

*Where is God's*  
**TRUE**  
**CHURCH?**

*by David C. Pack*

## Did Christ build one true Church? Or is His Church divided?

He said, “I will build *MY CHURCH*”—not “churches,” “fellowships,” “sects,” “denominations” or “communities of believers.” He promised the “gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

***Where is it and how is it identified? What and why is it? You need not be confused. Here are the plain answers!***

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Tens of millions of people heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of his ministry, God revealed, from the Bible, hundreds of true doctrines through him, that had been lost through the centuries. Mr. Armstrong said this many times himself. In the years after his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Copyright law prohibits the reproduction and distribution of literature produced during the time he led the Worldwide Church of God. The Restored Church of God is committed to the preservation and teaching of every one of the truths that he taught!

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Christ said, “I will build *My Church*” (Matt. 16:18). No matter how men interpret it, this verse speaks of a single church! Christ continued, “and the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it.” He promised that *His Church* could never be destroyed.

Over 2,000 different professing Christian church organizations have been “built” by men in the United States. Another is started every three days. Estimates place the number of professing Christians at about 2 billion. While church *attendance* seems to be increasing, it is not increasing as fast as the confusion surrounding the question of which is the *right* church.

While it has been said, “They can’t all be *wrong*,” it is much more correct to say, “They cannot all be *right*.” If Christ built His Church as He said, then it can be found somewhere on earth today—and it is the only *right* Church. But we must ask: How do we find it—what do we look for—how do we identify it—how do we know it if we see it?

My mother required me to read many books when I was a child. I spent many summers reading “a book a week.” I enjoyed most of them and am thankful that she did it. Two or three times, I picked up the Bible and attempted to read it. But I never got far, because it made no sense to me. I could not understand the Bible.

Despite this lack of understanding, upon turning sixteen, I was “confirmed” into the church that I had been born into. I recall having to appear briefly before a panel to answer some questions, which I no longer remember. I do recall making some kind of affirmation about this denomination. I also remember that I was not concerned in the least with whether or not I was in the right church, or if I was fulfilling the Bible definition of a Christian.

Neither of these questions remotely interested me. I did vaguely believe that God existed, but He was not *real* to me. I had never attempted to build a personal relationship with Him or find His true Church. I did not pray or study His Word for guidance or doctrine. These concerns did not enter my mind until a year and a half later, in 1966. It was then that I heard a voice on the radio that introduced me to Christ’s statement in Matthew 16:18. I began to question

where I could find this true Church. I knew it *had* to exist because, through study, I came to understand Christ's promise that it could not be destroyed.

### Traditions of Men

Christ said, "But *in vain* they do *worship Me*, teaching for *doctrines* the commandments *of men*" (Matt. 15:9). In Mark's parallel account of this statement, He continued, "Full well you *reject the commandment of God*, that you may keep your own *tradition*" (7:9).

The world's Christianity is filled with traditions. One of the largest is the traditional view of the New Testament Church. Most ministers, theologians and religionists typically define the church in this way: "All those who sincerely believe in Jesus as their Savior comprise the Church." This is often followed with the familiar statement, "There are many routes to heaven." Though the Bible does not teach that heaven is the reward of the saved, the clear implication of this statement is that people can believe what they want, or be a part of any group that they choose, and still be Christians. While people may sincerely believe these traditional ideas, *they are sincerely wrong!* (Request our free booklet *What is Your Reward in the NEXT LIFE?*)

My research led me to absolute PROOF of *where* the Church that Christ said He would build was. I learned that this Church could be carefully traced through 2,000 years of New Testament history. I was shocked. I could not believe that the Bible was so clear on a subject that confuses so many.

Your Bible says, "God is *not* the author of *confusion*, but of peace, as in *all churches* [the context shows this refers to all *congregations*, not all *organizations*] of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33).

God's Church (composed of *many* congregations of saints) should reflect *peace*—not confusion. You do not need to be confused about the identity of the true Church. God inspired the Apostle Paul to write, "Prove *all* things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thes. 5:21). While this certainly refers to *scriptural* matters, it does say that "ALL things," not "*some* things," should be proven. Surely God would not exclude something of such magnitude—such vital importance—as the matter of where His true Church is. God would never emphatically tell people to prove things that *cannot be proven!*

The more I studied the other doctrines of the Bible, the more I learned that the churches of this world were wrong—on virtually everything! One plain scripture after another contradicted each traditional "Christian" idea I had been taught. I was amazed at how easy it was to find clear, direct, undeniable proof that the traditions of men were not based on the Bible—at all!

Each time I studied a Bible doctrine—salvation, baptism, who and what God is, the gospel, hell and death, law and sin, grace, being born again, the Christian Sabbath, the true origin of "Christian" holidays, where the modern-day tribes of ancient Israel are found today, the sequence of prophetic events preceding Christ's Return and more—I gained *undeniable proof* of what the

Bible really taught! I was excited and fascinated. I found that the churches of this world were wrong on *all* these and many other points of Bible teaching. I came to realize that there had to be a church that believed and practiced all of the Bible's correct doctrines.

I learned that there was, and that the proof identifying it and setting it apart from all the churches of this world was no different than the proof of any other biblical doctrine.

### A Persecuted, Little Flock

When speaking to His disciples about the importance of seeking the kingdom of God, Christ said, "Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). By no stretch of the imagination can churches comprised of millions, let alone a total of 2 billion, be considered a "little flock."

Christ understood that *His Church*—His *little flock*—would be persecuted and despised by the world. Before His crucifixion, He warned, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have *persecuted Me*, they will also *persecute you*" (John 15:20). In the previous verse, Christ reminded His disciples that "I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world *hates* you." Christ *was* persecuted, to the point of a horrible crucifixion after a night of brutal torture. Therefore, the true Church could also expect to be persecuted—and hated! Those in it are "not of the world." The world senses this and hates them for it (Rom. 8:7). Christ used Paul to say, "Yes, and *all* that will live godly *in Christ Jesus* shall suffer *persecution*" (II Tim. 3:12). The word "all" means what it says!

Consider what we have just discussed. How many churches can you name that are small, persecuted, "not of this world"—and even hated as a result? Think about those you are familiar with. Do any fit this description?

Surely not many!

### The Importance of the Name of the Church

The world's churches have many different names, which are derived in various ways. These include the particular *doctrines* they teach, the *men* who founded them, the humanly devised type of *church government* that they espouse, their *location*, or their intended scope and size, such as *universal* or *catholic*—in order to be thought of as all-encompassing.

On the night of His betrayal, Christ prayed for the Church: "Holy Father, keep through *YOUR OWN NAME* those whom You have given Me, that they may be *one*, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them *IN YOUR NAME*...I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. *SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH YOUR TRUTH: YOUR WORD IS TRUTH*" (John 17:11-12, 14-17).

