

## Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen (Part Six)

Church History - AD 20th Century

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Our Christian faith differs from many religions by being rooted in history, not just New Testament history, but Old Testament history as well. Biblical and Christian history contains numerous interrelated threads, including the personal, the family, the national, and the spiritual.

All the way down through biblical history, from the beginning of the earth to its end, there is a clear cycle of patterns involving the progressions of God's people from sin to overcoming to salvation, and also from despair to hope to deliverance. Please turn with me to Exodus 13. This is speaking about the first day of Unleavened Bread.

**Exodus 13:3** And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

**Exodus 13:9** It shall be a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial [to be remembered] between your eyes, that the Lord's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt."

We see there that it is commanded that we remember that, as well as Passover itself, and that God is the one who did the work there.

Although the Bible takes history very seriously and we are to remember it, especially when we are *commanded* to remember, as we are here in verses three and nine. However the Bible also illustrates that it is possible to *overvalue* history. After all, earthly history will have an end. Nevertheless, threaded through earthly history is a spiritual level of reality that rises above and is more real than earthly history.

**I John 2:16-17** For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

So there is the key to whether your history will be ending or whether it will be going on forever. The apostle John warns against commitment to the passing world system because it is opposed to God. But thankfully we have received the love of the Father which implants in us a desire and an ability to break away from this idolatrous world.

In warning against all that is in the world, John does not demonize the whole created order. Rather, he gives examples, desires of the flesh and so on, of what we should guard against. Human desires are part of God's creation and therefore not inherently evil. But they become twisted when not according to the will of God. The world is passing away and its appearance of permanence is deceptive because history is not an endless cycle, but it is speeding toward a conclusion willed by God. So we must discern which history is important to remember and which is not. History related to God's will is vitally important.

Sadly, by the beginning of the twentieth century, only a few people remained faithful to the will of God, and these were the converted ones who carefully submitted to and diligently carried out Jesus' instructions regarding the will of God, which is found in the Word of God. Nevertheless, those few converted ones, the faithful, slowly increased though they remained relatively few. Lacking in spiritual works and true spirituality, the Church of God Seventh Day (which is the name of it at the beginning of the twentieth century), did not remember how it had received the truth from earlier true Christians who were faithful even to death by fire. Nor did it, like those martyred, hold fast the truth they had.

Similarly, the church in Sardis of the <sup>AD</sup> first century, is given a dire warning and described as having certain negative characteristics.

**Revelation 3:1-3** "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are

alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

So as the church of God entered the twentieth century, it was following the progressive Protestant ideology of ignoring the Holy Scriptures as established doctrine and instead relied on the Protestant traditions of men. As a result, they also de-emphasized repentance of sin and it was becoming spiritually dead because they did not guard the truth. Mark 7:13 says, "Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

So these things were happening during the time of Christ and the apostles. These early twentieth century ministers had rejected God's government, having lost the knowledge of how God governs His church, and they absorbed the Protestant idea of democracy applied to church government with its accompanying divisions and controversies and self-orientedness. The result of rejecting Christ's direction was increasing doctrinal deviation and lack of true conversion among the members. Confusion was increasing. Only a few individuals really repented and strengthened the truth that was slipping from their midst. Most of their ministers, instead of yielding themselves to be used by God, tried to carry on a work by their own human power.

In about AD 1927 an elderly woman who was a member of the church of God in Oregon, a branch of the aforementioned group, Church of God Seventh Day, introduced Herbert Armstrong's wife Loma to the truth about God's Sabbath. Loma gladly accepted this truth as God opened her mind. But Herbert Armstrong was not pleased with her decision because he was worried about what their friends would think. So Herbert was challenged to study the Bible for the first time in his life, and he tried to disprove this seemingly crazy, wacky idea his wife had accepted. Instead he found and proved the seventh day Sabbath to be the day God commands us to keep today. He concluded that if the Bible is true, the Sabbath must be kept on the seventh day. That led to proving the existence of God, and that the Bible is indeed His Word, and he studied each question intensively from all angles

for at least six months. As the result of this revelation, Herbert immediately began to search for the one true church that had to exist. Somewhere, there had to be the church Jesus Christ said He would build.

**Matthew 16:18.** [You are very familiar with this as it records Jesus' promise.] "And 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."

That proves that God's church has *always* existed since the time of Christ. It has never not existed. These church of God people in Oregon seemed to have the truth, and certainly they were the closest of any.

