

Where Is God's True Church Today?



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By Roderick C. Meredith

Thousands of different denominations claim to be following Jesus Christ. Yet they teach thousands of different "gospels" and disagree on countless points of doctrine.

*Is Jesus Christ the Head of all these denominations?
Is Christ divided? Or is there a true Church of God that stands apart from this religious Babylon?
How can you recognize God's true Church? This booklet will help you understand!*

CHT Edition 3.0 | November 2021
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Have you ever wondered *why* you were born? What your *real future* will be like after you die? What you will actually be *doing* for eternity? Will you sit around all day, playing a harp or staring passively into the face of God? Or does God have something far more awesome and wonderful planned for you?

Have you ever wished you could find a church that truly *understands* the **end-time** prophecies of the Bible—how they apply to *today's* headlines and the near future events affecting *your life*? Have you searched for a church that could help you understand the genuine *meaning* of life itself—and could explain where you and your nation will be headed in the next few years? Have you ever wished that you could find a church where the ministers actually preach *right out of the Bible* and help you “make sense” of its words—including its many specific prophecies? Do you long for a church where virtually *all* the members bring their Bibles to services, and where everyone actually *believes* what the Bible says and is trying to live by the true “first-century Christianity” that Jesus Christ and His Apostles lived and preached?

Have you hoped to find a church where people of all races and backgrounds are accepted with warmth and love, and where Christ's command to love one another is reflected in the “family atmosphere” when church members gather for worship and fellowship?

My friends, there *is* such a church that genuinely **believes** in the divine inspiration of the Holy Bible and is actually trying to **do** what the Bible says in every phase and facet of life. It is a church that has *no other* “holy books” or church “traditions” that take the place of the Bible on *anything*. This church is not a building, a corporation, or an invention of human beings. It is a spiritual organism with a history going right back to Jesus Christ and the Apostles. It is a very *small* church—the “little flock” described by Jesus Christ (Luke 12:32)—but it has *always* existed since the time of Christ and *will* exist at the end of the age when its faithful members are taken to a place of safety (see Revelation 12)

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before the Great Tribulation actually begins. Do *you* want to be part of such a church, whose members will soon become the kings and priests helping rule this earth under Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:10)?

Where Are God's People?

The man sitting across from me was sharing his thoughts earnestly.

"I used to think that God's people were just scattered all through the various denominations," he exclaimed. "However, the more I read the Bible, the more I feel there *must* be a true Church somewhere on earth composed of people who really *do* what the Bible says. But how can I know? How can I be sure where God is working today?"

Now, the big question is, how can *you* know? How can *you* be sure?

Today, many churches call themselves Christian. Some practice baptism by immersion in water. Others just "sprinkle" or pour water on the head of baptismal candidates. Many churches keep what they call the "Lord's Supper" every Sunday morning. Others observe this custom once a month, quarterly, or only once a year.

Most churches observe Sunday as their day of worship, while a few observe the Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Others say that the day of worship does not matter at all.

Churches are called by all kinds of names: Episcopal, Baptist, Holiness, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, Pentecostal, and others. More importantly, the various churches of this world have *different concepts of God*. Some feel that God is a fierce autocrat who roasts sinners in an ever-burning hellfire. Others think of God as simply the "divine spark" that somehow started all life but that has very little to do with everyday events and does not care about mankind's "lifestyle." Yet these differing churches all call themselves "Christian"—they use the name of Christ.

Does it make any difference? Has God left it up to *human beings* to search out and call their churches by various names and come up with various days upon which to worship, various modes of baptism, and different doctrinal teachings?

Where Is God?

Does God have anything to say about all of this?

Yes, He does!

Somewhere on this earth, God has *true* servants who faithfully and fully proclaim the end-time warnings to which we should all be paying attention. God inspired His prophet Amos to tell us, “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:7–8).

Today, staggering events are on the immediate horizon. They are prophesied in your Bible. *One fourth* of the entire Bible is devoted to prophecy. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:2–4). Does *your* minister preach the *full message* of the Bible? Does he regularly explain and make clear to you and your loved ones the **powerful end-time prophecies** of the Bible? The Bible lists many specific events for which true Christians should be watching. These events will soon clearly demonstrate that humanity is at the very *end* of this present age—the age of man’s rule over the earth under the influence of Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9).

Many religious leaders talk about the “end times.” But in all honesty, *who* is telling you the specific events for which you should watch? And who is helping you, today, to understand the real *meaning* behind the traumatic upheavals in the weather and the increasing earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and awful wars in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere, that are increasingly threatening this planet?

Who is truly “making sense” out of all of this?

Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** shall make you free” (John 8:31–32). Again, if you are to abide in Christ’s “word,” *who* is really making that word “come alive?” Who is continually quoting **not** from the secular writings of this world, but from the *inspired word of God*? Who is constantly challenging you, “**Prove all things**; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, *King James Version*)?

Another vital issue to consider: Where is the full **truth** being preached today?

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“Oh, *all* churches have the same basic beliefs!” many will say, or, “*No one* has a monopoly on the truth. We can’t really *know* about these things anyway, so all religions are essentially valid as long as people are sincere!”

I am sure many of you have heard this type of reasoning before. If there is **not** a *real* God, or if the Holy Bible is **not** truly inspired, then such reasoning might stand up. *But such is not the case!* Perhaps the most basic instructions of Jesus Christ are these words: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*” (Luke 4:4). God’s true Church must necessarily acknowledge this *most fundamental* of all Christian teaching! Church leadership and individual Church members may **not** yet be perfect, but they must at least *acknowledge* that God’s word is the **basis** for knowing the ultimate truth their Creator intended, for **without** the Bible—**without** the inspired instruction from **God Himself** in His inspired word—all that remains are the billions of *human opinions*: “This is the way I feel!” or “This is how it seems to me!”

Do you get the picture?

So if God does have a true Church on this earth, it must acknowledge the *inspired authority* of the Bible and must base its teaching **solidly** on that foundation! As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, “But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the **church of the living God**, the *pillar* and *ground* of the **truth**” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Again, what *is* the truth? Jesus said in your Bible, “Sanctify them by Your truth. *Your word is truth*” (John 17:17).

Wherever the true Church is, it is the **pillar** and “bulwark” (as the word “ground” ought to be translated in 1 Timothy 3:15) of the truth. It is the **protector** of the truth. Paul also tells us that true Christians—those who compose the true Church—are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:19–20). If, as Paul wrote, the true Church is built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, then the **writings** of the apostles and the prophets—**not** human opinions or “feelings”—must be the **basis** of doctrine and practice.

