

The Prime Directive

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Many of you remember the church of God in the decade of the 80s, some in the 70s, and some even in the 60s. I recall the early 1970s, when, before services, after services—about anytime in fact—we frequently conversed about the changes God would bring about at Christ’s return, at the start of the Millennium.

For all the vigor we exhibited then, there often was not much rigor. Some people, for example, espoused what I came to call the “Gunsmoke syndrome,” asserting that God would return civilization to the “horse and buggy” days where people would live more or less like the Amish do today. These people thought the millennial civilization would resemble Dodge City, Kansas shortly after the Civil War.

Now, of course, they granted that this “New Dodge” would be situated in a verdant locale like Oregon’s Willamette Valley. And, of course, they conceded that Marshall Dillon would not be around because there would be no crime there, and Doc would not be around because God would be peoples’ health and healer. And, certainly no Kitty, for reasons I will leave you to deduce.

It would be Gunsmoke with only Chester. To these people, the Millennium was “Chester-without-a-limp.”

Most of us today agree that the Millennium will be quite different from Dodge—the dusty, dirty, unsanitary old fire trap that it was back then.

But, what we do share with those of past decades is a conviction that the Millennium will be a pretty cool place. Herbert W. Armstrong rightly advertised it as the “Wonderful World Tomorrow.”

Today, I want to look at Christ's efforts to reveal Himself and His Father to people then, and the role He will assign us towards the achievement of His objectives.

Let us start with Isaiah 11, a passage which talks about some physical changes at that time. But, the passage closes with a stunning statement about how knowledge concerning God will increase. God is speaking:

Isaiah 11:6-9 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

I have entitled my comments today, “The Prime Directive.” Remember how Captain Kirk and his Star Trek gang labored under a prime directive? Well, my thesis today is that we too, as spirit beings, will have at least one prime directive in the Millennium—issued by the Great King Himself. We will work with Christ to ensure that the people of God's holy mountain will not be destroyed or become hurt, neither physically, nor emotionally, nor spiritually.

We need to define this holy mountain. Some claim that God's holy mountain is a reference to Jerusalem, citing Isaiah 66:20. Others, taking their cue from Joel 3:17 aver that it specifically refers to Zion. Both understandings are correct. But the first use of the term, “My holy mountain,” in this context, is right here, at Isaiah 11:9. Here, the “holy mountain” becomes associated with the entire planet to the degree that safety is afforded because the knowledge of God fills the whole earth. While the “holy mountain” is most specifically located at Mount Zion in Jerusalem, it symbolically refers to the government of God, which will be ultimately worldwide.

Refer to Daniel 2:35 where the stone that pulverizes the image grows to a mountain which fills the entire earth. Christ's Kingdom may not fill the earth immediately, but eventually, fill it, it will.

Am I saying that, wherever that holy mountain of Christ's rule has penetrated, wherever it is in effect as it gradually overspreads the planet—there, no one, nowhere, at no time, will stub his toe? No, I am not saying that. God might very well allow little incidents like that to take place in order to teach people to be careful. Those are useful lessons. But, I believe we can understand that serious accidents simply will not take place anywhere Christ's government has penetrated.

Eventually worldwide, spousal abuse simply will not happen. Muggings and kidnappings will not take place. Child neglect will not occur. Child abuse will not take place. Child molestation will not take place. Wars will not occur. God will not permit it.

We, as God Beings, will enforce the prime directive, having both the power and the authority to ensure that people are not destroyed nor harmed.

So, Isaiah 11:9 notifies us that God is going to increase the level of (now virtually nonexistent) knowledge about Himself, eventually, worldwide. How do you increase knowledge? Ask a nearby second-grader; he will tell you. You teach. Teaching, at its core, absolutely requires communication between pupil and teacher.

Turn to Ezekiel 36, which tells of an action God will take on behalf of His people Israel to enable this God-man communication. I will just mention Joel 2:28 is where God indicates that He will eventually take this action regarding all humanity, not just Israelites.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

The Living Bible puts it, “I will put My Spirit within you so that you will obey My laws.” The International Standard Version indicates that God will place His “Spirit within you, empowering you to live according to My regulations.”

That Spirit—that Holy Spirit—is a causative agent, permitting people to obey God’s laws. But, the Spirit does more than that.

Consider: If people are going to obey God’s statutes, they will need to learn them first. That is straightforward. God’s Spirit will facilitate the teaching process, permitting the communication between God and man, the communication which is required for learning to take place.

Let us catch our breath by approaching this matter from the viewpoint of Isaiah 2. People will come to the point where they will flow to Jerusalem, as the last part of verse 2 indicates. For what purpose will they go there? Notice verse 3:

Isaiah 2:3 “Many people shall come, and say: “Come, 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.”

Although I did not read verse 2, the verb flow there deserves comment. It is the same Hebrew verb appearing in Jeremiah 51, a prophecy regarding the total destruction of Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:44 I will punish Bel [a false god] in Babylon, and I will bring out of his mouth what he has swallowed; and the nations shall not flow to him anymore. Yes, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

People, under God’s government, having His Spirit, will learn of God. That same Spirit will make obedience possible.