There are twelve separate places where the New Testament records that the true Church has been kept in the *name of the Father—God*. The first five refer to the entire Church, or body of Christ, as a whole. The next four speak of a specific local congregation, while using the same term "Church of God." This may refer to the Church of God at Judea or Corinth, etc. The final three references speak collectively of all the individual local congregations combined. All these references use the term "Churches of God":

- (1) Acts 20:28: This verse is instruction to the elders to "feed THE CHURCH OF GOD."
- (2) I Corinthians 10:32: "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to THE CHURCH OF GOD."
- (3) I Corinthians 11:22: "...or despise you THE CHURCH OF GOD, and shame them that have not?"
- (4) I Corinthians 15:9: Paul wrote the same thing to two congregations: "For...I persecuted THE CHURCH OF GOD."
- (5) Galatians 1:13: "I persecuted THE CHURCH OF GOD."
- (6) I Corinthians 1:2: "THE CHURCH OF GOD which is at Corinth."
- (7) II Corinthians 1:1: "THE CHURCH OF GOD which is at Corinth."
- (8) I Timothy 3:5: Paul references an elder in a local congregation: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of THE CHURCH OF GOD?"
- (9) I Timothy 3:15: "...behave yourself in the house of God, which is THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD." This verse adds a descriptive word to God by using the term *LIVING*.
- (10) I Corinthians 11:16: "...We have no such custom, neither THE CHURCHES OF GOD."
- (11) I Thessalonians 2:14: "For you...became followers of THE CHURCHES OF GOD which in Judea are in Christ Jesus."
- (12) II Thessalonians 1:4: "So that we ourselves glory in you in THE CHURCHES OF GOD."

In the modern age, for corporate reasons, the Church may use an additional descriptive name to distinguish itself from other "Churches of God"—those merely *appropriating* God's name, but not obeying His doctrines or doing His Work. Herbert W. Armstrong chose the name Worldwide Church of God and before that, Radio Church of God. We have chosen the name THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD.

Just as many churches of this world may have a few correct doctrines mixed with much error, many appropriate the correct name of God's Church. This booklet will later explain why *some* of these churches have a significant amount of truth, but choose to accept certain false doctrines. Only one church

on the face of the earth has the correct name *and teaches all the additional hundreds of true doctrines that the Bible teaches!* We have read how Christ prayed in John 17, "*Sanctify them through Your TRUTH: Your word is TRUTH.*" The Church that Christ uses, directs and guides is sanctified—set apart—by its belief of the *truth* of God's Word!

In addition to carrying the name "Church of God," the true Church has come out of the world, is small and persecuted, even to the point of being hated by this world, and is set apart from it by its beliefs—which are in complete agreement with the truth of the Bible.

### Unified Through God's Word

Men have their own differing definitions of what the Church is, but only the Bible definition—*God's definition*—matters. Read it for yourself. Paul wrote to Timothy the evangelist, "...that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in *the house of God*, which is *the Church of the living God*, the pillar and ground of the *TRUTH*" (I Tim. 3:15). In the end, no other definition, devised by men, is acceptable. This definition of the true Church will guide us throughout the remainder of this booklet.

We have discussed how this world's churches are in confusion, divided by endless disagreement over doctrine and practice. Amos 3:3 asks, "Can two *walk together*, except they be *agreed*?" The answer is NO!

This world's churches do not practice the principle of "man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word of God*" (Luke 4:4), exactly as written. Instead, since they follow the many differing traditions of men, endless disagreements separate, divide and create more and more churches of men. They generally do not "walk together," because they do not "agree"—either with each other or God!

Many New Testament verses show that the Church that Christ built is *unified*—walking together in complete agreement with both each other, and with God and Christ.

An important point, demonstrating the unity of the true Church, emerges from Christ's prayer in John 17, on the night of His betrayal. He prayed, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be *sanctified through the truth*... That they *all* may be *ONE*; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be *ONE in Us*: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be *ONE, even as We are ONE*: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made *perfect in ONE*; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me" (vs. 19, 21-23).

These are powerful statements! Christ intended that His Church be unified *no less than were He and His Father!* There is no room for disagreement in a Church that is *this* unified. These verses describe a perfect oneness through the truth—the same kind of oneness that the Father and Christ enjoy. It is *this* kind

of unity that allows true Christians to be “in” Them—be *in* Christ and the Father (vs. 21).

In the Psalms, David was inspired to record, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for *brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psa. 133:1).

We now must examine several New Testament verses to see if, in fact, this kind of wonderful unity was apparent *after* the New Testament Church actually formed. Did God's true servants teach and administer *this* kind of agreement?

On the day of Pentecost, when the New Testament Church appeared for the first time, 3,000 converts were baptized. They formed the very beginning of Christ's “building” of His Church. The initial description given of the Church was “And they *continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship*” (Acts 2:42), “...*all that believed were together*” (vs. 44) and “...they, continuing daily with *one accord*...did eat their meat [food] with gladness and *singleness of heart*” (vs. 46). From these three verses, we clearly see that the Church Christ built was unified—in agreement—over doctrine. Notice verse 47: “And *the Lord added* to the Church daily such as should be saved.” In the Church that Christ guides and directs, He is the One who adds to it, building it!

Much can be learned by examining Paul's instructions to congregations that he was overseeing.

The CORINTHIAN congregation had many problems—including great division and disunity. Paul strongly admonished them to stop entertaining other doctrines and to quit playing favorites with ministers. Notice: “Now I beseech you, brethren...that you all speak the *same thing*, and that there be *no divisions* among you; but that you be *perfectly joined together in the same mind* and in the *same judgment*...Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas [Peter]; and I of Christ. *Is Christ divided?*” (I Cor. 1:10, 12-13). There is no mistaking what this scripture means. Paul was inspired to describe, in *five* different ways, how completely the Corinthians should be unified and in agreement. These verses cannot be “spiritualized away” by deceptive human reasoning.

Later, in the same letter to Corinth, Paul recorded that the Church had many separate members (brethren), but was like various parts of a human body in that these members were connected. Study chapter 12.

Verses 12-14 state, “For as the *body is one*, and has *many members*, and all the members of that *ONE body*, being many, are *ONE body*: so also is Christ. For by *ONE Spirit* are we all baptized into *ONE body*...For the body is not one member, but many.”

The context uses the analogy of feet, eyes, ears and the mouth to show how different parts of a human body are still connected within the same person. Paul continues, “But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they *many members*, yet but *one body*” (vs. 18-20).

These verses cannot be “spiritualized away” by human reasoning. They do not describe an amorphous, disconnected, “spiritual” body of disagreeing peo-

ple and organizations. Any foot, eye or ear that is taken from a human body *dies!* No body part can live without blood supply and the connective tissue necessary to hold it to the body. God created the human body, so He clearly understands the analogy that He inspired.

For further proof of the meaning of *body*, consider two additional scriptures, written to two separate congregations under Paul's leadership.

Notice his statement to the COLOSSIAN congregation: “And He is the head of *the body, the Church*” (1:18). The Bible definition of the body of Christ is the Church! Paul admonished them to be “*knit together in love*, and...*the full assurance of understanding*,” and “*Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught*” (2:2, 7). There is no misunderstanding the total unity Paul is describing. Brethren walk “together,” assured of the “understanding” they “have been taught.”

Now see his instruction to the EPHESIAN congregation. Speaking of what God placed under Christ's control, Paul wrote, “...and gave Him to be the Head over all things to *the Church*, which is *His body*” (1:22-23). In chapter 4, Paul admonished the Ephesians to be “*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. There is *one body*, and *one Spirit*, even as you are called in *one hope* of your calling; *One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father*” (3-6). Again, there is no misunderstanding the all-encompassing unity and agreement that this verse requires of God's people. Recall how Christ prayed for this kind of oneness and unity.