Paul’s inspired statement about the true Church being the *pillar* and *bulwark* of the truth is **enormously** important, for through God’s

Church, people should come to understand the supreme **purpose** for mankind's existence. They should learn in detail about God's great **plan** for humanity and *how* He is working out that plan. They should come to understand the vital **one fourth** of the Bible that is prophetic. They should then grasp the *real meaning* of current events as they relate to Bible prophecy. This will make their newspaper reading and world news viewing on television truly "come alive."

Then, members of the true Church of God will know **how** to follow Jesus' command, "**Watch therefore**, and *pray always* that you may be counted worthy to **escape all these things** that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). These truly converted people will then have the divine protection of **God Himself** during the horrifying Great Tribulation that Jesus Christ specifically prophesied would occur just before His return (Matthew 24:21–22). These *true* Christians—members of the *true* Church learning the full truth—will be spared from the horrifying "hour of trial" that will soon descend on this earth, for Jesus *promises* to people in this Church, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

Do you, personally, want to be *protected* during the traumatic years just ahead? Or would you rather be "comfortable" attending whatever church you grew up in—or now attend—whether or not it understands the real truth?

A "Comfortable" Church?

Should you look for a church where you can easily "fit in" and be "comfortable?" Columnist Pat Jobe wrote for the June 14, 2004 issue of *The Charlotte Observer*, "'Comfortable in church.' The phrase has always driven me crazy. The idea that we would go to church to get comfortable, to be comfortable, to be with people around whom we are comfortable, is offensive, maddening and just plain loony. 'Comfortable' is what I want when I put my feet up to watch TV... Comfort for the churchgoers I know is about class, education level, country club and race. And yes, too often about politics to boot. We like to worship with people who think like us, look like us, and drive the same kinds of cars we drive" (p. 9). I am sure you are familiar with these attitudes. But is *this* the approach to true religion that Jesus Christ taught His true followers?

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Please *listen* to Christ Himself: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate [love less] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26–27, 33).

No, Jesus Christ does **not** intend that we strive for a “comfortable” existence in following Him! This may sound strange to some of you who have only heard about the “peace and prosperity” gospel that so many preach today. But the *true* Christ of your Bible talked constantly about the need to come **out** of this world’s society, about the need to prepare for **persecution**, and about the need to “give up” one’s life in order to truly serve the **only** One who can actually give us *eternal* life!

The true Church is composed of people who have genuinely *surrendered* their lives to God through Jesus Christ. They will have *proved to themselves* the existence of the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. They will have *proved to themselves* the literal inspiration of the Holy Bible and will have dedicated themselves to following Jesus Christ’s instruction: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*” (Luke 4:4). And they will certainly have **proved** for themselves that Jesus of Nazareth was *God in the flesh*, that He **died** to pay the penalty of sin for all humanity, *rose from the dead* after three days and three nights in the grave (Matthew 12:40), and now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our active High Priest, living Head, and soon-coming King.

Such truly converted people will **surrender** to Christ as “Lord”—the One whom they will **obey**. Therefore, through *Christ living within them* through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20), they will strive to **live** by the teachings of the Bible. **These** are the people who make up the true Church of God!

So if you are willing to “get real,” then please be willing to listen to what the *Bible actually says*, for God *does* have a true Church here on earth. That Church is *genuinely* preparing its members for eternal life. That Church is *genuinely* doing the Work of God today. And that Church has several notable “signs”—key identifiers that are clearly mentioned in the Bible—which will show any sincere, discerning person **where** God’s true Church is *if* they are willing to listen with an open mind!

Do You “Need” to Attend Church?

In the current religious confusion, many people become turned off by what they call “organized religion” and decide to stay at home and worship God alone, with their family, or with a few other people. Is there anything wrong with *that*?

Even though many sincere people try to justify the practice of forming a “stay at home” church, this is *very definitely wrong* for many reasons. And it is totally *unbiblical*, except in a very few extreme circumstances!

Those who truly believe the Bible understand that Jesus Christ was the “light” whom God sent into the world. He was our **example**, and His Apostles were also used as examples once they were fully converted.

What was the *inspired example* of Jesus Christ? “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His **custom** was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16). Jesus’ own practice was to **attend** worship services regularly with others in an “organized” synagogue or Church setting, for God had already called the Sabbath a “holy convocation”—which means “commanded assembly.” So Jesus Christ **obeyed** this command, setting us an example.

We find that—even after Jesus’ resurrection—Peter and the early Apostles *met regularly* in the temple on both the weekly and annual Sabbaths. In fact, the New Testament Church actually started **not** on Christmas or Easter, but on one of **God’s** commanded Holy Days, the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1)! Then the early disciples *met regularly* with others in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 2:46–47).

When it was God’s time for Paul to become active in the ministry, “Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year *they assembled with the church* and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:25–26). Note that Paul and Barnabas “assembled” with the “Church.” So there was an “organized” Church which **did** meet together regularly! Still later, we read, “Then Paul, as his **custom** was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2).

The inspired writer of Hebrews tells us, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the as-**

sembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:24–26). This vital scripture in God's word tells us **not** to forsake assembling with others. It also tells us to "stir" one another to love and "good works."

A few misguided souls might *assume* that if they just met at home with family and friends, they could stir up each other to good works. This approach clearly goes against the overwhelming number of biblical examples that God's true servants did and should meet as an organized church, led **not** by some layman who decides to "appoint himself" to the ministry, but by a properly trained and ordained *true* minister of Jesus Christ! The Bible is emphatic that "**no man** takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God" (Hebrews 5:4).

In my more than 60 years in Christ's ministry, I have dealt with a number of men and women who decided to withdraw from "organized religion." In doing so, they adopted a "just Jesus and me" approach to the Church, not recognizing that God has established a clear pattern of leadership in His Church. Many of the men, depriving themselves of sound counsel, ended up *assuming* the duties of the ministry or virtually "appointing themselves" as ministers of Jesus Christ. In nearly every case, these men were obviously **self-willed**, usually "hardheaded," and genuinely unwilling to be taught and led by others. They desired to be "important" in their own eyes and in the eyes of their family or immediate friends by *taking it upon themselves* to establish a "home church" and act as minister or leader.

These men seemingly forgot the powerful example of Korah and his followers, who *rejected* the leadership of God's appointed servant Moses and argued that "every man" had the right to act as spiritual leader! These **self-willed** individuals challenged Moses and Aaron with these words: "You take too much upon yourselves, for **all** the congregation is holy, **every one** of them, and the LORD is among them" (Numbers 16:3). God showed *His* attitude toward this "every man is a minister" approach by having the earth open up and *swallow alive* these hardheaded rebels (vv. 28–34)!