But something was wrong. They were spiritually lifeless or at least not accomplishing very much. Nevertheless, Herbert began to fellowship with these people. He was asked to speak to them and was eventually ordained by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God in June 1931. Because the gift of the Holy Spirit was promised to those who have truly repented, God was able to use Herbert Armstrong to restore lost truth. He restored 18 significant doctrines to the church, and this is good to remember these things as we go through and remember our history.

**Acts 2:38-39** Then Peter said to them, "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."

So we know that it is God who calls people into His church. It was to a repentant church that God restored His truth in a major way. Matthew 3:8-9 says, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."

It is God who chooses whom He will call and oftentimes it is not someone whom we may think.

As soon as Herbert Armstrong was baptized and the fruit of the Holy Spirit began to be manifested in his life, he continued to study and prove all things, as the apostle Paul instructs in I Thessalonians 5:21. As he studied, much of the truth that the visible church had allowed to dissipate began to be brought to Herbert Armstrong's attention by God's Spirit. Immediately he began to expound this truth to the remnant of God's people in Oregon.

God revealed the true identity of the modern house of Israel to Herbert through the writings of earlier ministers of the church of God. And he also came to see that God's annual festivals were commanded be kept today, along with the seventh day weekly Sabbath. He continued to grow in understanding their meaning. But it was seven years before any others in Oregon kept God's annual Sabbaths with Herbert and Loma. They did it by themselves for seven years. It took that long to convince others.

By 1933 it was obvious to many that voting their own leaders into office was not God's way and that it had led only to confusion. So the decision was made to reorganize the church by following a more biblical approach to church government. Duggar and Dodd recorded in their book, *A History of the True Church* on page 299, that the government of the church was to be placed in the hands of, "Twelve to look after the spiritual affairs of the church and seven to take charge of the financial business, and also the 70 to go forth two by two in giving the warning message for the hour."

The reorganization meeting was held in Salem, West Virginia on November 4th, 1933. An appeal was made by lot to follow the singular case in Acts 1: 23-26 to choose from among the names presented. And prior to the meeting, a call for prayer had been sent to God's people around the world, "that God would again choose men to lead His church as in former time." Now, according to the November 6, 1933 issue of "The Bible Advocate," on page five, "the 40th name was elder Herbert Armstrong of Oregon."

The reorganization by men in 1933 was never to be a success. In just a few years, that church had permanently disintegrated into several ineffective fragments, neglecting much of God's truth. They did not bear good fruit, and so they did not stay together in unity. In John 15 Jesus spoke with His disciples about the necessity of bearing fruit.

**John 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you."

So this is something the church had not been doing. They produced very little fruit, and that fruit did not remain. Obviously, if our bearing fruit is to continue, we must keep up the effort to produce it. The fruits or qualities of character that God is building into our lives must be in a constant state of growth. Nobody can stand still because you only go backwards when you do not push yourself to move forward in spiritual growth. In Hebrews 13:1, Christ commands growth. "Let brotherly love continue." See, that is growth. We cannot grow if we do not have brotherly love for one another, and that includes forgiving one another.

Now like some trees that bear their fruit continually, among them lemon, orange, and grapefruit, the fruit produced by God's Spirit should be never ending. And even though hundreds may eat of your fruit, the supply should never run out. In other words, we are to produce a perpetual harvest of rich spiritual fruit. Many who were called failed to achieve this continuous fruitage because they did not faithfully persevere. That became weary in well-doing. Sometimes we get discouraged because we do not grow as quickly as we may think we should or would, and become frustrated because we do not see tangible fruit being produced.

This frustration is especially noticeable during the trials of life. We always seem to feel that we have lost ground when we are going through a trial. One reason might be that we start to respond in a right direction but stop too soon, just short of completion. So we may become bored with the routine that is required to correct the problem, or we may become just plain weary of well-doing. One of the hardest areas of human life to deal with is everyday, mundane activities. We probably complain about that more than anything else in our life, but they are necessary even for spiritual growth.

But we cannot allow ourselves to get discouraged and give up. We must accept the time God needs to work out His purpose in our lives. The more we zealously practice the way of God and accomplish good works, the more

fruit of righteousness God will be able to produce in us. You know the list of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, and so on. Therefore, God's testing seems often inconstant, and there seems to be no break from trials. But God promises a way of escape to those who love His law. And you cannot love His law and know His law unless you are studying the Scriptures.

The apostle Paul gave the Corinthian congregation encouragement through Old Testament examples, and then he showed that God provides an escape at the time that it is needed. Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. That was really the last minute that God intervened to save them. But that is what He does sometimes is. He waits until we think we are dead.

