

In Search Of A Clear World View (Part One)

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Many times I have heard Mr. Armstrong at a Feast of Tabernacles, or beginning a Feast of Tabernacles sermon, ask, “Why are we here?” He was not at all interested in the geographical location; his question was focused on the particular group of people gathered at that particular time. He was interested in the assembly meeting to observe what appeared to be an unusually named Hebrew festival. He would then set the stage for the Feast by revealing the overall purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles and its place in the purpose of God.

Since the split of the Worldwide Church of God into scattered groups, I had begun a practice of beginning the Feast with a message from my “Handwriting is on the Wall” series detailing a major trend appearing in the news that gave good indication, or evidence, that we were just prior to Jesus’ return because prophecy was being fulfilled. This first night’s sermon is not going to follow that pattern at all. It begins with a series that I will expand as we continue on through the Feast. It will cover many foundational truths that are important to our firmly believing who the church consists of, and what some of the responsibilities are as distinguished by the Bible.

In an overall sense, my sermons are going to focus on an underlying theme—what and who we are. That phrase, distinguished by the Bible, is becoming ever more important. This identification is becoming important for us as a body and as individuals as time proceeds, and it is important because there is so much going on in the world—activities, ideas, concepts, pursuits, events of war, financial crises, problems in government, and problems in health. Everywhere we turn we are bombarded by news of these things occurring, and they are competing for our attention.

This is my concern, that all of this news that we are hearing is competing in our minds and is in many, many cases deflecting us from what we really should be paying attention to. So it dawned on me, just over a week ago, that what I am hopefully going to accomplish through this series of sermons at this Feast, my specific purpose, is I want to clarify what I believe the members of the Church of God’s worldview ought to contain. Thus, I have titled this entire series, “In Search of a Clear Worldview,” and this message is number one.

I will begin with a definition of “worldview.” This, I found, is not easy. It is difficult to get a clear handle on it. One of the reasons is that it is a fairly new term, and it requires a

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fairly long definition. I will tell you how new it is. I have two Oxford dictionaries in my own private library. One is a 1967 edition. I looked in it and the word was not even there. The other edition I have is a 1992 edition. I looked in it, it had the word, but all that it said was “a noun,” and there was no definition whatsoever. This is in an Oxford dictionary, and there is no definition. That is how recent this term is. I later found out that the word “worldview” is derived from the German language.

I am going to attempt to put this term into a more easily understood and usable definition. The word is “worldview,” and I want you to think about the word “view.” A view is what we see with our eyes. A worldview is a snapshot of what our mind sees. It is not something that we literally see with our eyes, but it registers on our brain. So, the worldview is something that your mind sees, and it will include major events occurring in the world. It will include a great deal as we go through this, but you have to understand that it is your worldview and, therefore, you are included with what your mind sees. You have to be in it or it is not your worldview, so you are a part of it.

A worldview is built upon presuppositions gained from life’s experiences, and these presuppositions help one define what is going on and take action. Because everybody’s life experiences are somewhat different, it is highly unlikely that any two people’s worldviews would be precisely the same. So, we are dealing with the word “worldview.” It is a generality, but it applies specifically to you. Because of the necessity of presuppositions carried in our minds to create a worldview, a Christian worldview absolutely must include experiences with God, with His truths (including things like doctrines), the church as an institution, and our self as a Christian within the church, and bearing responsibilities.

I think that you are beginning to get the idea that this word is not simple. It can be stated simply as a picture snapshot that your mind sees, but it happens quickly in your mind as the occasions arise and you are faced with making a decision, and the decision maybe has to be made quickly, and so you have to jumble all of this back and forth, rearranging it into deciding what you want to do.

Christian worldview is the way in which we, then, perceive ourselves as a Christian with responsibilities within the larger picture of what is taking place in the world so that we might choose the best course of action for glorifying God, and giving evidence that He is indeed a major part of our life.

As you can see, there is no precise definition, and it has to be this way because everybody’s worldview is a little bit different, and everybody has to define their own worldview. Thus, these sermons are going to focus on essential and significant

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elements that ensure that we have a correct picture, or pictures, in our worldview.

This is important because how many times have you heard somebody say, “Well, this is the way I see it.” They are interpreting their view in their mind of what they just saw, and the person right next to them might have seen exactly the same thing but come up with different descriptions of what they just saw. Incidentally I heard, on this same line, that generally police say that eye witnesses do not make the best witnesses to an accident, or whatever, because they get so many different stories. Everybody is processing it through their own mind, and what they saw was not quite the same—“Oh, it was a black man, and he was short, about five-foot six,” and another person said, “He was white, at least six-feet tall.” Then another said, “He was running,” the other said, “No, he was walking,” one said, “He had a gun,” another said, “No, he did not have a gun, he was dressed all in black,” and so on. That is the way it is and the police have to sort this out.

With this thought in mind, everybody has to sort their own worldview out, but what I want to do is make sure, to the best of my ability in this series, that there are some things as a Christian that must be there. Even here we will not come up with the same things in our own mind, but perhaps we can get fairly close.