A few verses later, Paul described the importance of a faithful ministry, actively working with and teaching Christ's Church. Carefully read and understand the following lengthy, important passage: “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the *perfecting of the saints*, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying of the body of Christ*: Till we all come in the *unity of the faith*, and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, unto a *perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the *fulness of Christ*: That we henceforth be *no more children, tossed to and fro*, and carried about with *every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the *truth in love*, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: From whom the *whole body* fitly *joined together and compacted* by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (vs. 11-16).

The Church is Christ's body and, as its Head, He governs, directs and builds it, adding to it daily. These verses describe it as being unified in both *doctrine* and *love*. (See the inset at the middle of this booklet to understand how these two points work together.) In phrase after phrase, these six verses demonstrate that the entire Church (“*whole body*” and “*every part*”) must be walking together in *complete* doctrinal agreement under Christ's authority. He works through His true ministers to keep the Church from drifting into “every wind of doctrine.”

Consider Paul's admonition to the PHILIPPIAN congregation: "...stand fast in *ONE spirit*, with *ONE mind* striving *together* for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries" (1:27-28). And, "Fulfill you my joy, that you be *likeminded*, having the *same love*, being of *ONE accord*, of *ONE mind*" (2:2). These verses teach that complete unity in the Church is the only condition that is acceptable to God!

The local ROMAN congregation was experiencing a problem with false doctrines entering the Church. Notice what Paul wrote: "Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark* [take note of] them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine* which *you have learned*; and *avoid them*. For they...by good words and fair speeches *deceive* the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).

This is strong language. It introduces the truth of the biblical doctrine of disfellowshipping (sometimes described as *shunning* or *excommunicating*) those who depart from the truth into false doctrines and seek to take others with them. This principle demonstrates how important it is to God that His people not stray from the truth into man-made doctrines.

A number of additional scriptures address and amplify this same Bible principle. See Titus 3:10-11, I Corinthians 5:1-8 and I Timothy 6:1-5. Together, these verses represent a vital Bible doctrine that the true Church must practice in order to maintain unity. In addition to ignoring God's instruction, churches that will not practice this doctrine are full of discord and disagreement—which inevitably leads to splits within the church or congregation. *Fulfilling the instruction to disfellowship is neither abusive nor an act of hate!* It is a form of God's love being administered to people who have drifted into error (it is designed to wake them up). At the same time, it protects the remaining brethren in the Church. It requires a greater level of faith—that most find too difficult—to obey God's instruction to protect the Church in this way. However, obeying God yields the fruits of peace, joy and unity in the Church (I Cor. 14:33, 40; Prov. 22:10).

The Apostle Peter also taught the importance of Church unity and oneness. He wrote, "But you are *A* chosen generation, *A* royal priesthood, *AN* holy nation, *A* peculiar people" (I Pet. 2:9). The four phrases in this verse are in the singular—meaning one, not several. If a nation is split into several nations, no one would consider it to be a *single* nation—it would be multiple nations, not "a" nation. The same is true of God's Church. There is but one!

What did *Christ* teach on the matter of Church unity? He said, "Every *kingdom* divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every *city* or *house* divided against itself *shall not stand* [survive]" (Matt. 12:25). Recall that Paul asked in I Corinthians 1:13, "Is *Christ* divided?" Here is *Christ's* answer. His instruction is even more fascinating when the reader considers that He is describing *Satan's kingdom* in this account! He said that even Satan is wise enough to know that his kingdom cannot be divided and survive! Surely, the great God of heaven and Jesus Christ are at least as wise as Satan the devil. Of

course, they are infinitely *wiser!* They both understand that Their Church cannot be divided and survive ("stand").

### The Two Trees

How did mankind get into the state of confusion, division and disagreement that exists all over the earth today? God's original command to Adam was: "But of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*, you shall *not* eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely *die*" (Gen. 2:17).

In the next chapter (3:6), Eve, with Adam following, rebelled and ate of this wrong tree. Notice that this tree represented *knowledge* that was "good and evil." The tree was not entirely evil—it contained a *mixture* of true and false knowledge! It is the same with the churches of this world. Some do have small amounts of true ("good") doctrinal "knowledge," mixed with much false ("evil") doctrinal "knowledge." For 6,000 years, God has told His true servants to avoid mixing truth with error. He warned Adam that eating of the wrong tree would result in death. It did. The warning is the same for us today!

When I was first learning the truth in 1966, Mr. Armstrong used an analogy that I had never considered before—and have never forgotten since: Think of a delicious cake laced with arsenic, cyanide or strychnine, while otherwise containing nothing but good and healthy ingredients. Eating the cake would always result in death.

The good ingredients would not be sufficient to overcome the poison hidden in the cake. Likewise, God's Church does not and cannot mix truth with error. As with the cake, the result for those who do is deadly!

I have explained some of the true doctrines that God's Church teaches. This booklet could scarcely contain a simple listing of *all* of them, let alone a detailed scriptural explanation proving them and explaining *why* God teaches them. The following sections of this booklet list and briefly examine *some* of the major doctrines of God.

### Who and What is God?

David wrote, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa. 53:1). The single-greatest biblical truth is the identity of the true God! God *does* exist. His existence can be *proven!* (Request our free booklet *Does God Exist?*) The first of the Ten Commandments requires people to worship the true God only. (Request our free booklet *Should You Obey THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?*)

The ancient Greeks served 30,000 different gods. Some say that the Hindus serve *5 million* gods. Judaism teaches that God is one single Person. Many people believe that God is some kind of "inner goodness" within everyone. Others believe God is a "metaphysical idea." Most of the churches of traditional Christianity teach that God is a Trinity—that He is *one God*, but *three Persons*.

## TRUTH or “LOVE”—Which Comes First?

The Apostle John taught the importance of Bible truth *and* real godly love. In regard to understanding the correct identity of the true Church, it is vital that we recognize which one of these is the foundation for the other.

I grew up in a large, respected, well-known church of this world. It was comprised of millions of “believers”—people who believed in and talked about Jesus. No doubt, most of them were sincere. They also talked about “Christian love.” Many sermons had this topic as their theme. Sometimes it seemed that “Jesus” and “love” were the only two subjects preached.

These are both critically important topics. The Bible has hundreds of verses that refer to Christ and the importance of real godly love. But I saw that many people had a hollow love, and that no one really believed what Christ *taught*. Also, no real love was evident in their lives. It was not until later that I learned *why*.

Does this sound familiar—Christ’s name on peoples’ lips but the truths that He taught not evident in their lives? Lots of *talk* about love, but little, if any, practiced in their lives?

John has been called the “Apostle of Love,” because he spoke about love much more than all the other New Testament writers combined. Check any concordance. You will see this to be true. What is not realized is that he also wrote more about the importance of “truth” than all the other New Testament writers combined. John could as easily have been known as the “Apostle of Truth”! A superficial look at his gospel and epistles could leave you wondering if he wrote about anything other than these two subjects. Strangely, despite John’s dozens of references to the importance of truth, this emphasis is ignored by almost everyone!

In God’s infinite wisdom, He knew that He could not have one apostle stress truth and a different one stress love. This would have more easily left the impression that people could “choose their favorite apostle,” depending upon whether they felt truth or love deserved greater emphasis. This problem divided the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 1:10-14). The result is that each group would feel superior to the other because it has the “more proper” emphasis. Many denominations feel that they merely need to stress love, with little emphasis on correct doctrine. The churches that think this way have a well “developed” set of scriptures that they use in an attempt to establish their position.