**I Corinthians 10:12-13** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. [That should be in everyone's mind here prior to Passover because it requires humility.] No temptation [that is, trial or test] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [or tested] beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

You enter into a test or trial, and you do not think that you are going to be able to last through it or bear it. God promises you will—if you rely on Him in faith that He will do it.

The same principle holds true for the church of God today. There seems to be no escape from the worldly temptations and Protestant enticements that Satan threw at the church. But at the critical moment when the church of God was breaking up (this is back in 1927-33), Christ separated a few people in Oregon to begin another chapter in the church's history.

It is interesting that the great manipulation and distribution of printed Bibles was not accomplished by the church of God, but by various Bible societies. So God can raise up stones if He has to to do His work. And that is exactly what He did to distribute the Bible back there when the printing press was started. At the critical moment when the visible church of God was breaking up, Jesus separated a few people in Oregon to begin a new phase of His

church, and He began to use Herbert Armstrong and the small group He had called to assist his coworkers to reach the world with good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

In 1947 Ambassador College was established to formally train men and women to serve in the church, and that college was attacked relentlessly by Satan for 50 years. So by 1997 when the church finally closed, very little truth still remained in it. But it is interesting that it was opened and closed and opened often over a 50 year period.

There are some similarities between the characteristics of the first century church in Philadelphia and the church of God in the second half of the twentieth century.

**Revelation 3:8** "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. [So we could say that about the church God raised up through Herbert Armstrong.].

**Revelation 3:10-11** 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. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown."

I do not know how many times in the Bible we are warned to persevere and we are told to hold fast, but it is very often, and to me, that tells me that God expects us to work and to work hard at living His way of life, which includes Bible study and prayer.

In verse 8 Jesus promised an open door for the church to witness to the world. The door here was an opportunity to broadcast and publicize God's truth. Verse 8 also implies that some people tried to shut that door that He opened to the church. And similar to the promise to the church in Philadelphia during John's time, there is an interesting parallel to more recent history.

Christ opened the doors of radio to His church, and since the first Sunday in January 1934, the World Tomorrow program broadcast did not miss a week on the air until 1972. It began on TV on a regular basis in 1967 and this proved to be an even greater door. If we were to project that all the way to today, the Internet has shown itself to be an even greater door than radio and television, so you can see how God is able to do His work in greater ways. Although it began with just a little strength of itself, it magnified greatly through the modern doors of radio, television, the printing press, and personal appearances by Herbert Armstrong before world leaders. And most important of all, through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Problems of a personal nature still plagued the church on a regular basis. During the 1950s, Herbert Armstrong wrote, "In those day early days, I used Raymond Cole, a pioneer student, as a troubleshooter to restore peace where frictions had developed." Even that early in that church there were frictions, contentions, and so on.

By 1953 the gospel of the Kingdom of God had gone coast to coast in the United States. Also that year, the work of God expanded to Europe. During the 1960s, because of its tremendous growth, the name of the church of God was changed from the Radio Church of God to the Worldwide Church of God. Regarding the 1960s, Herbert Armstrong wrote in the June 24, 1985 issue of the *Worldwide News* (this is a long quote):

Up through the 1960s, with new lost truth being continually restored to this era of God's church, there had been little contention or opposition within the church, but the wily Satan was not to allow this growth in harmony and peace and unity to continue without opposition. We were to learn the truth of Jesus' Parable of the Sower and the Seed in Luke 8. The seed sown was the Word of God, the Bible, and the Word was being proclaimed over the United States, Canada, Britain, Europe, and some other parts of the world. It fell on four types or classes of people. The first and largest number were those by the wayside. They heard, but then cometh with the devil and taketh away the Word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved. These were the millions who heard. But the truth of God's Word never sank in. There was no response from this large number, though they did hear, at least in

part. The second group were those on the rocks who, when they heard, were interested and received the message with joy. Many of these were baptized, but they had no root and temporarily believed, but because they lacked a depth of purpose or capacity to grow spiritually, soon dropped out. The third group were among thorns. When they heard the message, they were baptized, but the cares and interests of the world choked them. They still wanted to be like the world. They were liberals, and they brought forth no fruit to perfection. [Keep in mind, those previous three groups were all weak and left the church, or we are in the process of leaving the church.] The fourth group, smallest of all, were those on good ground, which kept the Word and came out of the world, growing spiritually in character and biblical knowledge. They brought forth fruit with patience in various degrees. So it has been especially since 1969 in God's church. The world looks on such events occurring in any church as evidence of corruption or wrongdoing or something wrong and reprehensible in the church. Worldly clubs, societies, and churches do not generally seem to have such troubles or controversies. Satan does not bother them. They are already on his side, but Satan seeks to destroy God's one and only true church.

