have areas of similarity, but it is going to be that while they are doing that work of God that they will be growing. And that is how it works with us too.

Isaiah 61:5-7 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, men shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs.

This really gives a very good indication of the work of Israel. Remember, this is primarily spoken to Israel. There are overtones for us. There always is. That is the way God writes things?to have several levels of meaning. But this one is specifically written for Israel during the Millennium. Because, remember, it is talking about Christ coming back bringing Israel back into her former habitations and putting them to work.

What do they do? They are rebuilding the old waste places. And how long that takes, I do not know. But it appears that the rebuilding will be first. They have to have a place to live. They have to make conditions right.

Then it says that strangers and Gentiles will become their workforce. That is kind of interesting. "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers." What is Israel going to do while all the work is being done for them by these Gentiles who bring their wealth to Jerusalem? It tells you very clearly what they will be doing. Israelites "shall be named priests of the LORD. Men shall call you servants of our God." What does that tell you that, after they finish rebuilding, the Israelites will do? They are going to do their original job.

What did God call Israel to be for Him? A nation of priests. They are going to be the servants, the ministers, of God during the Millennium. Remember, it says in I Timothy 5:17 that an elder is to receive double honor if he does his work well. Well, it says in verse 7, "Instead of your shame, you shall have double honor." This was also the inheritance of the firstborn which was double. So what the impression is here is that they are going to be the elders, the ministers, the servants, the preachers, the teachers in the Millennium?teaching their fellow human beings.

Now those who will be in the first resurrection will be working with them behind the scenes, directing these efforts, ruling and teaching them. But they are the ones who are going to be going out, evangelizing. See, we do not necessarily need to do that work because we have already gotten our reward. We have already overcome and grown and been changed. And now God will use human beings to preach the Word.

It would be great to have God speak at us all the time and tell us what to do, but for human beings we would feel like "it's impossible." "That's God. He's telling us what to do. We are just normal human beings. It might be easy for Him to do, but for us it is impossible." And so God uses humans to speak with humans and to teach humans so that they form a brotherhood and they understand that their teachers understand what they are going through and can help them with their problems?just like happens today.

Do you notice that the apostle Paul has not been resurrected as a spirit to teach us today. God allows *men* to do that work because it is a little easier coming from a man than from an

all-powerful God. It is a psychological thing, but it also means that the preachers are going through the same thing and the same growth as those who are listening. So it is a little bit easier. It works a little bit better. Otherwise it would just be like God speaking ex-cathedra all the time. It would not make the impression on us that having a brother teach does.

Isaiah 61:8-9, 11 "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering [That is really a poor translation. It is really, "I hate robbery in iniquity." The words "iniquity" and "burnt offering" are really very close. It makes more sense to say "I hate robbery in iniquity."]; I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant. Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed." . . . For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

This section primarily covers the Israelite's reward once they repent. But there is an underlying idea here. That idea is in the phrase, "the Gentiles will know them and their descendants." Now, how do they know them? What is it that makes them different? It says here that it is their work, the covenant that they have, and the blessing they receive. Those three things, the Gentiles will know them and their descendants because of Israel's work, Israel's covenant, and Israel's blessing. It is what they *do*, the *relationship* they have with God, and the *reward* that they receive from having that relationship and doing that work. The Gentiles, then, in seeing this, will appreciate it. They will get the right example from it. It will draw them. They will want to emulate it.

I wanted to talk about this phrase, "work in truth." It is very interesting. It is a hint that they are going to redo what they failed to do back when they came out of Egypt. Part of God's reward to Israel is to give them their original jobs back, their original work back. Their "work in truth" was to be priests of God. But they erred and went off and left that work behind and did their own thing. Every man did what was right in his own eyes. And so He says that He will "direct their work in truth." They will finally get back to doing the job that God had given them originally. And through them, in doing that work, the truth will spread.

Let us go back to Exodus 19 and just see what that original job was. This was just before the 10 Commandments were given.

Exodus 19:1-4 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

I always thought that was so funny. They would walk the whole way, but God considered it eagles' wings. Just apply that to Revelation 12 and you will get the joke.