In *our day*, by separating themselves from God's true ministers and also separating themselves from being part of the **Work** of

preaching the Gospel to “all the nations” (Matthew 28:19–20) that Christ is accomplishing through His true Church, these people are shirking their responsibility to be part of the *active body* of Jesus Christ. They are *not* learning the lessons of working together as part of that body, are not learning the full truth in a *balanced* way, are not learning to humbly receive and act upon the needed *exhortation* and *correction* that all Christians receive in the true Church of God.

Rather, such individuals end up on the “fringe” of God’s people, **not** interacting and learning as part of a real church fellowship. Such self-appointed religious leaders and their followers usually become sidetracked by odd ideas and doctrinal novelties. Also, very importantly, they show the living Christ that they lack **faith** in His ability to lead the Church, which God tells us is *His* responsibility (Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:18)!

The Church Jesus Built

Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets’” (Matthew 16:13–14).

But Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16).

Then Jesus continued, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock *I will build My church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (v. 18).

Jesus here said very plainly that He *would* build a “church”—which simply meant in the inspired Greek language a “group” or “crowd” of people. Jesus called it “**My**” church—not just *any* group, crowd, or church.

Throughout the New Testament, God clearly indicates, again and again, that *His* people—*His* Church—would be *small* in number during this age and would often be persecuted. He said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.... If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, *therefore the world hates you*” (John 15:16–19).

Wherever they are, it is obvious that God’s true people do **not** truly “fit” into this world and its society, for Jesus continued, “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (v. 20). And Jesus called His people the “*little flock*” (Luke 12:32).

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Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14). Remember, then, that only a **few** go in through the narrow gate—only a **few truly understand** and are part of God's true Church today!

Notice: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, *but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). Jesus plainly stated that His true people must be *obedient* to the Father's will. They must **do** what God the Father commands.

Now, see how this *directly applies* to the true Church. All through the New Testament, the term “woman” is used as a *symbol* of a church. In 2 Corinthians 11:1–2, the true Church is pictured as the affianced “bride” of Christ. In Revelation 17, the great false church is called a “harlot” (v. 1) and a “woman” sitting on a scarlet-colored beast (v. 3).

Nearly all scholars acknowledge that in Revelation 12, the *true Church* is pictured as the bride. She is being “persecuted” by the “dragon”—described in verse 9 as Satan the devil. Although the zealous members are taken to a place of safety, in verse 17 God describes the devil as going to make war with the “rest” of the true Church—*those left behind*.

In Revelation 14:12, God describes His faithful people: “Here is the patience of the saints; *here are those who keep the commandments of God* and the faith of Jesus.” God indicates that *these* are the people who will be *protected* from the soon-coming Great Tribulation and the horrifying **plagues** of God that immediately follow!

Does it *make any difference* how you worship God? *Of course* you can worship in the church of “*your choice*”—as the Sunday religious-page ads often say. *Of course* you can follow the ideas of your relatives, friends, and associates! But will *they* be there to **protect you** during the coming world upheaval? More importantly, will *they* be there to “save” you in God's judgment?

Why not prove to yourself that the **Bible** is the *inspired revelation* from the Creator of basic spiritual knowledge otherwise inaccessible to mankind? Why not see what the word of God—the *Bible*—says about where God's true Church is today?

Identifying “Signs”

We have already seen that Jesus said *He* would build *His* Church. We have found that the Bible describes that Church as a small, persecuted Church—one that is certainly *not part of this world's society*. It is a Church that does the **will** of God the Father. It **keeps** the Ten Commandments given as a basic *way of life* by Almighty God.

Obviously, many differing churches are small. Many are persecuted. Some are persecuted because they seem to deliberately *provoke others* and so bring unneeded persecution upon themselves—**not** because of a biblical *message*, but because of thoughtlessly and arrogantly trying to “cram their religion” down the throats of other people.

Many small, unorthodox religious groups sincerely feel they are not “part of this world.” Perhaps they wear distinctive attire—black hats and black bonnets, simple and plain clothing, or special undergarments—to “prove” this to themselves and others. But being small, sometimes persecuted, and *not* of this world's society are principles that may be applied in strange ways. A biblical “key” to properly understanding and applying the above principles is revealed in the Apostle Paul's statement that God has given Christians the spirit of “a *sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7).

But apart from the aforementioned general description of the true Church, are there any *specific identifying signs* that point unmistakably to where God's Church is today?

Thankfully, *there are*.

For the sake of brevity, I will list and explain just *five* of these “signs,” so that—if *your mind is open*—you may **know** how to recognize God's true Church on earth today.

1. The **Fear** of God

Before creating mankind, God created Lucifer—one of the cherubs who originally covered His throne. In Latin, “Lucifer” means “light bringer” or “shining star of the dawn.” Lucifer was originally created with tremendous wisdom, beauty, and capacity (Ezekiel 28:11–15). In Isaiah 14:12–15, Lucifer is described: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest

sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit."

As nearly all theologians recognize, it is obvious from this and other scriptures that Lucifer's ability and beauty led to a great deal of **pride**. This pride, in turn, led Lucifer to *rebel* against his Creator, and his name was later changed from "light bringer" to *Satan*—which literally means "adversary" in Hebrew. Lucifer became God's greatest *enemy*.

Throughout the entire Bible, God shows us that He is determined **not** to allow *anyone* to come into His Kingdom who is a potential *adversary*—a potential *Satan*! Are you? We all should recognize how **vital** this is to God. He wants *unity* and *peace* in His Kingdom and His Spirit-led Family! He is the Author of *love, joy, and peace*. Any being who would be a potential rebel might eventually **destroy** that peace.

Therefore, throughout the *entire Bible*, God reveals that He will make *absolutely sure* that any potential son of His will come to have the correct "fear" of God! As God's word indicates, this fear is **not** "terror" or "being afraid" of something bad! Rather, it is a profound *reverence*, humility, and willingness to **obey** our Creator and never to rebel against His laws and His righteous ways, which always bring peace and joy.