The first worldview element that we will explore briefly is the value, significance, and importance of our calling into the church. This element must not be ignored except at great risk to whether we will glorify God and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and, therefore, toward salvation itself.

We will begin in Matthew 6, right in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-24 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

I will not refer back to these scriptures very often, but they have been used by me to introduce the particular narrow area for this sermon, and that is the word “treasure.”

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What Jesus is talking about here are universal principles very valuable to Christianity. They are themes that will be present as my sermons proceed (even though I do not mention the word “treasures” all that often) because they represent (especially the word “treasure”) major planks in the foundation we will build upon.

Even though, as one might say, normal day-to-day life goes on and the responsibilities that daily life imposes on us must be taken care of too (that is within our calling), the two major principles in these verses are exceedingly important to fulfilling the responsibilities that our calling imposes on us. They play major determining roles in how we spend our time—all the time.

Being as focused on our calling as these verses imply has become the major responsibility of our life. It is a fact of life that because of God's calling He is forcing us into committing ourselves to major choices. Our calling is the nature of the universe for us now. Let that sink in. It is the most important thing that has happened to you and me in our lifetime. It is determining the nature of our life, if we allow it and we take advantage of it.

That means a lot of choices have to be made. Let me illustrate “choosing,” as it is seen within these brief six or seven verses that I just read from what Jesus taught. No one can go two directions at the same time. That is pretty simple, is it not? One who is selfish cannot be kind at the same time. If we decide not to choose, that in itself is a choice. Let us put these principles within what Jesus said, and you can check it out later and see if I am not correct. We must choose God or the world, as to which one will dominate. The choice has to be made. Which will it be?

In verse 22, the term “good” is rendered as “single” in the King James Version. Both words are correct; they can be used either way depending upon how you want to interpret the intent of what Jesus said. I will use “single” though. The term “single” indicates that one's vision is clear, nothing is wrong with the eye, and everything is healthy. “Single” indicates that one's vision is clear, it is not fractured, it is not blurred, and it is not fuzzy. Jesus is teaching that a person whose vision is focused regarding what the right treasure is will be better off spiritually than the person who does not know, because he is seeing things in a fractured, fuzzy way. He is not looking at God clearly with his mind's eye, and there are things intruding into the mind that maybe they should be there, but they are not as important as God or His purpose; therefore what Jesus is doing is He is urging us to choose to focus.

Now the term “treasure” implies something that we place high value upon, and the important aspect is not that everybody looks upon the treasure as valuable, but rather

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that we do. What am I emphasizing here? We are the only one who can decide which to choose. It has to be a voluntary response to choose God, and so then you have made the choice that God is your treasure, and that His calling of you, His purpose for life, is the treasure. Nobody can make that choice for you; it is an individually arrived at decision.

This has another ramification and that is if we individually place value upon our calling (the fact that it is our treasure) we will automatically be drawn to protecting it and adding to it. There is the value in the person deciding where his treasure lies, and wherever the treasure is it is going to draw our attention. There is no way to avoid it. It is one of those things that will work automatically and if God is the treasure and His purpose is the treasure we are going to be drawn to protecting that treasure and we are going to be drawn to increase it.

It is one of those laws that work. That is why each one of us has to arrive at this decision of where the value is; nobody can do that for us. Verse 24 makes the treasure issue even more critical because the treasure will subtly force us to serve one or the other. It is interesting that in verse 24, in Jesus' illustration, both God and mammon are not portrayed as employers, but as slave owners. Jesus' teaching then is very clear. This is rather shattering—either God is deliberately chosen to be served with single-eyed devotion, or He is not served as God. He is just another thing that we will pay attention to once in a while, if we have the time.

This begins to get interesting in view of what is taking place in the world right now. If you view the film that we are going to be showing on Friday evening, you will hear an Anglican priest state that 33,000 Christian denominations have formed since Martin Luther's spiritual revolt. When he nailed the 95 theses to the Wittenberg cathedral door, he was splitting from the Catholic Church, and 32,999 have followed suit, one after another.

Let us consider something that is more up to date and that is the latest issue of the *Church of God News* lists 257 Church of God Feast sites in the United States of America alone. Is the Church of God scattered or what? Wow! God did a number on the church. Who is deciding what is valuable, what is your treasure? You are right at the apex of the one making the decision, and then just a little bit off to the side is the Church of Great God, or on the other side is some other group, or whatever—257—that is sobering.

We will look at one more major factor here, and will include a couple more as we go along. We will talk about some significant things within our calling. Let us go first to the

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book of Ephesians because I want to impress on you, as this sermon draws to a close, what is valuable about the calling. And we are not even talking at this time about salvation that lies at the end of it, but just some things that should show you the unique, honored position that you have of knowing what you know, so that you can make a clear choice that God is, indeed, your treasure.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us, in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all things under His feet [Christ's feet], and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

These verses show the first important fact of these sermons. The church is not merely a passing phenomenon. The church has been in God's mind from before the foundation of the world. We might say He planned that there would be a church, over six thousand years ago by this time, and you are in it. If that is not significant I do not know what is. How many billions of people have lived since Adam and Eve, and God passed over them? They lived, they had children, they died, the children died, and right all the way down to right now. What kind of significance is there in that for you, that you should be a part of this?