Exodus 19:5-8 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,

then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

I think it is very interesting that God is going to hold them to their oath. It has been delayed by about 3,500 years, but God is going to make them do that work, to be a kingdom of priests to Him and to be a light to the Gentiles, to evangelize them and to show them the way of God. And all the indications from the Bible are that the Gentiles are going to lap it up much faster than the Israelites ever did. It says that the Gentile kings will bring the Israelite's sons and daughters from afar. They will bring all their wealth. They will be the nurses and nannies of the Israelite's children.

That may be more figurative, but the idea is that the Gentile nations will be willing to serve the Israelites because they have the right attitude. They will be taught the right way. I can imagine them doing it, because God seemed to pick the most stubborn people to be His. And the other peoples of the world, when they hear the truth and God opens their eyes, they jump in with both feet.

So, during the Millennium, the Israelites are going to do the work that they *failed* to do. They will be the priests, the ministers, the teachers, the evangelists. They will be the ones who will spread the Gospel. They will be the ones who feed the flock. And this time, they are going to do it properly as they should have done before.

Let us go to Ezekiel 44. We will see one indication of this, a specific indication. This is the area in Ezekiel where he had revealed to him the millennial temple. And God gives them a few instructions about the priests as well.

Ezekiel 44:10 "And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity.

Meaning God has not cleared them of that quite yet. Verse 11, this is how they are going to clear their name before God.

Ezekiel 44:11-15 "Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. "Because they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them," says the Lord God, "that they shall bear their iniquity. "And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. "Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it. (This is talking about the Levites.) "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the

fat and the blood," says the Lord God.

It is kind of interesting. Did you notice what He said? That those who failed to what He had told them to do, He was going to give them the drudge jobs. They would be the gatekeepers. They would do the things that they failed to do before. But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok who had done it right, they get the priestly jobs, the better jobs. But they are still doing the work that Israel was supposed to do, specifically the Levites, who were put in charge of the Temple, Tabernacle, and all the holy things. So this specific tribe is going to be doing what it was given to do in the Wilderness. I just thought that was very interesting.

Back to Isaiah 62. This falls right on the heels of what we just read there in Isaiah 61. I did not make much of Isaiah 61:11. I probably should have. I will go ahead and read it again. Then we will go right into chapter 62.

Isaiah 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

What I failed to mention was that this has to do with the work that God gives them to do. It is *in this* manner that God, then, will cause righteousness to spring forth across the nations. That He will send Israel out as His emissaries, as the proper example of His way of life, and righteousness will spring forth from all the nations.

Isaiah 62:1-2 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name.

Isaiah 62:11-12 Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.'" And they shall call them The Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, a City Not Forsaken.

Israel's righteousness, when it finally does spring forth, will cause the Gentiles to come in droves. Like I said, they have always seemed a bit better at reacting to what God does than the Israelites. Now, this section applies both to the church and to Israel. These things apply to us as God's sons and daughters, but we are going to be spirit then. And at this time, in the Millennium, it is going to specifically apply to them.

But that is what happens with us, is it not? Oftentimes people come into the church because of our righteousness and the things that they see. They always say that word of mouth is the best advertising, but that is wrong. It is the shining example of God's people that is the best advertisement. It is really something we probably do not see very often. We do not mark the distinction so much. But somebody who does not know God's way and sees it for the first time can be very much impressed.

And if they watch for any reasonable amount of time, they can see that the reason why a person acts as he does is because of those things I mentioned earlier about Israel's work, its covenant, and its blessing. They go together. The work is what is noticed, what the people do,

how they act, what they offer. The covenant is the relationship with God. If people notice the work and try to link things together, it is not very long before they see that the reason why you do what you do is because of the relationship you have with God. Because that is the center-point of all of our activities.

And, then, it is not very long, if they go that far, before they see the blessings that come from that relationship and from that work. Those three things go together and we see them working with us. And that is how it is going to work in the Millennium too. Israel's example is going to be a shining beacon that attracts the Gentiles.

I am sure that it is not going to take very long once Israel begins showing its example—a proper example—that the Gentiles will come in multiple thousands of people. Maybe the "Acts 2" type of baptisms could take place. And eventually the area of influence of God's way is going to spread from Jerusalem, spread from the land of Israel, as this example keeps going into the further reaches of the earth.