### The Role of Love

Two of the most frequently quoted verses in the Bible come from John. Both speak about love. John 3:16 states, “*For God so loved the world,*

*that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” People who know little—or nothing—about the Bible usually know of this verse.

John 13:34-35 states, “*A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another.*” It is easy to see, from just these verses, why so many believe they are Christians. If they just “have love”—all the while feeling no need to be concerned about right doctrines or *truth*. Notice the phrase, “*By this [love] shall all men know that you are My disciples.*” It is true that an outward demonstration of love does make an important impression on people. In a selfish, unhappy, confused world, people practicing love—the way of *give* instead of *get—do* stand out from all those around them.

A basic question arises. How does *Christ* know if you are His disciple? We are not asking how *MEN* know, but how *CHRIST* knows. John also answers, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

Did you notice the phrase “*IF you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed?*” This is a key point! (We will see later how love is connected to this.) “Continuing in His word”—remaining free of error—signifies to Christ that we are His disciples. This is what Christ seeks!

### The Role of Truth

Holding fast to truth would never be a sign to men. People are usually turned off by what true Christians believe “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). The truth is *not* attractive to anyone *not* being called by God. However, seeing people show genuine concern for one another turns no one off and is attractive to all. Anyone reading this booklet, who may doubt this, should attempt to “cast” a few of these “pearls” (of truth) at someone. Watch the reaction. Then try showing love to them when they do not expect it. The lesson will be learned.

Consider! True Christians are led by the Holy Spirit. It is called the “Comforter” and the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13). This same Spirit of truth “will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). That is the only place where we and “it” can be “comfortable.” The Holy Spirit will lead all true Christians into the knowledge of real godly love. Galatians 5:22 says that love is a “fruit of the Spirit.” Romans 5:5 explains that this fruit is possible in a Christian’s mind only because God’s Spirit has put it there.

Romans 13:10 states, “love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Also see 1 John 5:3.) It will be clear that you love others because they will see you fulfilling God’s laws toward your fellow man. Understanding real

Christian love—what it is—how it is expressed—its relationship to law—its part in being the light of the world—is also a *great truth!*

Examine an important verse: “He that says, *I know Him*, and keeps not His commandments, is a *liar*, and the *truth* is not in him” (1 John 2:4). Verse 5 speaks about people who claim to be Christians—to “know Him”—but who neither keep the commandments *nor have “truth” in them*. The world is filled with professing Christians who claim to “know Jesus in their heart” but who have no interest whatsoever in understanding the true doctrines of the Bible. Now, focus carefully on Christ’s words: “But whoso *keeps His [Christ’s] WORD; in him* verily is the *love of God perfected*: hereby know we that we are in Him.” Love is *not* perfected in those who are *not* keeping Christ’s word—the truth. God’s love is *only perfected* in people who DO! Remember John 8:31. True Christians must “continue in” or “keep” God’s word.

The Greek word for “keep,” *tereo*, means “to watch or to guard (from loss or injury) by keeping the eye upon...to detain in custody.” Are you determined to keep the truths of God’s word in your “custody”? Are you prepared to “guard” it from “loss or injury”? Are you convicted about keeping your “eyes” continually upon it? If so, then you are “sanctified” by that word of truth (John 17:17). Only then can you become and remain Christ’s disciple!

Remember! Truth is the umbrella that stands over love. Love springs from truth—*not the other way around!* It is no coincidence that Matthew 22:37-39 says, “love your neighbor as yourself,” *after* it says, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” None who reject God’s truth love Him. Therefore, genuine love for “neighbor” will be absent.

### Many Churches Claim to Have “Love”

What about the churches that profess the importance of love and having a “relationship with Christ”—while in ignorance of God’s true doctrines or while neglecting or abandoning the ones they may have? Can love be “perfected” in them? The Bible says that this is impossible! The only thing such people “perfect” is the ability to *talk* about love. Many churches have honed “lovespeak” into a fine art. But this is nothing more than empty, hollow, selfish *talk!*

This is why the church of my childhood was filled with talk of “love” and “Jesus,” while it demonstrated no real love and had no knowledge of the true teachings of Christ. Checking the Handbook of Beliefs of this church (as I did) would show that it matches what almost every denomination and branch of traditional Christianity says when there is doctrinal disagreement within their churches. They all say something like this: “We must agree in love to disagree. Love is primary. Doctrine and opinion about Bible truth is secondary. Let us all just have love. Let us submerge our differences under ever more love.”

The problem is that this breeds more division and doctrinal confusion in these churches and a complete disregard and neglect of doctrinal truth. This wrong premise puts the “love” cart in front of the horse. The true Church continues in truth and *then* walks in love. Real love, in God’s Church, springs from first having the truth! John “rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the *truth* that is in you, even as you walk in the *truth*.” He said that seeing *this* within fellow Christians was his greatest source of joy (III John 3-4).

### How Love, Truth and Blessings Work Together

Here is an important, related point. What role do *blessings* and *growth* play in the formula of truth and real Christian love? Do their presence—or absence—tell the true Christian anything? They should!

I John 3:18 states, “let us not *love* in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and *in truth*.” John explains that this gives Christians confidence toward God in their prayers, while eliminating the conscience problems that hinder them. Verse 21: “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” Answers and blessings flow from obedience, pleasing God and application of His truth in our lives: “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, *because we keep His commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (vs. 22). This principle is made plain through paraphrasing three simple(?) verses.

Isaiah 58:13-14 explains that Israel was promised great blessings *if they kept the Sabbath properly*. Malachi 3:8-10 shows that they were also promised great blessings—but only *if they tithed faithfully*. Exodus 15:26-27 directly connects the promises of good health and healing *to full obedience to God’s commands*. These and many other verses show us that we *can* know when we are in harmony with God. Conscience problems vanish when people follow all of God’s commands and instructions. This is essential. God’s people must always understand this—and never forget it! A true Christian’s path is not easy or pain-free. However, if our ways please Him, God will continually give blessings and growth. This becomes a sign to *us* of His happiness and pleasure with us. When blessings, fruit and growth are continually *lacking*, God is *not* pleased!

FIRST, belief and continuance in the *truth tells CHRIST* who His disciples (also, real love will always be evident) are. SECOND, *love tells PEOPLE* who Christ’s disciples are. THIRD, *blessings, fruit and growth tell US* whether we are pleasing God and continuing in His word. What could be clearer?

If I were the devil, I would speak endlessly of love and Jesus, while de-emphasizing right doctrine, truth and resultant growth and blessings. If this is what you are hearing, beware!



God said, "Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness" (Gen. 1:26). When God says this, He is not talking to Himself. Nor is He confused. God is plainly more than one Person. The Hebrew word used here is *elohim*. It is a *uni-plural* word—meaning more than one Person. God and Christ represent two separate Beings, composing the Godhead. Together, They represent the "Us" and "Our" of this verse.

John 1 contains a remarkable statement about the true nature and identity of God. It says, "In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God. The same was in the beginning *with* God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (vs. 1-2, 14).

The only way the Word could be both God and "with" God is if there were *two* separate Beings. One Person or Being, the Word who became Jesus Christ, came to earth and "dwelt among men," until His crucifixion as the Savior of mankind. The other Person or Being, the Father, remained in heaven and was the One to whom Jesus Christ prayed. He (the Father) was the One who resurrected Him from the dead so He could return to His throne in heaven. The Godhead is two separate Beings—Father and Son! If God were a Trinity—three Persons or Entities in one Being (with the Holy Spirit as the third Person)—Christ's death would have been *impossible*. If the Trinity doctrine were true, it would deny God's plan, because mankind would have no Savior.

God is not conjoined triplets where one-third of one Being can die—without affecting the other two-thirds of the Being. This entire idea (often called a "mystery that cannot be understood") denies God's great master PURPOSE for mankind. It pictures Him as a mysterious, closed, Triune God with no room for expansion in His Father/Son family relationship! (Request our free booklet *The TRINITY—Is God three-in-one?*)

God's true Church understands and teaches the vital key to the knowledge of God's supreme *purpose* for mankind—to be BORN into the God Family.

### Mankind's Great Purpose

We just read, "Let Us make man in Our *image*, after Our *likeness*." Why did God do this? It is not within the scope of this booklet to disprove evolution and prove the truth of a literal creation. The fact is that God *did* make man. We must ask, *why?* For what *purpose* did He do this?

The popular belief of nearly all professing Christians is that they "die and go to heaven." Yet, Christ stated, "...*no man has ascended up to heaven*, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). It was not until I came into contact with God's true Church that I learned that the belief that "*heaven is the reward of the saved*" is a *fable*!

No wonder Christ taught, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the *earth*" in His very first sermon (Matt. 5:5). He understood that Christians do not inherit heaven—they inherit the *earth*! Actually, Christ is quoting the Old

Testament here. Psalm 37:11 says exactly the same thing. It has always been God's Plan to give rulership of earth to Christ and the resurrected saints, who will rule with Him. It has *never* been His Plan to have people "roll around heaven all day," "ride clouds," "play harps" or merely "walk the streets of gold, in front of the pearly gates." God's purpose for mankind is far greater than these inventions of deceived men!

The book of Revelation, which is Christ's revealing of events prior to, including and following His Return to earth, says of the saints, "And has made us unto our God *kings* and *priests*: and we shall *reign on the earth*" (Rev. 5:10).

Many people refer to Christ as King of kings, but never question who the *other* "kings" are. These are the resurrected saints! Also see Daniel 7:18, 22, 27, which all show that Christ and the saints inherit all the kingdoms of this world at His Coming.

God says that Christ is "His Son, that He might be the firstborn *among many brethren*" (Rom. 8:29). Do you recognize the implications of this statement? Many more sons and daughters will be added later to God's Family. They will enjoy the same things that God Himself enjoys. God is a Family—a Household! (See Ephesians 3:15 and I Timothy 3:15.)

True Christians have the Spirit of God. This Spirit makes them sons of God: "For as many as are *led by the Spirit* of God, they are the *sons of God*" (Rom. 8:14). Now consider the following verse: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be *like Him*; for we shall see Him *as He is*" (I John 3:2).

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren (the true Christians who follow later), because those who are added to God's Family—in the resurrection to occur at Christ's Return—are going to be "like Him." We are not going to be "like" something else. Christ is God. Being "like Him" means that we will be part of the God Family with Him.

God is a Father who now has one Son. But He will later have *many more* sons. God is reproducing Himself by developing His character in yielded, conquered, Spirit-begotten human beings (God begets His children just like any *human father*).

Remember, Paul said that the ministry teaches and edifies the Church so that it can grow into the "stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). A Christian copies and builds the character of Jesus Christ, so that he can later enjoy membership in the God Family with Christ and the Father. What a sobering yet exciting opportunity and responsibility!

The truly marvelous human potential that is offered to everyone who repents and believes and practices God's many wonderful truths is that they will be born into the very Family of God. May God help you understand what He offers all who seek *Him* first—above all else—in their lives (Matt. 6:33).

The true Church of God teaches that this INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL lies ahead for God's people!

### The True Gospel

Notice that Revelation 12:9 says, "Satan...deceives *the whole world*." This is a staggering statement! Surely the truth about a subject as important as the gospel would not be excluded from this deception.

The first words spoken by Christ in the Bible are, "Repent you, and *believe the gospel*" (Mark 1:15). But what *is* the real gospel? Is there more than one? True Christians are told that they must believe the gospel. Verse 14 says, "Jesus came...preaching the *gospel of the kingdom of God*." There is no other gospel but the kingdom of God. The world focuses on the *Person* of Jesus Christ, rather than the *message* He brought. It is ignorant of the kingdom of God—the *government* of God that is coming to this earth at the Return of Christ and the saints. The world has assumed the belief of numerous man-made gospels.

Paul warned those who would believe or teach another gospel, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert the gospel* of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any *other gospel* unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any *other gospel* unto you than that you have received, *let him be accursed*" (Gal. 1:6-9).

Satan does not talk directly to human beings. He works through his servants—his ministers. The Bible teaches that Satan does have *his* ministers. And they almost always teach a false gospel. Paul warned the Corinthians that they had been "beguiled" into accepting "another gospel" (II Cor. 11:4). He went on to describe the cunning ways through which Satan's ministers successfully deceive: "For such are false apostles, *deceitful workers*, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for *Satan* himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be *transformed as the ministers of righteousness*; whose end shall be according to their works" (13-15). The true Church has always had to be careful—vigilant—about the dangers of false ministers entering it and perverting the doctrines of God. This will be addressed at the end of this booklet.

There is only one true gospel. All others are "perversions" designed by Satan to replace the great truth of God's soon-coming kingdom. (To read more about this government, request our free booklet *Which is the REAL GOSPEL?*)

As the one who deceives the whole world, Satan is called the "god of this world." Notice: "In whom the *god of this world* has *blinded the minds* of them which believe not, lest the *light of the glorious gospel* of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4). The world does not know of *this* gospel. God, for His own great purpose at this time, has opened the truth of this gospel to a very few—and has put them into His Church. The rest of the

world now remains blinded. The devil does not want human beings to enjoy what is forever denied to him—membership in the God Family.

Matthew 24:14 says, "And this *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached [Mark 13:10 says, "published"] in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then shall the end come*." The Church that Christ built has the knowledge of His true gospel of the kingdom of God. That Church will always be found preaching it (Matt. 24:46), until the end of this age comes. You have been allowed to come into contact with the knowledge of this gospel—and that you can be a part of God's true Church *now* and His soon-coming kingdom *later*.

But first comes a time of testing for true Christians.

### The Sabbath Test Command

The churches of this world will often admit to making a half-hearted effort at keeping nine of the Ten Commandments. Typically, they will acknowledge that it is wrong to steal, kill, covet, bear false witness, and commit adultery. They will also acknowledge that honoring one's father and mother, avoiding idolatry and taking God's Name in vain—while claiming to follow the God described in the First Commandment—are basically good things to do. But most do a poor job of actually keeping these nine Commandments. They teach that Christ officially did away with them and "keeps them for us." Most at least tacitly agree that these nine Commandments are "nice principles."

There is one commandment that people almost universally will not obey. God says that *this* command sets His people apart from everyone else. The Sabbath Fourth Commandment is the *test Commandment* (Ex. 16). "Remember the *Sabbath day*, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: but the *seventh day is the Sabbath* of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work" (20:8-10). God gave the Sabbath from Mount Sinai, through Moses, to ancient Israel. While most people are familiar with this story, they are *not* aware that God commanded the Sabbath to be kept *FOREVER!* It was never meant to be "just for the Jews" or "just for ancient Israel."