The church of God received most of its persecution from the world against individual members for Sabbath keeping. Even the children of members were persecuted for keeping the Sabbath and the holy days. In contrast following about 1969, the faithful members of the church received most of its persecution from *within* the church, as we will see.

Having attended the Radio Church of God since 1963, which later became the Worldwide Church of God, I saw firsthand many of the events that transpired during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and on into the twenty-first century. I can attest to the fact that there was a definite transition in the church's attitude and personality from around 1969 and 1970, and the humility, teach-ability, brotherly love of the brethren prior to 1970, morphed into an increasing self-centered, disrespectful, and unthankful attitude. Not the truly converted ones, but all of the first 3 that were listed they are in the Parable of the Sower.

Contributing to this degraded Christianity were the evangelistic campaigns by Garner Ted Armstrong and other evangelists of the early 1970s, which caused an influx of large numbers of what we might call liberal converts into the Worldwide Church of God. Protestant approaches and doctrines were being infused into the church by leading ministers.

Just as uncontrolled national immigration today has overwhelmed the cultures of Western nations, negatively influencing their personalities, character, and Judeo-Christian ethics, the massive influx of religious hobbyists from the world into the church of God has had a very negative effect as well, starting there in about 1970 or so. During the 1970s humanly reasoned philosophy, feminization, and humanism led many astray.

**Colossians 2:8** Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Whenever you hear or read what has to do with Scripture—God's way of life—always compare it to what the Scriptures say. If you have a conversation with a Protestant, it does not matter who it is, whether it is a construction worker or somebody, a Protestant minister. They will agree with you as you quote Scripture, when you tell them what the Bible says, and then a few sentences later, they will say, "Well, my mother is in heaven," you know, or one of the other things. They always default to their traditions, and that is what Paul is warning against here.

They began an epidemic of striving over doctrines with a never ending pursuit to liberalize and water down doctrine. Proverbs 20:3 says, "It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel." That is something we should all memorize. I have heard members of the church say, "What's so important about doctrine?" Especially that happened when there were changes going on in Worldwide. Protestantism promotes the false teaching, from their own words, "Don't worry about doctrine. The important thing is spiritual unity." How can you have spiritual unity without doctrine, without understanding doctrine? Everybody is making up things and doing

what is right in their own eyes. Paul refutes that lie in I Timothy 6. Whenever there is disunity in the church, it is because somebody does not really believe and practice the Word of God.

The Word of God is vital to the spiritual health of the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation. Seven times Christ calls on the churches to hear what the Spirit is saying. The Word of God is the written Word of the Spirit. It is the written Word of God. Now, when churches stop listening to the voice of the Spirit through the Word and start listening to the voices of false teachers, they begin to turn away from the truth. And we must not deny the faith, even if it costs us our lives. We must keep His Word and not deny His name. Apart from the Word of God, there is no life or hope for the churches.

So those who were teaching false doctrine and who would not agree to Paul's teachings were to be exposed and dealt with. God does not look highly upon those who practice to deceive. The false teachers are often referred to in Paul's writings as having faulty reasoning. And since the gospel is the truth, to deny it is to think in a faulty manner, imagining that goodness is a means of gain, not just monetary gain. People who wrongly preach that God will give material health and wealth if only one has enough faith, fall under the condemnation of the apostle Paul.

**I Timothy 6:3-5** if anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

God is not our personal genie. We do not just say, "God, please give me this," and there is that new car. It does not work that way. But that is what the Prosperity Gospel teaches in Protestantism. These people who cause trouble in the church are proud. They want to be important people in the church. Yet they are ignorant, knowing nothing. Also, they are sick because the word *obsessed* in verse 4 means having a diseased appetite.

Having rejected the healthy sound doctrine, they have made themselves spiritually sick. Instead of feeding on the truths of God's Word, they feed on empty questions and the meanings of words. And all of this leads to resentment, conflict, and confusion—not to godliness. These people have no recognition of the truth. Titus 3:10-11 says, "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned." Jesus through Paul commands that a troublemaker, or heretic, meaning one who causes factions and divisions, is not to be permitted membership in the church after he or she has been warned two times. Troublemakers who move from church to church should not be received back into the fellowship after the second offense.

