

The Good Tidings

“...I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God...” (Luke 4:43)

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THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER
OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

(Romans 1:16)

A monthly e-journal of New Testament Christianity published in portable document format and sent free to interested individuals via email. Its primary purpose and goal in publication is to “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:16). Subscribers are encouraged to assist us in this effort by forwarding *The Good Tidings* to all their email contacts and by printing out copies for folks who do not have access to email. Send articles and subscription requests to the Editor.

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the Word of God

John 8:45; Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ

John 3:16; 8:24

Repent of your sins

Luke 13:3, 5; II Peter 3:9

Confess Jesus is the Christ

Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37

Be baptized for the remission of
your sins

Acts 2:38; 22:16

Live faithfully everyday

Matthew 10:22

Why I Left “The Church of God” Denomination

Some of the most religious people we read of in the Bible were lost people. When in Athens, Greece, Paul the apostle observed those who worshiped many gods and said to them, “...I perceive that in all things you are very religious...” (Acts 17:22). The Holy Spirit dispatched Philip to overtake a very religious pilgrim who had traveled over one thousand miles from his home in Ethiopia in a chariot. On the road to Gaza, Philip taught this traveler about Jesus and he obeyed the gospel and became a Christian (Acts 8:26-40). Saul of Tarsus, a religious zealot of Judaism, thought he was going God a great service by persecuting disciples of Jesus. On his way to Damascus to jail more Christians, he met a great light, brighter than the noon day sun. The voice from the light said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecuteth...” (Acts 9:5).

These examples of religious, but lost, people remind us of many contemporary acquaintances, family and friends who too are very devout, and zealous, and as the religious Athenians, they seek to worship God in ignorance and error. I must shamefully admit that for many years, I too was a religious zealot. I read the Bible regularly, yet as did the Ethiopian Queen's Treasurer, I needed someone to guide me. I persecuted the Lord's church and traveled many miles worshiping and leading others in ignorant worship. Thank God, I met and was taught by faithful gospel preachers. How tragic for my soul if I had met one of the current “liberal change-agents” with an ecumenical agenda, who would have told me, “If you were baptized in Jesus’ name to please God, you are alright spiritually. After all, there are saved people in all denominations.” If I had heard and accepted that error, what motivation would I have had to change?

For the twenty-two years that I spent in a Pentecostal denomination called “the church of God,” I was deceived into thinking that I was a member of God’s church. But after studying the Scriptures, I began to realize that I was wrong, that my baptism was for the wrong purpose, that I was lost, outside the family of God, without hope and without the blood of Jesus covering the sins of my life. May I humbly say as did Paul: “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; I obtained mercy because I did it in ignorance and in unbelief” (I Tim. 1:13).

There are many segments of Pentecostals. There are those who believe correctly concerning the godhead. There are some who believe in “Jesus Only.” Some believe in speaking in the “unknown tongue” and some who do not. Those who identify themselves as “the church of God” also have a great deal of diversity, ranging from “Armstrongism” to small

independent congregations of “snake-handlers” scattered throughout Southern Appalachia. These groups generally have their roots in “Methodism” and even though many of them had a beginning among the impoverished mountaineers of Appalachia, in recent years they have become highly influential and popular religions. I was baptized into the “church of God” in 1948, began preaching for them in 1953 and preached their error for seventeen years. My wife and I left that group in 1970, studied the Bible and obeyed the gospel that same year, and were added to the church of Christ by the Lord Himself.

SEVEN REASONS WHY I LEFT “THE CHURCH OF GOD” DENOMINATION

#1, THE CHURCH OF GOD HAD THE WRONG FOUNDER:

In 1886, a group began meeting in a school house in Cherokee County, NC, under the direction of Richard G. Spurling. They called themselves, “The Christian Union.” They later moved to Cleveland, TN, and changed their name to “The Holiness Church.” Fanaticism almost destroyed them in the years 1900-1902. In 1907, A.J. Tomlinson became their “pastor” following another name change in 1906 to “The Church of God.” Then in 1909, the new denomination elected Mr. Tomlinson as their “General

Overseer.” He held this office until 1923, when questions of financial impropriety came up. He was impeached and started “The Church of God of Prophecy,” which he and his sons controlled for many years.

Contrast the founder of this denomination to the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, “...I will build MY church...” (Matt. 16:18-19). Isaiah had foretold that the Lord's house would be built in the last days (Isa. 2:2-5), that it would begin in Jerusalem, and that “...all nations would flow into it...” Daniel prophesied that Messiah's kingdom would begin in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44). The Psalmist declared: “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it...” (Psalm 127:1). What Biblical right does any mere human have to begin a church different in origin and teaching from Christ's own church?