Israel continually refused to remain faithful to God's Sabbath. They had periods when they did observe it, before neglecting it and falling into the practices of the nations around them.

God told Israel, "Moreover also I gave them My *Sabbaths*, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of *Israel rebelled* against Me in the wilderness: they walked not in My statutes, and they despised My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and *My Sabbaths they greatly polluted*: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them" (Ezek. 20:12-13). Mankind has been rebelling against the Sabbath ever since. Yet it still remains the *sign* between God and His true people today (vs. 20).

God says, "For I am the LORD, *I change not*," (Mal. 3:6). Paul was inspired to write, "Jesus Christ *the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. Be not car-

ried about with various and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:8-9). The God of the Old Testament was the same Person known as "the Word" in John 1:1-2, 14. I Corinthians 10:4 identifies Christ as the "Rock" of the Old Testament. In other words, Christ is the One who inspired both Malachi in the *Old* Testament and Paul in the *New* Testament to say that He is a God who does not change! This applies to the Sabbath. This is why, in the *New* Testament, Christ said, "Therefore the Son of Man is *Lord also of the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:28).

Theologians and religionists have long taught that the true Sabbath of the Bible is the seventh day, Saturday, not Sunday, is the seventh day of the week. A good dictionary explains this. The weekly cycle has never been changed. (Request our free booklet *The SABBATH—has time been lost?* for proof of the unchanged weekly cycle since the time of creation.) However, the ministers of this world have had to carefully devise "explanations" that dismiss many clear scriptures about God's plain command to keep His Sabbath. They justify Sunday-keeping—even though God's Word has *never* justified this!

*Instead of letting God's Word change their beliefs to conform with His truths, they change the words or their meanings to make them fit their beliefs!*

Sunday is commonly thought of as the day that Christ was resurrected from the dead. It can be clearly proven that the Bible does *not* teach this. (Request our free booklet *CHRIST'S RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday.*) There is an important reason why theologians and many others *must* conclude that the resurrection accord on Sunday. Sunday is commonly referred to as "The Lord's Day." While the true Lord's Day of the Bible is actually the Day of the Lord—the Day of His Wrath (Joel 2:1-11; Rev. 1:10; 15:1, 7), the term, The Lord's Day, has become synonymous with Sunday. But why? The reason is simple. If Sunday can be established as the day that Christ was resurrected, it can be a means of validating and "authorizing" the *unauthorized* keeping of Sunday by the churches of the world—in place of God's true Sabbath!

You have already seen several scriptural references to the Sabbath. God hallowed it at creation—long before there were any Jews or Israelites to keep it (Gen. 2:1-3). The Sabbath was to be kept "forever"—"continually"—and "throughout your generations" by Israel, God's intended model nation (Ex. 31:12-17). Christ kept it (Luke 4:16) and said that He was Lord of it, and that it was "made for man" (Mark 2:27-28). He did not say that it was "only made for the Jews." Paul also observed it (Acts 13:42, 44; 17:2; 18:4).

Sabbath-keeping, as God's command for true Christians, is a large subject requiring its own extensive booklet proving it. Much more than just the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition collapses if Christ was really in the grave for 72 hours (starting Wednesday afternoon and ending Saturday afternoon) instead of the traditionally taught 36 hours between Friday afternoon and early Sunday morning. The greatest single reason for the unscriptural tradition (recall Mark 7:7) of Sunday-keeping collapses at the same time. God has always said, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). He has never said, "Remember Sunday to keep it holy—and just call it the Lord's day!"

It was once said, "More than the Jews having kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews"! This could just as easily have been said of God's true Church, which has been under siege through the ages. One of the single-greatest *KEYS* that identify the one true original Church of God, founded by Jesus Christ, is God's true Sabbath. Think about this. Prove it for yourself. (Request our free booklet *The SABBATH or Sunday—which?*)

### The Annual Holy Days

In Ezekiel 20:12-13, God said, "I gave them My *Sabbaths*." The word *Sabbaths* is plural. The weekly Sabbath is not the only Sabbath that God ordained to be kept forever. Leviticus 23 describes seven annual Holy Days—*annual* Sabbaths—that God commanded Israel (four different times) to keep "forever." Like the weekly Sabbath, this subject requires its own lengthy booklet in order to properly outline the proofs that these annual Sabbaths must still be kept today. (Request our free booklet *God's HOLY DAYS or Pagan HOLIDAYS?*)

These Sabbaths picture the Plan of God, as they are kept each year in sequence. The two Holy Days known as the first and last Days of Unleavened Bread were kept by the early New Testament Church (Acts 12:3; 20:6) in conjunction with the Lord's Supper, which is the New Testament Passover. (You may request our free booklet *How often should THE LORD'S SUPPER be taken?* to learn more about the Passover and these spring Holy Days.) In late spring is the Day of Pentecost. Leviticus 23:1-2 calls these Sabbaths "*feasts of the LORD*." The terms Holy Day, High Day and Feast Day are all found in the Bible and are synonymous. They are all annual Sabbaths.

Four more annual Sabbaths are kept in the fall. They are known as the Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah* to the Jews), the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the Feast of Tabernacles (*Succoth*) and the Last Great Day.

When clearly understood, these days each depict important events within God's Plan. The PASSOVER shows God's mercy through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is the one feast day that is not an annual Sabbath. The seven DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD depict the Christian coming out of sin, just as Israel came out of Egypt after the first Passover of Exodus 12. The first and last days are Sabbaths. PENTECOST, or Feast of Firstfruits, representing the early spring harvest in Israel, portrays the first resurrection of true saints (the firstfruits of God's Plan) at Christ's soon-coming Return. The FEAST OF TRUMPETS depicts Christ's Return—with the seven accompanying trumpets of Revelation 8, 9 and 11:15-19 describing what happens when each of these trumpets are blown. The DAY OF ATONEMENT ("at-one-ment") pictures the whole world finally "at one" with God, because Satan will have been bound and cast into "the bottomless pit" (Rev. 20:2-3), where he can no longer deceive the nations. The FEAST OF TABERNACLES depicts Christ's 1,000-year reign on earth with the saints and a time of peace, happiness and prosperity for a world that has not

known this for 6,000 years. This seven-day feast is followed by the LAST GREAT DAY, which represents a time at the end of the millennium when all human beings who have ever lived will be given a full opportunity to know God's truth and Plan of Salvation. (Request our free booklet *Does the Bible teach PREDESTINATION?* to learn more about God's great plan!)

True Christians called in this age (John 6:44, 65) have an opportunity to be part of the early spring harvest of Pentecost, while the *world* learns the truth later, during the time pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. The true Church teaches the truth about these Holy Days and the scriptures that support their observance.

### Many Other Important Truths

I have mentioned that, when God first called me, I was amazed at how many plain doctrinal truths the Bible taught that I had never heard. As explained before, this booklet could not contain them all. Here are *some* others.