In 1970 large numbers of ministers conspired against Herbert Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God to change government and other doctrinal issues to fit in with the modern philosophies of human reasoning. Doctrines such as church government and Pentecost, divorce and remarriage, and healing and tithing, to name a few, were targeted for revision. Some did need to be looked into more carefully, but they lumped in everything so they could change what they wanted into the reasonings of men.

Although some doctrinal teachings may have needed a change or updating, the impatience of several false ministers turned into a rebellion and coup attempt.

**James 1:2-4** My brethren count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

So if the church teaches something, or a minister teaches something, and you do not quite understand it or you do not believe it, but you know that minister has been a faithful minister and he has taught the truth, then just give it a while. Study it, think about it, because sometimes it takes a while to understand some doctrine that is hard to understand, and every once in a while we come up things that have to be clarified somewhat, and some people agree, some people do not. But do not just reject it out of hand. Just make sure that if you do not agree with it, that you take time. Take the

patience that James talks about and think about it and make sure that you are not just going to throw the minister or the church out the window because you do not agree with ten percent of what it teaches. No human being or church group is perfect, even though we try to be. We are human beings and we still have human nature. So we all have to stay close to God so we can guard the truth and recognize counterfeits.

Had these ministers had patience, real errors and doctrine would have been corrected in due time. Thirty-five ministers rebelled, formed their own church, and incorporated the Associated Churches of God back in the 1970s. They took about 3,000 people with them. Some Worldwide Church of God congregations on the East Coast were devastated. For example, Richmond, Virginia, lost 80 to 90 percent of its members. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, lost 60 percent. According to an article in the March 10, 1974 issue of *The Dallas Times Herald*, "Ken Westby, former regional director of the Worldwide Church of God and chairman of the board of trustees of the new church [that is Associated Churches of God], said there will be several differences in the operation of the new church compared to the Worldwide Church. They include no requirement for tithing, local autonomy in the operation of the church with no central authority." Those are just two of the reasons why they pulled a coup and pulled people out of the church and went and formed their own thing. That and a lot of other differences, and they have really sunk over the decades. They are still in operation. I checked last week, but they are almost unrecognizable.

While the rebellion and conspiracy festered in Worldwide and just prior to the forming of the Associated Churches of God, Garner Ted Armstrong, vice president of Worldwide Church of God at the time, issued a letter to the brethren dated February 25, 1974, in which he said,

I am writing this letter with a heavy heart in the midst of a vital emergency, which is striking at the very heart and core of this great work of God. Heresy, collusion, every form of chicanery, of backbiting, disloyalty, and rebellion have reared their ugly heads among many of those even within the ministry. I have had to declare a state of emergency throughout the entire church,

canceling all Bible studies, deacons and/or elders meetings, special meetings, Spokesman's clubs, or meetings by any minister, elder, or deacon in the entire Worldwide Church of God for the time being.

This gives us an indication of what it was like over the centuries of where the church of God would grow in size, and then leaders who were corrupt would take it over and this happened time and time again.

We know that God is the one who blew the Worldwide Church of God apart, and most likely He did that with these other groups along the way over the centuries. But Satan's hand is still there, involved in it. He is always nipping at the heels of God's people and even doing more damage to those who are attending the church who are unconverted, who are not baptized.

But the conspiracy took on a new shape under Garner Ted Armstrong. According to the August 6, 1979 Worldwide Church of God Members Hotline newsletter, Herbert Armstrong wrote,

During these years from 1970 on, I was overseas a great deal of the time, even up to 300 out of 365 days of the year. Garner Ted had threatened ministers, or those who knew what was going on, with being fired if they communicated to me what was being done. There came to be a total lack of response from ministers when I repeated requests during 1975 and thereafter. I was being shut out of all authority in the church Christ had used me in starting and building. Ministers were crying for more and more watering down of truths Christ had put into His church through His apostle. For example, a number of ministers either had not been really converted or had slipped so far from Christ by lack of prayer that it was too embarrassing for them to anoint and pray for healing. They were demanding that healing be eliminated. Meanwhile, in these same years, a small group of self-professed intellectuals were busy preparing the STP, that is the Systematic Theology Project.

Remember that name, STP or Systematic Theology Project, because I am going to speak a little more about that.

So you see what was going on constantly. Satan was constantly doing his dirty work. God allowed that to test those who are truly converted, and those who are truly converted oftentimes are not that many in number, and this has gone on century after century after century. So is God trying His people by fire? He wants to make sure there they were pure.