One of the first "tests" that Abraham, the "father of the faithful," had to pass is described in Genesis 22. *Please read this chapter carefully!* Here we find how God "tested" Abraham (v. 1) to see whether he would *be totally submissive* to his Creator—even willing to sacrifice his only legitimate son. At the very last minute—when Abraham had **proved** his total submission to God—God sent His Spokesman, who said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for *now I know that you fear God*, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (v. 12). Then, God gave Abraham the magnificent blessing that tremendous *physical* wealth and power would come upon his descendants, as well as *spiritual* blessings through the "seed," Jesus Christ (vv. 15–18).

Abraham had to *prove to God* that he "feared" Him and that he was willing to *totally surrender* his own will—not just to "*believe in*" God, but to **do** what God commanded! In Proverbs 1:7, we read, "The **fear** of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Again, in Proverbs 9:10, we read, "The **fear** of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is un-

derstanding.” So this tremendous *awe* and deep *reverence* before our Creator is the very starting point of true knowledge and true wisdom. Without it, God does **not** want us in His eternal Kingdom!

It should be obvious that those in God's true Church must learn to have this *profound reverence* and willingness to *obey* their Maker that was portrayed so well by Abraham, the “father” of the faithful. Also, members of the true Church will have *proven* to themselves what God tells us in Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God *must believe that He is*, and that He is a *rewarder* of those who diligently seek Him.”

If you and I are to be *genuine* Christians, we must totally **believe** in a real God—the God described in the Bible. And we must believe that, as the Bible says, He is a “rewarder” of those who *diligently seek Him*—not of those who half-heartedly attend the “church of their choice” or the local neighborhood church whenever it is “convenient,” and who believe whatever religious fad is currently in vogue!

Real Christians will also have proven to themselves the *inspiration* of the Holy Bible! Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). They will have *surrendered themselves* to follow what Jesus said and **do** what God says in His inspired word. They will understand that God “reveals” Himself *through His word*, **not** through our human imagination. They will understand and respond to 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

As God makes clear in the above verse, scripture is given not just for our encouragement, but for **reproof** and **correction**, as well as “instruction in righteousness.” God's true Church must base its beliefs **totally** upon God's inspired word! It must accept the *true Christ* revealed in the Bible as both Savior and Lord—the One we must **obey**. Those who fail to do so have come up with *hundreds* of different, competing denominations—each with different doctrines, practices, and concepts of what God is like.

The Foundation of Truth

In his very helpful and insightful book *The Battle For the Bible*, Dr. Harold Lindsell lays out this fundamental proposition: “Of all the

doctrines connected with the Christian faith, none is more important than the one that has to do with the basis of our religious knowledge. For anyone who professes the Christian faith the root question is: From where do I get my knowledge on which my faith is based? The answers to this question are varied, of course, but for the Christian at least it always comes full circle to the Bible. *When all has been said and done, the **only true and dependable source for Christianity lies in the book we call the Bible***" (p. 17, emphasis added).

I hope all of you will carefully read the above quote and say a hearty "Amen," for this is absolutely **vital** to true Christianity and a key that *must* be taught and practiced by any church that calls itself the true Church of God! Again, the *true* people of God will only be those who **surrender** to actually **do** what the Bible really says. They will obey God's word even *if* it brings them "problems" or *severe persecution!* As you know, the early Christians *took their very lives in their hands* when they followed Jesus and the original Apostles. They were continually persecuted, sometimes martyred—and often hounded out of their jobs, their cities, or even their families. As we have already seen, the Jesus Christ of the Bible told all who would follow Him, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate [love less] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26–27).

When challenged about which "power" healed a crippled man, the Apostle Peter courageously answered, "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the **name of Jesus Christ** of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10–12).

To be in God's *true Church*, one must sincerely follow Peter's inspired instruction on the day of Pentecost: "**Repent**, and let every one of you *be baptized* in the **name** of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord

our God will call” (Acts 2:38–39). When one comes to the point of being willing to wholeheartedly **repent** of breaking God’s holy law—for “*sin is the transgression of the law*” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*)—one must be baptized in the *name* of Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. At that moment, the new Christian will be *totally forgiven* of past sins and will become a member of God’s Church.

You **cannot** “join” God’s true Church! You must be put into the Church—**baptized** into the Church—by God Himself, through His filling you with the Holy Spirit. As Paul explained, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is **not** His” (Romans 8:9). Also, “by one Spirit we were all baptized into **one body**—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Through the **total surrender** of your heart, mind, and body to God *through Jesus Christ* as Savior, you will be plunged into—*put into*—the Church of God, which is Christ’s body. Then—with Christ as your ultimate Boss and Lord—you will **not** belong to yourself anymore. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and *you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Are you, personally, willing to make that kind of commitment?

Complete Surrender to Jesus Christ

God’s true Church is composed of people willing to surrender fully to Christ. They must also be willing to follow Jesus’ instruction: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny** himself, and take up his **cross**, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24–25). Most professing Christians today are so interested in “saving” their lives—having a “good time” and fitting into this present society—that they would find it very difficult to even consider actually *obeying* this powerful teaching of the Son of God.

I will always remember conducting a series of small evangelistic meetings in February 1957, in London, England. Among the attendees was a very kindly Scottish couple who came virtually every night for four weeks and seemed very interested and enthusiastic. They said, “Praise the Lord!” and acted very pleased with what I had to say during most of the campaign. They said that they wanted to do

“whatever” the Lord had in mind. But near the end of these evangelistic meetings, I touched on a couple of very key and *vital* instructions from God involving the Ten Commandments directly. Suddenly, their attitude changed. They became somber and defensive.

My wife and I both tried to visit with them for the last night or two of their attendance in these meetings. They acknowledged that what I said came out of the Bible. But they said that in their present situation, because of this man's employment, it would be “too difficult” to obey God. So they failed to show up for the last couple of meetings and eventually faded away into the mass of Londoners. God's direct command seemed “too hard” for them. It demanded *obedience* in a way to which they were not prepared to respond.

One of the finest true ministers I have ever known said often, “God will not ‘save’ anyone He cannot *rule!*” You see, as in the example of Abraham, God demands that we prove to Him our willingness to *surrender* our lives and wills *totally* to **do** what He says!

Please do not misunderstand! I do not mean to convey the idea that every person has to have this *almost perfect attitude* of submission to God **before** becoming a member of His true Church! But the basic *understanding* and willingness to *grow* in that perfect submission to our Creator *should be there*. We in this Work, which the living Christ is using to proclaim His message, **cannot** help you by offering you a “cheap substitute” to genuine Christianity. We cannot and must not offer you “cheap grace” and say, as do so many others, “*God accepts you just as you are!*”

For the true Jesus Christ of the Bible said, “But **why** do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ **and not do the things which I say?**” (Luke 6:46).