With that as a background, let us ask the question: In the Millennium, where will we, as spirit beings who have gone through the sanctification process (we have experienced all this), fit into the picture?

Please, turn to Isaiah 30, a passage which speaks directly to the work we will be doing among the people living in the Millennium and beyond.

Isaiah 30:20-21(NET) The sovereign master [obviously, God] will give you distress to eat and suffering to drink [Yes, many will suffer and die during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.]; but your teachers will no longer be hidden; your eyes will see them. You will hear a word spoken behind you, saying, “This is the correct way, walk in it,” whether you are heading to the right or the left.

We will be these teachers. Notice how the World English Bible handles verses 20-21,

Isaiah 30:20-21 (WEB) Yet your teachers will not be hidden any more, but your eyes will see your teachers. And when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way. Walk in it.”

There is an implied merism in these two verses.

Verse 20 notifies us that the teachers will be in front of the people, face to face, where they can be seen. This is a commonplace orientation between students and teachers. We all understand this.

Verse 21 is more surprising, though: The teachers will be behind people at times, speaking into their ears, advising them what path to follow.

The opposites of a merism imply all that is in between. “I looked high and low,” or, “I looked up and down,” means, “I looked everywhere.” Before and behind in this context also speak of inclusiveness.

Turn to Psalm 139, which provides commentary on this passage. Here, David sings of the level of God’s involvement in his own life. Doubtless, this passage describes the vitality of the interface—the depth of the relationship we will have with the people in the mountain of God, those with His Spirit, in the Millennium.

Psalm 139:1-6 O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought from far off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand on me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, and I cannot attain it.

There is that formula, “behind and before,” again, implying ubiquity.

Paraphrases use terms like, “You surround me,” or, “You hem me in,” or, “You encircle me,” or, “You hedge me in.” We, as teachers, will be all around these people. We will surround them. We will have their back. We will be there for them when they need us, on the spot.

Ultimately they will come to count on us, and we will not let them down. And just like David, they will, without a doubt, be unable to fathom how we can be so “johnnie-on-the-spot” with our words to them—so incisive, so insightful.

Turn to Deuteronomy 5. When the children of Israel heard God speaking the Ten Words—the Ten Commandments—they ran for cover.

Deuteronomy 5:22-25 “These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: “Surely the Lord our God has shown us His glory and greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us.”

Deuteronomy 5:27 “You go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.”

When you stop to consider it, God has not spoken directly to many people in history; just a handful of all the billions. Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets, the apostles, Job. The Father spoke to Christ. When God speaks, He changes lives; He often changes history. He intervenes to keep His plan on track.

But historically, the masses, fearful, lacking God’s Spirit, cannot abide God’s speaking to them. For this reason, God has usually restricted His comments to a remnant, not to the masses. He speaks to those who can understand, to those with His Spirit, generally. In the Millennium and on into the White Throne Period, God will begin dealing more and more with masses of people, not just small remnants. We, as appointed teachers, will be there helping Christ teach them.

Let us briefly look at this notion in the context of two other scriptures. Turn to Jeremiah 3, a millennial prophecy. I am just going to pick up this one verse where God is speaking.

Jeremiah 3:15 “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

Who, in those days to come, will best fit the description of, “shepherds after God’s heart,” if it is not the faithful Bride of Christ? It is about as clear as it can be—we will be dispensing knowledge.

Notice yet another witness to this fact in Jeremiah 23. This passage carries much the same meaning, using again the shepherd-sheep metaphor:

Jeremiah 23:3-4 “But I [Christ] will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set shepherds over them who will feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall any be lacking,” declares the Lord.

God does not delegate to us the function of rounding up the sheep. He explicitly says He will gather them. But, just as explicitly, God says He will set shepherds over the people for the purpose of ensuring their well-being. The Living Bible puts the last part of the verse this way, “All of them shall be accounted for continually.” We will not lose them, just as Christ has not lost us.

This passage situates us as more than teachers, but, like shepherds, we will serve also as protectors—or guardians—of the individuals who live into the Millennium. We will be shepherds in this broader sense.

Serving as teachers and protectors may require playing yet another, related, role: We may need to serve as providers at times, especially in the early days of the Millennium, when food and tools may be scarce. God provided clothing for Adam and Eve when that became necessary. He Himself provided food for His people for an extended period of time: For some 40 years, He provided manna for them. Again, during the cold nights in the wilderness, He provided warmth by a pillar of fire, and shade from the hot sun by a cloud.

I am not saying those exact types of intervention will be needed in the Millennium. More likely, we will need to provide what I call “in-a-thicket” benefits for people during the early years of the Millennium. Remember how, at the time of Isaac’s sacrifice, God provided Abraham with a ram caught in a nearby thicket (Genesis 22:13)?

Well, especially in the early days, we may need to provide individuals with food, or some basic tools, or utensils—in-a-thicket. The effect, from a practical standpoint, will be faith-building, as people come more and more to understand, from experience, that we are not there to hurt them or to exploit them. They will increasingly come to understand that we are there for their benefit—to protect and to serve and to teach, not to enslave. They suffered through that. Those days are gone.