The Systematic Theology Project, STP, was the number one official symbol of this slowly turning Protestant of the church of God. It also brought out the rebellious attitudes of many ministers and members in the Worldwide Church of God in the 1970s. The STP was forced upon the ministry as a new doctrinal approach to the Word of God.

Many of the false ministers who were part of the earlier conspiracies went underground remaining in their ministerial positions, but still carrying in their deceitful hearts resentment and bitterness throughout the 1980s. Following Herbert Armstrong's death in 1986 they began deceitfully forcing their Protestant agenda on the Worldwide Church of God members. Subtle false teachings began appearing in the Worldwide Church of God's Worldwide News monthly newspaper. Hardly any of the Worldwide Church of God members noticed the doctrinal changes except the faithful remnant who recognized the demonic coup. It is always the faithful remnant who spiritually survive and grow in grace and knowledge during the conspiracies of false ministers.

In the May 21, 1990 issue of the Worldwide News, the pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, Joseph Tkach, admitted in his personal, "I have instructed that we undertake a long term plan of setting down the basic, clear, foundational truth of God's Word in a doctrinal manual. Some work along these lines had already been done in the systematic theology product project." (the STP) He dug out and was later found out that he was part of that conspiracy back in the seventies of that slowly turning Protestant system, or paper. So one of the original conspirators, Joseph Tkach, resurrected the STP. Numerous times during the last eight years of Herbert Armstrong's life, he intensely denounced the STP calling it Satan-inspired. This conspiratorial rebellion against God's truth so disturbed Herbert

Armstrong that he was still condemning it just a few months before his death. And here is an excerpt of what he reminisced in the June 24, 1985 issue of the Worldwide Church of God newspaper, the Worldwide News.

On the Pasadena campus more and more friction developed between the liberals and those loyal ministers and members who held to the biblical truth God had placed in His church. It was a sort of Cold War of nerves. It had become custom to hold an annual ministerial conference of ministers at Pasadena headquarters. In the 1974 to 1977 conferences these meetings had been marred by controversies over doctrinal issues.

He was constantly battling those who were trying to change doctrines. Herbert Armstrong found out about it, he put a stop to it, and commanded all the ministers to return their copies of the STP to headquarters. Some ministers did not. By the early 1980s, Herbert Armstrong began his campaign to get the church back on the right spiritual track. But little did he know the extent to which many ministers had allowed themselves to be indoctrinated with these Protestant false teachings.

Immediately on the heels of the conspiratorial STP, which attacked Christ's doctrine from within, the church and its government was attacked from the outside with help of disgruntled ex-members, and this was a fierce persecution of the church. I am trying to show you what the church has gone through, not just in this age but what it has been up against since it was formed. In 1979, the state of California sought to destroy the religious freedom that was guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States of America. And here is part of a report dated March 31, 1979 titled *An Aide Memoire regarding State of California vs Worldwide Church of God*. It was prepared under the auspices of the Emergency Committee for the Defense of Religious Freedom and Informal Voluntary Association of Lay members of the Worldwide Church of God in good standing. It was published as an official record of the events surrounding the church's confrontation with the state of California. I am only going to give you a few excerpts.

On January 3rd, 1979 without prior notice of warning of any kind an armed task force descended on the headquarters complex of the Worldwide Church of God in Pasadena, California. It forcibly

assaulted, seized, possessions and took over control of the church and its affiliated organizations, Ambassador College and Ambassador International Cultural Foundation. The task force consisted of a court appointed receiver, a retired judge, Steven S. Wiseman, representatives of the attorney general of California and private attorneys deputized by the receiver together with state investigators and law enforcement offices. [It was an army. It was a state of California army that descended upon the headquarters.] The property and assets of the church and its related organizations were summarily taken over, the offices and records were seized and their contents rifled. Cartons and files of records were taken and carried off without receipt, inventory, and accounting by private attorneys as well as public officials acting pursuant to the supervisory powers contained in an ex parte court order issued in secret without notice or hearing. The receiver took control of the entire administration of the church and its affiliated organizations. The locks were changed on the executive offices of the church, and church officials were excluded from their offices. The church publishing facilities was seized. Contact between the chief pastor and church membership was choked off.