Because you have to admit, there is still going to be human nature. Even though Christ will come back with all power, there are still going to be people who resist, and it is going to take awhile for nations to give up sovereignty to Jesus Christ. Just look how difficult it is for nations to give up sovereignty to a human organization like the United Nations. Nations do not want to give up their independence. It is going to take awhile before they learn of Jesus Christ's mercy, His goodness, and His wisdom in rulership. So, it may take awhile. Israel's example will be needed. And that is what they will be doing.

You all probably know these next verses by heart.

Isaiah 2:2-4 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains [Meaning, as Mr. Armstrong always said, talking about governments], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. [That is interesting. Once you establish God's government on this earth, people see it on the top of the hill like that bright and shining light. It says that the nations begin to flow into it.] Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. [Through the Israelites. That is their work.] He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

That is the effect of the law going out from Jerusalem. It will bring peace. I do not know how long it will take for Christ, with the rod of iron, to subdue all nations. I do not know if it is going to take some time after He comes. The Bible just is not quite clear on that. He will come and establish His throne in Jerusalem. Maybe He will have to put out a few fires. Man is rebellious. Remember, it does say that if Egypt does not come to the Feast, He will plague them with no rain.

But it will not take long, once Israel is doing its work, for the nations to begin to flow to God. It will not take long once they begin to see Israel's work as related to the covenant that they have

with God and the blessings they receive.

Isaiah 66:19 shows that not only will the Gentiles come into Israel seeking the way of God, but that there will be those going *from* Israel to the nations as evangelist.

Isaiah 66:19 "I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.

These are nations of Asia basically. They are the people of Japheth predominantly. And it seems like a great deal of the missionary work, or evangelism, during the Millennium will be to convert Japheth. At least that is the indication in this verse. "Those afar off" who have not had the influence of even nominal Christianity to any great extent. And that is what part of the main evangelistic effort will be, to convert Japheth.

Who knows how long it will take before that all occurs? Maybe it will occur during the rebuilding process, or in tandem with it. But it is going to take a long time. There are lots of people of Japheth in this world. I would imagine that they will be the predominant share of people early on in the Millennium. They evidently do not get quite as involved in the end-time problems, as say, the Caucasians do, out of which the Beast arise. All of the terrible wars that occur.

They will have their two hundred million man army, but there are a lot of people that will be back home. So, let us think about the evangelism that can be done by Israel during that time. God says He will send them to show His glory among the Gentiles.

How does that all fit together? The earth and its people will be in very poor shape after Christ's return. Though the Beast and his armies are destroyed, so is the earth. And all its cities are also destroyed. Lots of rubble, lots of ash, lots of ruin. Think about the people they will be recovering from plagues, war, famine, earthquakes, and all those other disasters in the book of Revelation.

God, once Christ returns, will begin to make some major changes in the earth's surface so that more land becomes arable, so that the weather patterns become more amenable to agriculture?optimal conditions for producing food. There will still be a great deal of work to do.

While Israel repents and is converted, the people will begin to rebuild. And rebuilding could take many years. Mr. Armstrong always said that it will take a few generations before they begin to start changing their minds and their habits to the way God wants and the physical rebuilding will parallel that. It may take many generations before all the Israelites are converted. I hope that is not the case, but we are stubborn people. We have always had rebels among us. And who knows how long that will take.

But as the earth's population grows, more rebuilding will take place. Eventually, God will begin preparing for the vast multitudes that will come up in the Great White Throne Judgment, in the second resurrection. And while these great projects continue, Israel will take up its job as a model nation.

It will take a while before the other nations begin to realize and really notice how much better Israel has it, but that will happen in time. We have a thousand years to finish the process. But

eventually most of this world's people will come to the knowledge of God, and it will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Then, after all that, there will be Utopia. The wonderful World Tomorrow is not something that is going to happen because of an instantaneous miracle. God does not change character by fiat. It takes time. And God has given Himself, His people, the people of the world, one thousand years to get it right. And even then, at the end, He allows Satan to do His dirty work and as we know, he will gather nations against God's people.

The work will not get completely done. There is still that element of human nature. And when you add Satan back into the mix, things turn out poorly. And then God has to work another great miracle of deliverance. Then the second resurrection begins and the real work begins.

Let us close in Isaiah 12 because this is a happy thing. This is a wonderful thing. This is a hymn of praise because of what God will do.

Isaiah 12:1-6 And in that day you will say: "O LORD, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; he also has become my salvation.'" Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"