The question remains: What will we teach? Well certainly, we will teach true doctrine. Yes, that is a given. More to my point here, however, we will be teaching people how to do what they have never done before—how to live God’s way of life. We will be teaching God’s law, showing people how to

apply it. We will be teaching people what to eat and not to eat, how to dress appropriately. We will teach the spirit and letter of the law, so people can eventually deal with principle and intent rather than dos and don'ts.

An example of a hypothetical child raising situation provides a good case study. You should understand that this may not happen exactly this way in the Millennium, but I list it here only by way of illustration.

We will postulate a situation, taking place some years into the Millennium, probably in a Gentile environment, wherein a strong-willed child, of say 6, confronts his parent. The child is behaving belligerently, rebelliously, disobediently. Obviously, the child has not been raised adequately.

His parents, when under the influence of satanically-inspired psychology, lack the framework essential to proper child-raising. You understand that their parents lacked the knowledge of proper child-raising, and their parents before them, back several generations. Satan did his work well, removing God from school, church, and home—the knowledge of God from everywhere, in the several generations prior to the Tribulation. The cumulative effect, by the time we get to our six-year old, is virtual darkness when it comes to child-raising. The parents are absolutely clueless! Just like the guy across the street from you—clueless.

We are spirit beings, remember; we understand the thoughts behind the words; we know the words that will be spoken before they are verbalized. We come to understand that the child has provoked the parent to anger; that anger is running hot. The parent's thoughts are driving him to yell back at the boy, to call him demeaning names (that being hurtful in itself).

Additionally, we realize that his brain is just beginning to send messages to the muscles in his arms to pick up a nearby club and beginning beating the child. You understand we are talking about the timespan of seconds here. But, we are able to respond with lightning speed. We know the mental states of both the child and parent, and of the inadequate backgrounds of both of them. We know the prime directive, that no one must get hurt, and we know God's law. So armed, we know exactly what to do. We have what we need to intervene immediately and decisively, denying opportunity for the situation to worsen—for someone to become hurt or damaged, or even killed.

That is a very ugly situation. It happens all the time in this present evil age. But, we are going to make sure it does not happen anymore—not on our watch!

At the same time, we will turn this nasty circumstance into a teaching situation, for the good of everyone involved. What will we say to the parent, either face to face or in his ear, as we deem most appropriate to the occasion? I will assume that this is a situation which calls for corporal correction. Not all situations do, but, for purposes of our discussion, we will assume this one does. If this kid thinks, “No one will hurt in all of My holy mountain,” refers to his tail, he has another think coming.

Clearly, we will not echo the satanic deception; we will not tell the parent not to punish the child, but rather how to do so—how to properly and profitably deal with the situation. How to turn it around!

Now remember, we are dealing with an ignoramus here. When it comes to proper child raising techniques—this is a parent who is the heir of Satan’s misrule for generations. We may have to approach the situation from the bottom up, as it were. We may need to produce miraculously a small thin paddle-in-a-thicket basically out of nowhere, because there may well be only that too-big, too-damaging club.

We may leave the paddle with the parent—even after we have demonstrated its proper use. I mean, some people are that ignorant; they, because of their background, may not know how to use it properly even if we put it in their hand. We will have to show them.

Yes, we will teach principle and intent. What I am saying through this example is that, at times, we will be dealing with people at a nitty-gritty level—dealing in fundamentals. But, we will be able to intervene quickly and effectively to enforce the prime directive—for the good of everyone. At the same time, teaching.

This hands-on truth-teaching, of which I have spoken here, the degree of protection and provision which I have outlined, is not available to the people of Satan’s world today. Yes, we in God’s church benefit from God’s

instruction, as well as our little ones enjoy angelic protection. But, qualified spirit Beings, after God's own heart, committed to and knowledgeable of His truth, empowered by God to intervene decisively and insightfully—that infrastructure is not functioning today, not for people in the world.

In the Millennium, those ever-increasing numbers of people living at God's holy mountain, having God's Holy Spirit, will enjoy that God-to-man communication and care on a daily, where-the-rubber-meets-the-road basis.

The level of penetration of peoples' lives will be profound, for we will then have immense power. Immense!

Sure, I am not here speaking of vast kinetic power, to move galaxies about. We may do that too at times. But first, our power use will be spiritual, as we help people tear down mental strongholds, as Paul refers to the fortresses erected by Satan before God put him away. We will deal in words, in thoughts, in principles, teaching people, all just at the right time; changing their lives; changing history; ensuring that they come to no harm. If you can accept it, we will be furthering Christ's work of reconciliation.

For 6,000 years, Satan, the Destroyer, has been prowling about seeking whom he can devour. He has become adept at dispensing lethal doses of darkness. But the World Tomorrow will not be Satan's world. God will use us, setting us to the task of undoing the work Satan has performed with gusto for millennia, dispelling his darkness with the light of God's truth.

Over a period of time, the cumulative effect of our front-and-back teaching of people with God's Spirit will be absolutely staggering. How staggering? Well, the knowledge of God will overspread the planet, as water fills the sea.

No, the Millennium will be far, far more than merely, "Chester-without-a-limp."