The *real* Jesus Christ also said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21–23).

Note carefully the final phrase of this inspired teaching from the Son of God: “... *depart* from me, you who practice **lawlessness!**”

Those who pretend to teach the Ten Commandments but then invent all manner of excuses to “water down” the very **basis** of genuine

Christian character are in *deep trouble!* The Apostle James was inspired to write, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:10–12).

James was clearly referring to the Ten Commandments. *Those* are the commandments that teach against murder and adultery. James showed that we must obey **all ten** of God’s commandments—not come up with clever reasons as to why *any* of them is “done away,” or why some are to be modified or “watered down” to fit our modern lifestyle.

Rather, God’s true Church is composed of those who have the *genuine* “fear of God”—who are tired of “playing games” with religion and are willing to *diligently seek* the God of the Bible, **obey** His commandments, and truly yield themselves to Christ to live *His obedient life* within them through the Holy Spirit. In fact, the best one-verse definition of a true Christian that I know of is found in this inspired statement of Paul: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*). *This* is the very basis of *true* Christianity. *This* is the foundation of the **true** Church of God!

2. The True Church Has God's Name

It sounds almost too simple. You would think people would know. But *God names things what they are!* Before Satan rebelled, he was called “Lucifer,” which means “light bringer.” After he tried to dethrone the living God, however, his name was changed to “Satan.” This means “enemy” or “adversary”—exactly what, in fact, this great fallen cherub had become.

The name “Jacob” means “usurper” or one who “supplants” another. After he wrestled with God’s Messenger and began to ask God for help, God *changed* his name to “Israel.” This means “overcomer” or “prevailer” with God. All through the Bible you see this principle: Names are *very important* to God. And *God names things what they are!*

In 1517, a young Catholic priest in Germany became upset at the selling of “indulgences”—the Roman Catholic practice of promising forgiveness of sins upon payment of money. He nailed to the church

door 95 theses expressing why the practice of selling indulgences was wrong and explaining his other disagreements with the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, Martin Luther unwittingly started what became the Protestant Reformation. Later, after a break with the Roman Church, his followers called themselves “Lutheran” after this reformer. They decided to *name* their church the “*Lutheran Church*.”

Years later, receiving a feeling of “inner warmth” and peace after a certain religious meeting, John Wesley set out preaching about a different approach to God and religion. Eventually, his followers decided to name their church after him. But although the term “Wesleyan” was widely used, Wesley and his followers became noted for their “methodical” and organized manner of conduct, and what began as a nickname eventually became the name of their whole denomination, the “*Methodist Church*.”

Presbyterians are named after their form of church government by the elders, or “*presbyters*.” Baptists are named after one doctrine: *baptism*. Seventh Day Adventists are named after *two* of their doctrines—belief in the seventh-day Sabbath and belief in the “advent,” or return, of Jesus Christ. Many other churches take their names from their town, their form of government, or some point of doctrine.

What, then, should God's true Church be named? Should it be named after some man? Should it be named after some *country* or geographic location? Should it be named after some *doctrine* or practice of the Church? Does God give us any indication in the *Bible* of what His Church should be called? Some may be surprised to learn that *He does!*

The Correct “Name” Is Listed Twelve Times

When the Apostle Paul was instructing the elders of the Church in Ephesus, he wrote, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the *church of God* which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Heed what? Heed the “*church of God*.”

Does it seem too obvious that God's true Church would be called *just that*—“the Church of God”? Notice 1 Corinthians 1:1–2: In his official address to the Church, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, “To the *church of God* which is at Corinth....” Later in the letter, he tells

them, "Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the *church of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:32).

In 1 Corinthians 11:16, Paul describes the many congregations *collectively* as "the *churches of God*." In verse 22 of this chapter, Paul again refers to them as "the *church of God*." And in 1 Corinthians 15:9, he wrote, "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the *church of God*." 2 Corinthians begins with the same official address: "To the *church of God* which is at Corinth" (v. 1). And in 1 Thessalonians 2:14, Paul refers to the original Christians as "the *churches of God* which are in Judea in Christ Jesus."

The introduction to both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians refer to "the church of the Thessalonians *in God*," for they were His churches and had to be *in union with Him*. And in 1 Timothy 3:5, Paul tells the young evangelist Timothy that if an elder does not know how to rule his house, "how shall he take care of *the church of God*?" Finally, in 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul tells Timothy that he is writing to tell him how to conduct himself in "the house of God, which is *the church of the living God*, the pillar and ground of the truth."

How clear!

Throughout the New Testament—in *twelve distinct passages*—the true Church is called "the church of God," "the churches of God," "the church of the Thessalonians *in God*," and at pagan Ephesus where stood the idol to the goddess Diana, "the church of the *living God*."

Often, in business or industry, the founder or owner's name is given to an enterprise as the identifying "sign" of ownership or control—as with, for example, "The Bank of Morgan" or "Lever Brothers." **God's name** is always attached to *His* true Church. Christ is God, so in one or two passages we also find the appellation "church of Christ" (cf. Romans 16:16; Galatians 1:22).

One of the absolute prerequisite identifying **signs** of God's true Church is that it *must bear God's name!* The name *alone* is not absolute proof of its identity, but taken together with the four other identifying signs, it is an absolutely *vital* designation, for *God names things what they are*. In fact, just before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed for His followers, "Holy Father, *keep through Your name* those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (John 17:11).

3. Growth in Grace and Knowledge

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Romans 8:9).

And again, “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, these are sons of God” (v. 14).

To be truly “Christian” and a child of God, one must be filled with and *led by the Holy Spirit*. The Bible shows clearly that each child of God must *grow spiritually*—so must the true Church of God genuinely **grow** in spiritual *understanding* and *depth*, and it must be *led by the Holy Spirit*.

Now, notice how the Holy Spirit works. Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth.” He said that when the Spirit of truth arrived, it would guide Christians into all truth and would even tell them of things to come (John 16:13). Note that the Spirit “guides” us *into all truth*. It also helps us *understand prophecy*—“things to come.”

It is a process of *growing* and **changing**, a process of becoming more and more like God in our character, our thoughts and habits. Perhaps the Apostle Peter expressed it most clearly when he said to “**grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

The true Church of God is made up of truly *converted* Christians—people who have been and who are certainly *being changed* by the power of God's Holy Spirit. As each individual must “grow” in grace *and in knowledge*, so the unified body of those individuals—the true Church—*must also grow*.