In addition to that, in a letter that was sent out which told all members of the church to send their tithes and offerings directly to the the judge, Steven Wiseman and the account that he had. So they wanted all the money too. That was part of the reason for this. The other was the Satanic attack on God's church. It is interesting that the original charges were filed by ex-members of the Worldwide Church of God, who had either real or imagined grievances against the church and sought vengeance on their ex-fellow brethren. It reminds me of that scripture of those who will attack us—our family, our friends.

Many times throughout the church's history, persecution of God's church has been instigated or aided by false brethren and ex-members. These are wolves in sheep's clothing. This has happened in every century since Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

**Matthew 5:10-12** "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed

are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Also, the civil rights and religious leaders are always anxious to take part in attacks, if given the chance to benefit and profit from it. It is becoming more obvious every day that persecution against Christians worldwide will continue to get worse through the end of this age. There was a Catholic priest in Africa who just made a comment that made the news, and he said that because of the immigration into Europe, Europe will not exist in 20 years. That is Western civilization, Christianity, and the rest of it, and the same is being brought upon us here, as we heard in the commentary.

Throughout history, God has allowed members of His church to be tracked down, persecuted, beaten, and, in many cases, martyred. It is becoming more obvious every day that this will continue. Malachi 3:1 states that Jesus is to come to His temple and He came to a material temple of stone, wood, and gold in the first century. And this spiritual temple, or the members of the church that Jesus comes to, is not divided.

**Ephesians 2:19-22** Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but 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, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built up for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

So the church at Ephesus was composed of former Gentiles, and they were no longer foreign Gentiles but fellow citizens with the saints, a spiritual nation. And they are also a spiritual family, a household of God, the God Family. The church is spiritual. As a building, we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, and as a building we are fitly framed together growing into a holy temple, a spiritual temple. And when I worked for the Worldwide Church of God in Pasadena in 1988, I remember hearing that 50% of the members of the church had started within the previous 10 years. So a church

of 140,000 or so, and half had come into the church in the previous 10 years—from 1978 to 1988—was the statistic I remembered hearing.

So what happened to the other 70,000? Because there was about 140,000 in the church in the late '70s, or maybe 120,000. But what happened to those other 50,000? Well, the church of God, or the visible church, has always had a revolving door. People come and people go, and we have seen that here in the last 26 years of our existence. And it is sad, but that is why we need to ask ourselves individually, "What do I believe? How much do I believe, do I believe it, am I willing to die for it." "What is important to me?" There is any number of questions you can ask, but this is serious, very, very serious.

The same problems that sporadically hit the church of God down through its history have now accumulated into a long list of corruptions: pride, conspiracies, discontentment, divisions, false doctrine, false teachers, selfish preferences, self-righteousness, faithlessness, disloyalty, and so on. These are some of the corruptions of this last century that we have had, and all the way back through time. There will always be tares in the visible church.

**II Corinthians 12:20** For I fear [this is Paul speaking] lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outburst of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceit, tumults.

This was Paul's concern about the problems that he might find when he arrived in Corinth because he knew there had already been that. So these things have always been in the church, not in the spiritual church but in the visible church. And now, as we approach Passover, we certainly want to make sure that we are not guilty of these things.

Here we see people claiming to be brethren of Christians, looking through a smorgasbord of ministers who titillate their senses and agree with their form of religion. That is why you have so many people going through a revolving door. They are looking for a minister who agrees with them, quite often. Not always. There are many reasons why that may be; some people need more fellowship if they are in an isolated area.

These religious hobbyists have rejected the government of God and have set themselves up as the standard of righteousness, replacing Jesus Christ and God the Father who give clear instructions through the apostle not to do this.

**II Timothy 4:3-4** 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.

We must yield to being molded into the image of God, growing in character, in grace, and in knowledge. This choosing is a joint effort—we work and the Father works. We work together. God does most of it, but we still have to make a very strong effort. Our part is to show Him our faithfulness, loyalty, commitment, and obedience. It is to those who overcome with the help of God's Holy Spirit that God places with Him on His throne.

Sanctification signifies that were infused with the Holy Spirit and stamps us with a seal that proves we are we have God's Spirit.

**II Thessalonians 2:13-17** But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

That is a very encouraging passage, one that we should read often because God does say there that He is the one who calls us, He is the one who maintains us if we stand fast and hold to the gospel of Jesus Christ, writings of the apostles, and the prophets.

God calls many and He selects only a few to be among the firstfruits of His Kingdom. He makes His truth available generally. But by comparison, only a

Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen (Part Six) by Martin G. Collins  
(<https://www.cgg.org>)

few succeed in passing the test for inclusion with the firstfruits. So tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people throughout the almost 2,000 years of the true church's history have been introduced to God's truth and gone back to the religions of the world, including atheism, or humanism, or environmentalism, or whatever it may be.