We can add to this significance, and you know this for sure, that each member is individually selected and metaphorically identified as being part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. These are not insignificant truths. It is mind-bending if we stop to think that our calling is something pretty valuable, a real treasure worth sacrificing for. This same point is confirmed in I Corinthians 12.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now God [no second-hand person, He did not send it down the line] has set the members each one of them in the body just as He pleased.

That means you too! Therefore, the church is portrayed as being right in the activity

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center of God's operations, and you are part of His focus. Let us define this even more thoroughly. We will go back to the book of Matthew once again.

Matthew 16:13-18 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "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." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 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."

Jesus' statement to Peter about God revealing the Messiah's identity also gives us a clue regarding the identity of the church. Remember the previous verse—it is God who has made us a part of the body of Jesus Christ. The revelation of the identity of the Christ is the first step to the revelation of the true church. The second must follow the first. The church, too, must be revealed.

He not only called you, He revealed to you who the Christ is, and He revealed to you where the church is. That is personal attention from the Creator of everything that is. Is it a treasure? Is it significant enough to consider it to be a treasure that you decide that it is a treasure?

The next thing that I want you to note is that Jesus' statement regarding the church is written in the future tense, even as He lived. There He was alive, the church was not formed yet while He was alive, therefore it did not even exist. He said, "I will build My church." Therefore it did not even exist as an organized body until Christ began it. As He said this, He was laying the final parts of its foundation through the calling and training of the apostles. Now, if we understand this correctly, we have been added to the apostles within the body. That is pretty valuable stuff.

Luke 24:49 "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Jesus was resurrected by this time, but He told them to wait there. So let us go to the book of Acts. Remember what He said ". . . until you are endued with power from on high."

Acts 2:14-20 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy, I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness. And the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In Luke 24, He told them to wait around, but even then the church had not yet been formed. He had died; He was resurrected. Now in Acts 2 the church was finally founded, and it was founded with a great deal of fireworks, I might say, and notice it was founded only after people received the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit by which God created the earth, the whole universe, and so forth, which means that if we are in the church we also have that Spirit in us. And how valuable is that Spirit that makes us a part of the church? That is the only way we are accepted within it.

If you are adding things up, our calling is worth a bundle. It is really a treasure. It is beyond being accounted for. In addition to this, we can add John 6:44 which, of course, confirms that God has to call the person personally; no one comes to Christ except the Father calls them—more personal attention. If you are familiar with what the world generally believes, they do not believe in that doctrine at all. Most of them do not, but Romans 9-11 disproves that. I will not go through that, but Paul spends three chapters showing that people are personally called by God. We will add something here; it is another one of those things that is mindboggling.

Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

This adds significance to having this treasure. There are two Israel's. One is distinctively named the Israel of God, that is, the church; it is a specifically possessive title. The other Israel is nonetheless the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Are you following this and where the significance is? God is specifically stating that we are

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His—personally we are His.

Let us add a little bit to this. We will go back into the Old Testament in the book of Ezekiel where we have a type. Here God gives a description of His courting of Israel, if I can put it that way. This was the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Ezekiel 16:6-8 “And when I passed by your and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, Live! Yes, I said to you in your blood, Live! [Think of yourself as being the one struggling in your blood, and God passes by and He says “Live!”] I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you [a marriage oath] and entered into a covenant with you, [a marriage covenant] you became Mine.” says the Lord God.

This is a precursor of the church. He not only owns us, He is going to marry us. Is that significant or what? I am sure that you understand the story here of His loving providence for Israel, and He describes there how she looked to Him, as a beautiful woman after His rescue of her, and entering into a covenant with her. This applies even more to the church because the covenant with the church is of so much greater magnitude, and it, too, is a marriage covenant. What a future! One more thing along this same line; it is in the book of Malachi.

Malachi 3:16-17 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them' So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him,”

We can look forward to a protection that is going to be given to us as the need arises and, of course, it is inferring here the Tribulation.

We will rehearse here briefly the church’s significance just in the scriptures that we have covered here this evening:

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1. The church is significant in that it was planned for from the very beginning. It is nothing passing at all. In God's eyes it is permanent.
2. It cannot be randomly joined; one must be specifically called and chosen to be a part of it.
3. It is metaphorically the body of Christ depicting intimate closeness with our Savior.
4. Its members are adopted as part of the Father's family.
5. Its spiritual identity must be revealed, and God purposely did that to us.
6. It is the Israel of God, and specifically His possession.
7. He considers the church His treasure, picturing how He values us so highly, that He willingly gives His protection.

If the church, and the knowledge of the true church, is not significant, I simply do not know what is. Placing a value on what we have received is our responsibility; no one can do it for us. I have given you some things to consider and to assist you in making your calling the focus of your life. I hope that this will become a sharp, clear part of your worldview. You are important because of what is in your mind.