For instance, Daniel was given awesome visions and dreams involving events to take place on earth at the end of this age—probably just a few years from now. He asked, “My Lord, what shall be the end of these things?”

God's angel answered, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed *till the time of the end*” (Daniel 12:8–9). Now, with mankind having the capacity to destroy all life from off this planet, we are certainly in the prophesied “time of the end.”

Who Really Understands?

Is there, today, a church that is truly **growing** into such knowledge and understanding of biblical prophecies? Do you know of any church that has been willing to **change** and **grow**—not to become more like the world, but rather to more deeply understand the master plan that

God is working out here below? Is there a church that truly understands *where we are headed*—*why* the United States and Great Britain are slowly but inexorably sliding from their pinnacle of national greatness, and *how* and *why* a powerful union of nations in Europe will soon become *the* force to reckon with?

There is a Church that grasps **why** you were born and put on this earth, and that understands the incredible human potential—including the amazing truth that God is *literally reproducing* Himself. This Church knows *why* most people in this present age never join **any** type of “Christian” church or organization, and **why** God *is not even trying* to save the world during this 6,000-year period when, as *Almighty* God, He clearly has the **power** to do so if He wants to.

God's true Church *understands* these matters and can give *clear biblical answers* to these most basic questions. It is a Church that *keeps on learning and growing* in vital knowledge and understanding.

Remember, most “mainline” churches seldom *if ever* change or grow in true knowledge. When they do change, it is nearly always in the direction of secularism—“watering down” what little bits of biblical truth they may once have had.

But the true Church of God *grows* continually into a deeper and fuller understanding of the Bible, of the great **purpose** being worked out here below, and of the exciting fulfillments of **biblical prophecy** now starting to occur.

4. The Sign of God's People

Speaking of true Christians having to flee the coming Great Tribulation, Jesus said, “And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24:20). *Why* would Jesus be concerned about His followers keeping the Sabbath day?

Because it is and always has been the “test” commandment—a test to see whether each of us will just *obey God because He says to do it*. Therefore, it is an identifying sign of His people. It points to the *true* God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Jesus observed the Sabbath “as His custom was” (Luke 4:16). The apostle to the Gentiles always preached and had religious services on that day (Acts 17:2).

In the Old Testament, a special Sabbath covenant was made with the people of Israel:

Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a **sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a **sign** between Me and the children of Israel *forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed* (Exodus 31:13–17).

To *prove* this point about God's true Sabbath and its meaning to yourself, write immediately for our *free* booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*

In addition to the weekly Sabbath, God gave His people seven *annual* Sabbaths or Holy Days. These spiritual “feasts” of rejoicing picture God's great **plan** of salvation. Those who fail to observe them do **not** understand God's great plan and purpose. They do **not** know, for instance, *why* God is not saving everyone now. And they do not know the exact time when, in God's master plan, **all** human beings who have ever lived will be given *genuine understanding* of God's word and of true Christianity—and the *vast majority* will respond!

One of these spiritual feasts is the Passover. Most churches have *changed* its time and manner of observance and call it the “Lord's Supper,” “Eucharist,” or some other name. Jesus kept it as the “Passover” (Luke 22:15–20). The Apostle Paul kept the Passover and the accompanying “Days of Unleavened Bread” (Acts 20:6; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

The Passover lamb of ancient Israel pointed to the *death* of Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God—for our sins. Right after the Passover, the “Days of Unleavened Bread” were observed. In putting out leaven, Christians are to picture *putting out sin* and **growing** in grace and knowledge—the next step after accepting Christ's sacrifice!

Paul taught the Gentile church at Corinth *how* to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread: “Therefore let us **keep** *the feast*, not with old

leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8). Notice! This is a **New Testament** command—**not to Jews**, but to a primarily *Gentile* church—to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God's *true* Church should be observing this God-given festival just as Christ, the Apostles, and **all** the early Christians did!

For a full explanation of these days and their meaning, write also for our free booklet *The Holy Days: God's Master Plan*.

The point is that these *annual* Sabbaths and Holy Days are also part of God's “sign” by which *His people* would be identified. Notice God's clear statement regarding the days of Unleavened Bread: “It shall be as a **sign** to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the **LORD's law** may be in your mouth” (Exodus 13:9).

Wherever God's true people are, wherever *His Church* is, His servants will have the identifying “sign” of God's true Sabbaths, weekly and annual, for the weekly Sabbath points to the true God—the Creator— and the annual Sabbaths set forth His marvelous **plan**.

Frankly, if you are not willing to genuinely **obey** the Fourth Commandment, which tells us to keep the seventh day of the week as “holy” time, then you will still be sitting there arguing or “reasoning” away God's commands when His true Church **flees to safety just as Christ indicated** in Matthew 24:20! And, if you survive the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, you will become *very thirsty* as the millennial rule of Christ begins and He is forced to bring **total drought** on *all* nations and peoples who *refuse* to keep **His** commanded Holy Days —especially the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16–19)! For your *own* sake—and the sake of your loved ones—please do not underestimate this **huge** issue! Are *you* willing to surrender to and **obey** your Creator on this vital point?

5. God's Church Does the Real Work of God

One of the “signs” Jesus gave of His coming and of the end of this age was this: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a *witness* to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Somewhere on earth, just before Jesus' Second Coming, His true servants will be preaching with increasing power the message of the coming world-ruling Kingdom of God! They will preach the message

of heartfelt **repentance** and total **surrender** to God and to His laws, which Jesus Himself preached. They will explain how true Christianity involves not just accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, but *genuinely* accepting Him as our *Lord*, our *High Priest*, and our soon-coming **King**—for Jesus' coming Kingdom is a *real* Kingdom. A kingdom is a *government*—and from one end of your Bible to the other, God's message is about His coming government, which will utterly **crush** all the governments of this world and will rule forever (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15).

The living Jesus Christ will soon return in mighty **power** to *govern this earth* and save man from blowing himself off the planet (Matthew 24:22)! As Jesus tells one era of His true Church, "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give **power over the nations**—'He shall **rule** them with a rod of iron'" (Revelation 2:26–27).

Notice: "And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). Notice that Christ and His saints will rule "*on the earth*"—**not** up in heaven!

Through God's true Church, this vibrant message of His soon-coming, world-ruling **government** is to be proclaimed. This message is **not** given to convert everyone, but is proclaimed as a "witness" so that when these end-time events actually occur, humanity will understand more quickly.

Also, through His Church God is training men and women in lessons of character and obedience so they may be "ready" to serve under the living Christ when He returns as King of kings. The Apostle Paul was inspired to alert true Christians to this absolutely *vital* aspect of Christian life and of the type of *preparation* and *training* members of the true Church should be receiving. Paul wrote, "Do you not know that the *saints will judge the world*? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that *we shall judge angels*? How much more, things that pertain to this life?" (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

In order to rule others, one must first learn to rule oneself. God's *government* is based upon His spiritual law—the Ten Commandments. *That* is why God says of the true saints, "Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who *keep the commandments* of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

Another absolutely **vital** part of the Work of the true Church is understanding and proclaiming the *prophetic messages* of the Bible. About *one fourth* of the entire Bible is devoted to prophecy! God's word itself tells us, "For the testimony of Jesus is *the spirit of prophecy*" (Revelation 19:10).

God's Church understands and proclaims to you the real *meaning* of current events, the "big picture" of **why** the U.S. and other British-descended peoples are increasingly losing their power and prestige, and exactly **where** this is leading. It can explain *why* the mainly Catholic nations of continental Europe are increasingly uniting, *where* this is destined to lead, and **why** the British will—within a few years or less—*get out* or be "pushed out" of the European Union. If you wish to genuinely *understand* these vital issues, call or write and request a *free* copy of our eye-opening booklet *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*.

Another vital part of the prophetic commission of God's Church in these **end-times** is what we call the "Ezekiel commission." This is the **warning message** that God clearly indicated His true servants should give *especially* to the twelve tribes of Israel. As the aforementioned booklet clearly explains, the Anglo-Celtic peoples of the U.S. and British Commonwealth nations are the descendants of the so-called "ten lost tribes" of Israel. Along with the Jewish people, *they* will bear the brunt of the soon-coming Great Tribulation. *These* are the people who *must be warned* about this coming holocaust!

We in the Living Church of God feel the responsibility to act on God's instruction to the **end-time** watchman, for "when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me" (Ezekiel 33:3-7). This is a *vital* part of the responsibility of God's *true* servants in these last days.

Only **God's Church** truly understands and gives you the genuine understanding of these and other world-changing trends that will soon *dramatically affect your life!* God's *true Church* will also be consistently teaching, training, and genuinely *preparing* its members for their future as kings and priests in Christ's soon-coming world government (Daniel 7:27; Luke 19:15–19, Revelation 1:5–7; 5:10; 20:6). You need to *open your mind*, zealously *study* your Bible, ask God for *understanding*, and see where the living Christ is working in these end times! God's *true Church* will be preaching the *entire Bible*—**not** just a few sentimental passages about the *person* of Jesus Christ while at the same time neglecting the powerful **message** that He Himself preached. You can *find* that Church and become part of it—if you are willing!

God's Church Has All Five Identifying Signs

Around the world, God's true Church is proclaiming—with increasing power—the *coming government of God on earth* through Jesus Christ and the resurrected saints, based on God's *law* and His commandments. God's true Church teaches the *way of life* that Christ and His Apostles preached and practiced. It practices *God's* form of government and is preparing its members to *assist Christ in ruling this world* (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

It is important to note that while God's true Church is one spiritual organism, the Bible shows that it is normal for the Church to exist in several different corporate “fellowships” or “branches” at the same time. In chapters 2–3 of Revelation, Christ reveals the characteristics of the seven ages or eras of God's true Church. He finds some fault with most of the seven churches or eras—but not with Philadelphia. These eras represent attitudes that are always present in God's Church, and they also indicate the progression of dominant attitudes in the Church at large. Today, we are clearly in the Laodicean era, which Christ condemns for being “lukewarm” even though it has most of the truth. The living Jesus Christ said, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16).

The Living Church of God, which has produced this booklet you are now reading, strives to retain the Philadelphia emphasis even in our Laodicean age. We earnestly exhort God's people to be *zealous*

in doing God's Work, in preparing to be kings and priests in Christ's Kingdom, and in totally surrendering to Christ's rule in the Church and in our personal lives. We in the Living Church of God are definitely focused on accomplishing the Work that Jesus Christ is doing through His Church in these last days.

Jesus inspired the Apostle Paul to tell us in 1 Corinthians 12 that His Church is the "body" of Christ—the *physical instrument* through which Christ is working today to accomplish His Work and to prepare the future kings and priests for His Kingdom. It is important to note that this body has *always* existed. Remember, Jesus said that "on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

So, ever since Christ ascended to Heaven and became the *living* Head of the Church, He has guided His "little flock" through trials, tests, and persecutions for the past 2,000 years. It will be extremely helpful to you to request your *free* copy of our very revealing booklet on this topic, *God's Church Through the Ages*. This booklet *thoroughly documents* the history of the true Church down through the centuries—using many outside church histories and resources to prove its points. It will help you understand *where* God's true Church has been all these years and *where* it is today.

By examining the "fruits," you can see for yourself how God is using the Living Church of God today to accomplish His purposes. Remember that, as indicated above, God's true Church is the "body" of Christ. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12–13).

Different "Branches" of God's Church

To be in the body of Christ, you *must be fully surrendered* to God and be led by God's Spirit: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is **not** His" (Romans 8:9). So each member of the true Church must be genuinely converted and led by God's Spirit. Again, God gives the Holy Spirit "to those who **obey** Him" (Acts 5:32). Yet down through the ages, there have been many different Church of God fellowships — "branches" of the true Church—that sometimes

coexisted. In the first century after Christ, the Apostle John wrote of seven churches in Asia Minor, each of which displayed an attitude that would be found throughout Church history to come and would also represent the dominant attitude of the Church in successive eras. These different “branches” of God’s true Church were often in different parts of the world—perhaps, at times, unknown even to each other. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, God’s true Church existed among the Bogomils in Hungary even while those believers were unaware that a similar group of Sabbath-keepers existed simultaneously in Great Britain.

Many in the U.S. are familiar with the Seventh Day Church of God. Over the years it underwent various “splits”—as many denominations do—and before World War II had ended up with one group headquartered in Stanberry, Missouri, and another headquartered in Caldwell, Idaho. From this environment, God raised up Herbert W. Armstrong, who for many years led what became known as the Worldwide Church of God. The Worldwide Church of God became, by far, the largest group of true believers who surrendered their lives to keep the whole law of God, observe the true Sabbath, preach the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God, and use the correct *name*, “the Church of God.” Even during this time, however, there existed the aforementioned groups of the Seventh Day Church of God. Mr. Armstrong often acknowledged that these different fellowships were “branches” of the true Church.