#2, THE CHURCH OF GOD HAS THE WRONG BEGINNING DATE:

The modern “church of God” sects did not begin until the 20th Century. Jesus began His church on the first Pentecost Sunday after His ascension back to heaven (cf; Acts 1,2). He promised it would begin during the lifetime of His disciples. He said, “...there be some of them standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power...” (Mark 9:1). Those

whom Jesus bought with His own precious blood are His kingdom or His church (cf; Rev. 1:6,9; 5:9,10; Acts 20:28). Some try to deny that we have the Pattern by which we can restore that original church in all its pristine purity. The “good seed” of the kingdom/church is the “WORD OF GOD” (Luke 8:11). So long as we follow the Word of God without the opinions and creeds of men, we can restore and have restored the church. When we cease to follow the Word of God and give credence to those who promote a “new hermeneutic” we leave the Divine Pattern for the opinions of mere men (cf; Heb. 8:5).

#3, THE CHURCH OF GOD BEGAN AT THE WRONG PLACE:

Various branches of “the church of God” have different geographical beginnings. Some in Anderson, IN, Cleveland, TN, Dalton, GA and the largest sect of Pentecostals, the Assemblies of God, began and maintain headquarters in Springfield, MO. But the church of Jesus, the Son of God, began at Jerusalem. Isaiah prophesied where the church would begin. Jesus told His apostles: “...Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47).

In Jerusalem in A.D. 33,

“...repentance and remission of sins...” truly began to be preached, “...in His name...” (cf; Acts 2:36-47). His church could not begin without the proclamation of His gospel (cf; Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 6:17-18). On that momentous day, “...the Lord added...to the church, those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41, 47).

#4, THE CHURCH OF GOD HAS THE WRONG ORGANIZATION:

The “church of God” denominations have an “international or national headquarters” or “general offices” at different locations. Then, there are “district” or “state offices.” From there, directions are given to local congregations ruled over by a “pastor,” with an “assistant pastor,” then “deacons” and members. At the very top of this pyramid-type of church government is the “General Overseer” with the “Assistant General Overseer,” then usually a “Cabinet of Advisors” sometimes called the “Supreme Council” or “Board of Elders.” These exalted positions of authority are usually political and consist of “yes” men/women to the top man.

Usually, within the local congregation, a very active “Ladies Willing Workers” group serves diligently to raise funds for the local church or the denomination. These too are organized regionally or nationally.

Even a casual reading of the New Testament is sufficient to inform us that such an “Ecclesiastic Conglomerate” cannot be found within the pages of God’s Word. “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” is the reading of Philippians 1:1. “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5). “The elders who are among you, I exhort...Shepherd the flock of God which is among you...” (I Peter 5:1-2).

The New Testament pattern shows no church organization larger than the local congregation with the “oversight” or spiritual care of her elders (also called: bishops, shepherds, pastors, and overseers). Deacons are “servants” of the local church whose work assists the elders in providing both spiritual care and/or physical needs of the congregation. Teachers and evangelists serve under the direction or “oversight” of the local elders. While it is true that the New Testament pattern for the church knows no organization larger than the local congregation, it is also true that the pattern shown in the New Testament knows no organization smaller than the whole of the local congregation. Thus “cell groups,” “house churches,” or any other subdivision of the local assembly are a dangerous trend. They are copied after denominations

fostered by mere men and not the New Testament. The Lord’s church, church of Christ, was founded by Jesus Christ and guided by Holy Spirit filled apostles, prophets, and elders, as their examples and words are given in the New Testament.

#5, THE CHURCH OF GOD TEACHES THE WRONG DOCTRINE:

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God...” (2 John 9). “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 3:15).

As with other denominations, “Church of God” sects fail to “rightly divide” the Old and New Testament. Some things from the Old Testament law, including tithing and instrumental music, are carried over and incorporated into their teaching and practice, while other things from the Old Testament are rejected. It all boils down to using whatever pleases their leaders without serious concern whether or not it pleases God.

They also try to claim that the promises Jesus made to His apostles concerning miraculous gifts and signs (that were to accompany the apostles’ ministry) is for church members today. However, the New Testament clearly shows that miracles and signs were for the purpose of revealing and confirming all the Truth (cf; Mark 16:15-20; Heb. 2:3-4; I

Cor. 2:9-13; 13:9-10; James 1:25; 2 Cor. 12:12). Confusion, frustration, and a sense of failure often cause the more honest people among Pentecostals to grieve because they cannot seem to “get all that the Lord promised.” They are often not discerning enough to detect the fakery of their peers in their “victorious jubilation.”

While not all Pentecostal groups are “premillennial” in their theology, most of them are steeped in the erroneous teaching of the “rapture” and a literal one-thousand year reign of Christ on earth.

Most of them are very liberal in their use of women in places of authority in their organization. Many of them have women evangelists, “pastors,” etc. They have for years set aside New Testament restrictions on women as teachers of men and/or public proclaimers in their worship assemblies.

Believe it or not, we now have feminists among us in churches of Christ who have an agenda, which if followed, we also will have women elders, preachers, and deacons (cf; I Cor. 14:34,37; I Tim. 2:8-12). A recent “brotherhood” teen teacher’s manual taught that we may have “deaconesses” in churches of Christ.