I learned that the Bible says, "The wages of sin is *death*" (Rom. 6:23). I had been taught that there was an "ever-burning hell," where "bad people" went because they were still alive after death. I had been taught that we have immortal souls that survive death. Ezekiel 18:4, 20 states, "the *soul* that sins, it shall *die*." Matthew 10:28 states, "fear Him [God] which is able to *destroy* both *soul* and body in *hell* [*gehenna*: "lake of fire," which burns up the wicked (Mal. 4:3)]." Most people fear going to a "hell" that *does not exist!* The Greek word for hell is *hades*, meaning "the grave." Again, the true Church teaches the truth about death and hell and the scriptures that explain them. (Request our free booklet *The truth about HELL.*)

I learned that Christmas and Easter are not Bible customs. Rather, they are completely PAGAN in origin. They have nothing to do with God and are both condemned in scripture in the strongest possible terms. (Request our free booklets *The True Origin of CHRISTMAS* and *The True Origin of EASTER* to learn more about these holidays that men have used to replace God's true Holy Days.) Again, the true Church teaches the truth about the pagan origin of these days and the scriptures that condemn them.

I learned how Satan the devil "deceives the whole world" as the "god of this world"—including deception about who and what he is. (You may request our free booklets *Who is the DEVIL?* and *A WORLD IN CAPTIVITY* to learn about his role in God's Plan.) I also learned that one-third of the original angels (demons) joined Lucifer (Satan) in rebellion against God's government—and that the *faithful* angels are God's ministering spirits. Again, the true Church teaches the truth about the devil and the scriptures that support this understanding.

I learned that Christ said, regarding when Christians are born again, "That which is born of the flesh *is flesh*; and that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*" (John 3:6). I had always been taught that people could be born again in this

life, while they are still made of *flesh*. No one told me that Christ, only *after* His Resurrection, was called "the firstborn *from the dead*" (Col. 1:18). No wonder those who are born again *are spirit*—they are no longer composed of flesh. God's Holy Spirit has "changed" them (1 Cor. 15:50-52) from "flesh and blood" to spirit. Then I understood why Romans 8:29 described Christ as the "firstborn *among many brethren*." I learned that I could be one of those "many brethren"—if I qualified! Again, the true Church teaches the truth about these doctrines and the many scriptures that support them. (Request our free booklet *What Does "BORN AGAIN" Mean?* to learn more about this.)

I learned that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), and that the law of God was "holy, just, good" and "spiritual" (Rom. 7:12, 14). I had been told that Christ had "done away" with the law. Instead, I found that He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets [I had also been told that the Old Testament, which contains the writings of the prophets, was basically "done away"]: *I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*. For verily I say unto you, *Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*," and that "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, *and shall teach men so*, he shall be called the least in the kingdom...but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom" (Matt. 5:17-19).

I learned that, when people keep the law of God, it keeps them! This is because it *is* a law. And because it is a law, I also learned that when people break it, it *breaks* them! If the whole world were keeping this law, it would be a very different place. Again, the true Church teaches the truth about law and sin and the many scriptures that explain them. (Request our free article "What does the New Testament teach about LAW AND GRACE?")

I learned that the Bible method of baptism is immersion, and that God says that no other form of baptism is acceptable to Him. (Request our free booklet *What do you mean WATER BAPTISM?*) I learned that proper baptism must be preceded by repentance and recognition of what human nature really is—where it came from and why it needs to be repented of. (Request our free booklet *Did God Create HUMAN NATURE?*) I came to understand that "the laying on of hands" immediately follows baptism and is the only way a person can receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Again, the true Church teaches the truth about proper baptism and the scriptures supporting it.

I learned that God's true Church protects and feeds His Flock. Christ said (three times) to Peter that if he (Peter) loved Christ he would "Feed My [Christ's] sheep" (John 21:15-17). I also learned that there was authority in the Church that Christ built. Hebrews 13:7, 17, Acts 16:4, II Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6 and other places explain that God gives His true ministers authority over His Flock—partly so that they are better able to protect it. Again, God's Church teaches the truth about this understanding and the scriptures supporting it.

I learned God's principle of tithing (the Hebrew means "*tenthing*") on one's income because "the tithe belongs to God" (Lev. 27:30). Also, in Malachi

3:8-10, God says He considers those who do not both *pay* Him His tithes and *give* Him His offerings to be “robbers”! I also learned that in these same verses He promised to open the windows of heaven and pour out tremendous blessings on those who were willing to “prove Him”—and that this is the way He finances His Work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the world. I found that Christ affirmed the tithing law in Matthew 23:23. Other places in the New Testament confirmed Christ’s words. (You may write for our free booklet *End All Your FINANCIAL WORRIES*.) Again, the true Church teaches the truth about tithing and the many scriptures supporting it.

I learned that there is a great false religious system that the Bible calls “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5), which masquerades as Christianity. It is pictured as a “mother church” who has protesting “daughters” who left it, but who are still part of her same system. This system has carefully counterfeited all of the hundreds of doctrines of God and has continually tried to penetrate, capture and destroy the true Church of God. I learned that the Bible warns God’s people about being swept into the deadly deception perpetrated by this great false church. And by studying true Church history, I learned that this false woman invariably finds a way to enter the true Church, causing those who are determined to hold fast to the full truth of God to have to flee! (Request our extensive free booklet *Many shall come IN MY NAME* to learn more about this system.) *Finally, the true Church teaches the truth about all of these doctrines and the many scriptures supporting them!*

### Some Recent History

After the original apostles died, the false church did come in and largely destroy the *visible* Church. Because of persecution, often including threats, imprisonment, torture and death, most people gave in and departed from the truth and the true Church. This period is often called “The Lost Century.” Yet, as Christ promised, the true Church has always survived. It has never completely disappeared or been destroyed—though it has certainly remained a “little flock” that has kept the truth and the Church that God has always kept in His name.

Peter warned, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be *false teachers among you*, who privily shall bring in *dammable heresies*, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many shall follow their pernicious ways*; by reason of whom *the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of *you*” (II Pet. 2:1-3).

Before his death, Paul warned the Ephesian elders to understand what would happen after he was gone: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy [Spirit] has made you overseers, to *feed the Church of God*...For I know this, that after my departing *shall grievous*

*wolves enter* in among you, *not sparing the flock*. Also of your own selves shall men arise, *speaking perverse things*, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30). History records that this is *exactly* what happened during “The Lost Century.”

A major defection within the true Church happened again at the end of the twentieth century. And it happened again precisely as Peter and Paul had warned would happen in the first century Church. I have previously explained that God called me into His truth in 1966. I was blessed to learn and to know God’s wonderful truth and to be personally trained by Herbert W. Armstrong. My relationship with him primarily began when I met and married his secretary in 1971. God used this man to restore truths that had been lost to His Church for centuries. Attendance in the Church exceeded 150,000 shortly after his death—when his successors did, in fact, “enter in” and “arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” From the time of Mr. Armstrong’s death in 1986, this process of destruction lasted approximately nine years. As has been the historical pattern, the vast majority (over 80%) completely departed from the truth, the true Church and the true God. They scattered back into the world or remained where they were, returning to and re-accepting hundreds of false doctrines and practices. (The complete story has been told in my book *THERE CAME A FALLING AWAY*.)

The other 20%, who did not accept the direction of the false teachers who captured the visible church, also scattered into a variety of groups that held to varying amounts of the truth we all had learned under Mr. Armstrong’s leadership.

All that I have described here was actually prophesied to occur. Paul was inspired to foretell and warn of this falling away before the Return of Christ. He recorded, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Return of Christ described two verses earlier] shall not come, except there come a *falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

Paul explained that this falling away would affect all who “received not the *love of the truth*, that they might be saved” (II Thes. 2:3, 10). The Greek word for “falling away” is *apostasia*. Literally, it means “to defect from the truth.”

When God called me, this prophesied “falling away” had not yet occurred. Though all in the Church knew that it was coming, most still became entangled in it because they had not stayed close to God, as they should have, through prayer, study, meditation and regular fasting. They were caught unaware.

At this point, an additional Bible doctrine must be introduced. The Bible teaches, in Revelation 2 and 3, that God has worked with His Church through seven separate and successive eras. In these two chapters, Christ describes each one. The first five are described as having their own unique set of doctrinal and spiritual problems that eventually led to their downfall. Each time this happened, God raised up a new leader to establish the next era. These seven eras are *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, *Pergamos*, *Thyatira*, *Sardis*, *Philadelphia* and

*Laodicea*. Originally, these were seven cities that lay close together (in this order) on a mail route in Asia Minor (now western Turkey). Each city reflected corresponding attitudes that would exist in the seven eras they represented. Christ was able to use them to show a pattern that would span the history of His Church over the next 2,000 years, from A.D. 31 until His Return. (Request our free booklet *The History of God's TRUE CHURCH*.)

When God called Mr. Armstrong in the fall of 1926, the New Testament Church had arrived at the end of the fifth era (*Sardis*). God used Mr. Armstrong in a powerful way to restore His full truth and to raise up and lead the sixth era of the Church—*Philadelphia*.

Mr. Armstrong's death paved the way for false leaders to arise within the Church. True Christians were forced to flee. Most of them formed or entered organizations, as mentioned above, that do not *fully* hold fast to the truth and practices of the true Church. Collectively, those groups form the seventh and last—or *Laodicean*—era of the Church.

While *Laodicea* means “the *people* rule, judge, decide,” they are still God's people in a weak condition. However, they do not represent His true Church. He cannot rule them! Soon, those who wished to fully hold fast (*Philadelphians*) without compromising *any* true doctrines or practices, found themselves again having to flee their organizations in order to do this. There is no avoiding the importance of at least briefly explaining these events, which brought The Restored Church of God into existence.

This Church does not compromise on even one of God's true doctrines. Just as Christ foretold, it is a small, hated and persecuted “little flock” that God has kept in His Name. It is doing God's Work—taking the true gospel of the kingdom of God to the world before this age ends. Its fruits are evidence of God's blessings. It is growing and has members scattered in countries around the world. The fact that you are reading this booklet means that you have come in contact with it—just as I was privileged, in 1966, to come into contact with the true Church and learn the truth for the first time.

Christ also promised that when false leaders, whom He refers to in John 10 as “thieves and robbers,” have been able to get into the Church, “the sheep *hear His* [Christ's] *VOICE*: and *He calls His own sheep by name*, and *leads them out*.” His voice is defined as “the truth” (John 18:37).

He goes on to say, “He goes before them, and the *sheep follow Him*: for they *know His voice*. And a *stranger will they not follow*, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:3-5). Christ continues by describing some ministers: “The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and *cares not for the sheep*” (vs. 13). This remarkable promise shows that Christ will never abandon His sheep and will always protect those who hear His voice and willingly follow Him when they are in danger! The *Laodicean* era of the Church is described by Christ as “*wretched*, and *miserable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked*.” Christ also says that this era is “lukewarm” and lacks zeal (Rev. 3:14-22).

This last era is now dominant, before the soon-coming, glorious Return of Jesus Christ. In verse 20, Christ says to all those in this era, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man *hear My voice*, and open the door, *I will come in to him*.” This is Christ's offer to all who have held fast to *part* of the truth. (*Philadelphians* hold fast to *all* of it [Rev. 3:11], because they are determined to “let no man take their crown.”) He will continue to call *Laodiceans* “*by name*” and knock on their door until there is no time left in this age. This era shuts Him out and will not let Him “*lead them out*” of the danger they face in the prophesied Great Tribulation, soon to come upon an unsuspecting world!

Just as Mr. Armstrong strove to live peacefully alongside the *Sardis* era of the Church, and bore them no ill will, we are striving to live peacefully (*Philadelphia* means “brotherly love”) alongside the seventh era—*Laodicea*—bearing them no ill will. We hope and pray that many more will continue to awaken to Christ's warning and come out of this era. However, this booklet is not written for or specifically directed to these weak brethren. It is to instruct new people who God is *now* calling, so that they are better able to understand recent events in the true Church—and avoid the same pitfalls into which so many others fell!

### Christ Built His Church

God calls His Church “a building” that is “fitly framed together” (Eph. 2:21). Christ is “building a building” consisting of “lively [living] stones” (I Pet. 2:5). Psalm 127:1 says, “Except the LORD *build the house*, they labor in vain that build it.” God is continuing His building of the Church in The Restored Church of God.

The true Church is depicted as a type of Jerusalem and as the Mother of the brethren in the Church (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-23). Like any Mother, she cares for and feeds her children. The true Church is pictured as a bride prophesied to marry Jesus Christ at His Return (Rev. 19:7-9). It is described as having “made herself ready” for this wonderful and glorious event! Will you be one who strives to make yourself ready?

Finally, we have not yet addressed the actual meaning of the Greek word translated “Church.” This needs clarification. Most have supposed it means a building or an organization. It means neither. The word “church” is *ekklesia*, meaning “a calling out,” especially as a religious congregation. Christians are called *out* of this world—its ways—its customs—its practices—its traditions—and *into* the true Church, and fellowship with God and Christ (I John 1:3).

God says, “Wherefore *come out from among them, and be you separate*, says the Lord...and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:17-18). May God help you to come out of the Babylon of this world (Rev. 18:4), that you may qualify to rule with Christ in the wonderful new world that lies ahead!

### Requesting Counsel

The following quote concludes Mr. Armstrong's booklet *WHERE Is the True Church?* under the subhead "The True Name":

**"In this world, churches are named after MEN, or after the SYSTEM men have devised, or the kind of church government MEN have thought out, CONTRARY to God's Word, or after a significant doctrine they emphasize, or what men hope to make it—all-encompassing, universal or catholic. But wherever that ONE *true* Church is, it will be named the CHURCH OF GOD.**

**"But that is not all. Many have appropriated God's name, but are not proclaiming the KINGDOM OF GOD, as the GOVERNMENT of God, which we must OBEY—teaching obedience to God's Law (Ten Commandments)—teaching REPENTANCE of rebellion and transgressing God's Holy Law—teaching that we may be now BEGOTTEN into the KINGDOM (Family) of God, and may, by the resurrection, be BORN into the GOD FAMILY! That true Church is preaching the imminency of the coming of CHRIST as KING of king and LORD of lords, to RULE all nations for a thousand years on earth. Not up in heaven, but ON THIS EARTH (Rev. 5:10).**

**"There is only ONE such Church!**

**"It is doing THE WORK OF GOD. It is, as Jesus said it would be, a 'little flock,' persecuted, despised by the world.**

**"God's Church does have...MINISTERS [and Elders]...available to call on you, visit you in your home, answer your questions, explain the Bible to you—*IF YOU REQUEST IT!* But none of them will *EVER* call on you, unless YOU of your own free will request it! Regarding the general public, Jesus said, 'Go NOT from house to house' (Luke 10:7). Paul had visited the elders (ministers) at Ephesus from house to house.**

**"Neither Jesus, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor any of the original true apostles ever approached people and personally URGED conversion on them. God has made every human a FREE MORAL AGENT. God compels each to MAKE HIS OWN DECISION, *and the true* GOD will never force you to be converted."**

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