During Mr. Armstrong’s ministry, most whom God called to the truth found themselves asking two vital questions:

- Where was the truth of the Bible most clearly being preached?
- Where was the “Work” most powerfully being done?

Remember, the “Work” consists not only of preaching the truth of the Bible, but specifically of proclaiming to the world the soon-coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14), giving the “Israelitish” nations a strong warning of the impending Great Tribulation, “feeding the flock” with the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), and genuinely teaching, training, and preparing God’s people to be “kings and priests” in Christ’s Kingdom (Revelation 5:10).

Certainly, most of those in the Seventh Day Church of God were “nice” and they had some of the truth. But they seemed content just to teach the basics and to quietly enjoy their fellowship with one

another. They seemed to lack the “fire in the belly” to go into all the world to powerfully preach the Gospel, as well as to give the vital Ezekiel warning (cf. Ezekiel 33:1–7) about the coming Great Tribulation that will primarily strike the Anglo-Celtic nations.

Jesus tells us regarding *any* religious organization that “by their **fruits** you will know them” (Matthew 7:15–20). So it is up to each individual to carefully consider, “*Where* is Christ primarily working today? *Who* is preaching more of the truth? *Who* is most effectively doing the Work of proclaiming the Gospel to the public all over the world?”

We understand from the Bible and from history that the Church of God is the “body” of Jesus Christ—the body of believers in the genuine truth of the Bible. Wherever God’s true people are, they will be those who have *surrendered their lives* to live by every word of God. Within the greater body of Christ, God’s true people must genuinely **love** one another as Jesus loved us all (John 13:34). Where those people are gathered into different corporate fellowships, there will be differing strengths and varying emphases. But outflowing love, brotherly kindness, and the spirit of service should be present in converted members of God’s Church, no matter where they live and to which particular fellowship they belong—for the *genuine* love of God is squarely based on the Ten Commandments. As the Apostle John was inspired to tell us, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

And so, through the Spirit of Christ within them, the true people of God will follow this path. They will have the understanding and courage to obey *all ten* of the Ten Commandments, exemplifying Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who **keep the commandments of God** and the **faith** of Jesus.” And they will exercise the faith to **keep** the identifying “sign” that God gave His people (Exodus 31:16–18).

Rather than argue and make excuses to disobey, God’s Church keeps *holy* what God has made holy. It follows the inspired *example* of Jesus and the Apostles in keeping God’s Sabbath and His annual Holy Days, which reveal His awesome **plan**. Finally, God’s Church does the **Work** of proclaiming as a “witness” the message of salvation *through Jesus Christ* and the *good news* of the soon-coming *Kingdom of God* based on His law.

Where Is God's True Church Today?

The organization that publishes this booklet strives to do all of these things. As you know, we in the Living Church of God try to follow all of the above truths with all our hearts and powerfully proclaim the **end-time** prophecies of the Bible, doing all we can to specifically **warn** the Israelitish people of the coming Great Tribulation. With our Headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, offices all around the globe, scores of local congregations with resident ministers, worldwide television programs, and a growing publishing work including this very booklet and *Tomorrow's World* magazine, that message is *going out with increasing power*.

Now, *you* must decide what to do about this booklet. Perhaps it will merely be helpful to you to consider these obvious, biblical identifying signs of where God is working—where His true Church is today.

But if your interest goes beyond that—*if* God is calling you and *if* we can *serve you personally*—do not hesitate to contact our office nearest you. We can answer your questions by mail or telephone—and *if you request it*, a fully-trained representative of this Work will meet you in person at a time and place agreeable to *you*.

You must decide.

As world events move inexorably toward the **end** of this present age, you owe it to yourself to be sure of where *you* are headed. “Take the bull by the horns.” *Prove these things* to yourself from the pages of your Bible. If God is opening your mind now, then *act* on this precious knowledge and begin to really prepare for your job in tomorrow's world. *Only* the *true* Church of God has been given the genuine *understanding*, *courage*, and *motivation* to fearlessly proclaim the full truth and really prepare you and your loved ones to fulfill the magnificent **purpose** for your lives and to become “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6) in the soon-coming Kingdom of God on this earth!

You Need to Act!

If you would like to visit with a minister or representative of this Work, then call our office nearest you as listed on the “Regional Offices” page at the back of this booklet, or *write* to that office, if you prefer. Just state your desire for a visit and give your address and/or phone number so our representative may contact you. Be assured that *no one* will show up without previously *scheduling* a visit at a time and place agreeable to you. Our minister or representative will be

there simply to *answer your questions* about the Bible, or about this Work and the Living Church of God.

There will be *no pressure* for you to “join” anything and *no solicitation* of money for *any* purpose. But *you* will have the opportunity to talk with a true minister or representative and more thoroughly check us out in a personal way—and ask about attending worship services or a Bible study, if you wish. Often, our minister may suggest that you read more literature, *prove* the truths of the Bible to yourself more thoroughly, and be more sure of your commitment *before* attending any meetings, for we want you to be *sure*. We are trying to *serve you* in your quest for eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

However, if God is truly opening your mind and calling you, we are sure that you will be delighted to meet with others who have been willing to genuinely give their lives to God and in service to their fellow man. You will find a group of happy people—often with little children—who bring their Bibles to services and are like the Bereans who “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:10–11). There will usually—depending on the size of the group and the local situation—be singing of hymns, announcements of any activities, news of the Work, helpful sermons, and a great deal of enthusiastic visiting and fellowshiping after the meetings.

May God help you to “*prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, *KJV*). As the end of this age swiftly approaches, we should **not** forever sit around speculating and doing nothing! God rewards those who zealously **act** on the truth and do all they can to get involved in serving Him and in serving their fellow human beings in God’s service. As James was inspired to tell us, “But be *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Again, be sure to request a free copy of our extremely helpful and thoroughly documented booklet *God’s Church Through the Ages*. It will help you really understand the history of God’s true Church—the “little flock” that almost disappeared during the Dark Ages.

God help *you* to understand and to get involved while you still have the opportunity! You may now be in your “comfort zone” in some other church fellowship. But—if God is calling you at this time—your Creator wants you to be an *active part* of His Church, genuinely preparing for His kingdom and powerfully **warning** our peoples of

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the coming Great Tribulation. Notice the clear responsibility of God's faithful servants: "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" (Proverbs 24:11- 12).

The living Jesus Christ tells *all* of us to *bear fruit*: "By this My Father is glorified, *that you bear much fruit*; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8). May God inspire you to be an *active part* of the Work that Christ is now accomplishing through *His* body, the true Church of God on earth today.

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