Now it is essential to God's plan to put to preserve, train, and perfect His church. And we find that all that the seven churches persevere is for the purpose of refinement.

**Psalm 66:10-12** For you, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire [that is trials] and through water [purification and baptism]; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment.

Though the experience and skill of metal working is unfamiliar to most people, we still talk about God's melting our hearts and purifying or refining us, and we tend to see this individually rather than corporately. But God does both, and by refining us individually, He refines His church corporately. Our actions individually affect the church as a whole, as a body with many parts. The Bible often stresses refinements positive benefits rather than the element of judgment, although both may be involved. And this is why the refining process requires the judgment that sin be removed from the body beginning on an individual level.

In this church history series we have seen that throughout the last almost 2,000 years, God's people have experienced the same types of trials, tests, and persecutions. Some time periods have had more severe trials than others. But regardless of the time period, God has tried and tested every individual He has called. The reason He has done this is for the purpose of separating out and completing His elect. He is preparing the firstfruits of His Kingdom to rule. This is why many are called, but few are chosen.

The true church of God is spiritual, not physical. It is not some politically organized denomination that one joins. We are not baptized into any humanly devised organization, but into the spiritual body of Christ. Jesus did

not die for an organization called a church. We cannot join the true church, only God can put us into it. Jesus Christ is a Spirit being. And the church is called the Body of Christ because it is a spiritual organism whose High Priest and Head is Jesus Christ, just as a husband is head of his wife and family, as we read in Ephesians 5:23-24. This is not a popular concept in mainstream Christianity. And it is another truth that separates the church of God from the world.

From the beginning the church was subject to the rule of God, and it was not a government set up by human beings. Jesus is Head of the church, and the true church of God is one spiritual church composed of scattered members united in spirit. The church that Jesus is building is composed of those scattered individuals who have God's Holy Spirit. And if we submit to God in faith and obedience and if we are genuinely repentant of our sins, and if we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, were baptized with full immersion in water and have received the Holy Spirit, and if we have done all the required things and produced good fruit, it is still by the grace of God through faith that we receive salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of God. *We can never be good enough*, but we can be obedient and repentant and humble and overcome and do our part in that way, which will affect our reward. But it does not effect, or rather, does not earn us salvation.

What we see consistently throughout the church's history is the God of grace and mercy intervening again and again to make sure that the gates of Hades will not prevail against His church. And it is not the blind grace of the tolerance of sin that Protestantism falsely calls love. But it is a deep commitment by God the Father and Jesus Christ to see that Their plan for the salvation of mankind first successfully develops and completes the firstfruits of Their Kingdom, and then at a later point in time, most of the rest of humanity may receive their salvation.

There are great rewards promised in chapters two and three of Revelation to the called who overcome and are chosen. For example, spiritual food, a new name, authority, robes of righteousness, a permanent position or responsibility, enthronement, and an eternal inheritance.

In God's dedication to work individually with each of us, He generously forgives our sins as we repent and overcome and it is by the grace of God

that are given the opportunity be among the first fruits of the Kingdom of God.

**Romans 8:27-39** [You are very familiar with these verses, but it is extremely important and fits well with the sermon.] Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Wow! God weaves everything together for the good of His children. The good in verse 28 of this text does not refer to earthly comfort, but to conformity to Christ, to closer fellowship with God for bearing good fruit for the Kingdom and to final glorification.

For a final scripture, please turn with me to Hebrews 12. One of the lessons we learned from the church's physical and spiritual challenges down through history is that our call and election is not an easy walk. It is a running with endurance while never taking our eyes off Jesus Christ.

**Hebrews 12:1-3** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

You must be looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, as we run with endurance. Anybody that has run a marathon knows what it takes to do that. Most of us have not. Most of us do not really realize the effort and the practice that it takes, which means to study ahead of time and so on.

In about 12 more days, we will observe the Passover in memory of the suffering and death of our Lord and Savior. Our remembrance of church's history, although important and beneficial, pales into insignificance to what we are to memorialize on Passover. Remembering on Passover should be on what God has done for us through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. We should not be focusing on ourselves and our own problems. Our Passover focus should be on what sin did to Jesus Christ, not what sin does to us. In the meantime, we are to be working with God for help to be worthy to take the Passover by having repentant, humble, and forgiving attitudes.