#6, THE CHURCH OF GOD PRACTICES WRONG WORSHIP:

Much of the worship activities of the “church of God” denominations are clearly for

entertainment and self gratification. Musical instruments of many varieties are part and parcel of their emotionally charged worship. “Special” choruses, quartets, trios, duets, and solo musical entertainment are included in nearly every assembly. Applauding with the hands, cheering, and standing ovations are an acceptable way to express appreciation and approval of musical performances. While I admit they do put on a pretty good show, is this what God wants by way of worship (cf; John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19)?

Peter tells us: “According to His (God, CH) divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). If God wanted such aforementioned human originated worship, He failed to tell us of such a desire. We are commanded to do all things in Jesus’ name, that is, by His authority (cf; Col. 3:17). Sadly enough, we have some among “churches of Christ” today who have little or no conviction concerning faithful adherence to the New Testament pattern for worship.

The frequency for partaking of the Lord’s Supper and receiving the contribution of our monetary offerings is the same in the New Testament -- “upon the first day of the week” (cf; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). While I attended “church of God” worship services for part of three decades, collections were a

part of nearly every gathering. I can only remember them celebrating the Lord’s Supper less than a dozen times. They would literally go for years without any mention or practice of the communion. Some members of the Lord’s church fail to appreciate the “Memorial Supper” of Jesus’ sacrifice as well. We know this by the way they forsake the assemblies of the church.

There is a distinct, clearly set forth pattern for acceptable Christian worship. We are taught by **command**, **approved example** and by things **implied** in the New Testament exactly what our God desires by way of worship. We are taught to assemble together on the first day of every week (cf; Heb. 10:25; I Cor. 11:18; Acts 20:7). This is for the purpose of: 1) Breaking bread (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-30); 2) Brethren leading us in fervent prayers (I Tim. 2:8; Acts 2:42; I Cor. 14:15-17); 3) Preaching the gospel (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 15:1; I Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:2); 4) Giving our offerings (I Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7); 5) Singing praises to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; I Cor. 14:15).

When we try to change or improve on God’s Divine Pattern, we corrupt our worship and render it unacceptable to God.

#7, THE CHURCH OF GOD TEACHES THE WRONG PLAN OF SALVATION:

Penitent alien sinners are taught that salvation from sins

comes when they “pray through” (at an altar of prayer) for God’s forgiveness and acceptance. They teach that salvation comes at the point of faith, that repentance from sins precedes saving faith, and that the Holy Spirit baptizes saved individuals into the spiritual body of Christ. They use for a proof text First Corinthians 12:13. They also teach that saved ones should “join the church,” be “voted on” if accepted, and must receive “water baptism” to be identified with the literal earthly church. Pentecostals often differ on the “baptismal formula” said over the one being baptized. Some argue hard and long for “Jesus Only” while others argue just as firmly for the “Father, Son and Holy Ghost” formula. Jesus never commanded us what to say, but He did tell us what to do (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38). When we do what Jesus said, we will baptize “in His name” or “by His authority” (cf; Acts 4:7; Col. 3:17).

Some “church of God” groups teach that one must receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost and “speak in tongues” before one can be eternally saved. No one today can duplicate the ability to speak in a language (tongue) without previous training in that language. The use of the miraculous gift to “speak in tongues” was for the profit of “unbelievers” (I Cor. 14:22). The ability to speak languages miraculously began with the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4-11). These “tongues”

were known languages (tongues, dialects) and were not the “gibberish” that is known neither to God, men, nor angels. If the Pentecostals have the ability to duplicate the “tongues” of the church in the first century, why then do they send their missionaries to foreign language classes or else use an interpreter when speaking to foreigners? Pentecostals teach “tongues” are a sure evidence that one has received the “baptism of the Holy Ghost.” They teach it is a sign for the “believer” while the New Testament shows it was a sign for “unbelievers.” The sign/gift of tongues ceased when the “perfect” (complete) revelations of the New Testament was completed (I Cor. 13:8-10; Jude 3; James 1:25). We can only drift into confusion and frustration when we try to claim for ourselves things promised to inspired men in the first century church.

CONCLUSION

Many honest truth seekers are still in the spiritual confusion caused by religious error. Many members of the Lord’s church today have studied themselves out of denominations. Others were led out by faithful gospel preachers who had the courage to “...earnestly contend for the faith...” (Jude 3) by debating with false teachers. Some have the idea that it is “unloving” to point out religious error. I am so thankful that true Christians loved my soul enough to point out my errors, and to “...speak the

truth in love...” to me. That they did not let my ugly and abrasive attitude discourage them from praying for me and teaching me the truth, I am grateful. I traveled far and wide quoting: “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). All the while, I was in bondage to a false religion, and to Satan who promotes religious division and doctrinal error. I was not until I obeyed from the heart the truth, the gospel, that I was set free from sin and error (cf; Rom. 6:17-18).

(NOTE: Dear reader, you, too, can come out of denominationalism and obey the gospel. If you **believe**, won’t you **repent** of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), **confess** faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37) and be **baptized** for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21)? Our earnest prayer is that you will!)

— Charles A. Huff

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If you are a member of the Church of God denomination or any denomination, it is our sincere desire and wish that you would compare what you are being taught with what the Bible teaches and become a Christian only by obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ.