

NEWS WATCH FOR *the* CHURCH OF GOD

News in the world and church — to give warning and help for God's people — by Ron Weinland

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TWENTY-ONE TRUTHS

Anyone with much experience around God's true Church should be familiar with twenty-one foundational truths. These truths are also referred to as "the trunk of the tree." Although most people are familiar with these truths, many have turned away from them

It is a miraculous process by which we are led into God's truth. Brethren seem to have forgotten this process by which God has personally intervened in our lives to give us His truth. Our ability to know His truth is something that God alone can give. It is God's free gift to us. It is a serious offense to willingly turn away from those truths once they have been given to us.

God's truth is not discovered by personal intellect and scholastic insight. No amount of human research can piece together the plan of God that is revealed through His spirit. Do we truly believe God's own word about how He reveals truth to us, or do we actually believe in something else? Our recent history reveals that the overwhelming majority of brethren have come to believe in something different.

Let's be reminded of how this supernatural revelation of truth is able to come into our minds and become a part of our understanding. The apostle Paul made it clear that what he preached was not a matter of his own human intellect or reasoning.

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

Paul is making it clear, to those who hear him, that the ministry must depend upon the power of God to work in them to preach His word. A minister cannot rely upon his own human reasoning and skill to preach to others, but sadly many do.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:" (vs. 7). That mystery is the hidden truth which contains the plan of God and the gospel of the Kingdom of God, which God alone can reveal.

God's ministry can only teach and lead people in God's truth through the power of His spirit working through them. Although that truth can be written and preached with inspiration from the power of God, it is still a mystery to all who hear it, and they will not understand, unless God's spirit is also at work in them to reveal it to them.

"But God has revealed them [hidden truths] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (verses 10-12).

So Paul makes it clear that man cannot receive the truth of God through human ability, but that His word can only be received and understood through spiritual discernment as he says, *"But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (verse 14).

The truth that God reveals to us is something that is to become a part of our very mind and thinking. We are to grow in it and thereby come into greater unity and harmony of spirit with God. James explains this process in other terms that should be inspiring to us. We are told to *"receive with*

meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21, KJV).

Even more revealing, if we can only understand, is what James wrote, when speaking of God, *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures [Gk – creation]"* (James 1:18).

Do we grasp that the begetting of God's spirit in our lives involves a begetting of His truth in our minds? Do we really grasp that His truth comes only from Him? He must reveal truth to us through the power of His spirit. Therefore, who are we to decide to change or disbelieve that truth? Yet, that is what so many brethren have done and continue to do.

What truth has God revealed to us? Many will argue about these matters, but the truth is the truth. The only choice before us is whether or not we will accept it. We can refuse it, but in so doing we will be refusing and rejecting God in our life. That is precisely what most have already done.

What Truth Was Revealed?

Why is this article entitled "Twenty-One Truths?" Are these twenty-one truths some official standard for God's people? For more than a decade we have readily spoken of eighteen truths that were restored during the period of Philadelphia. Many today don't believe that these are true. There is much argument and debate over this, but it doesn't change what is truth.

Some of these truths could be condensed or even broadened in number. It is all a matter of how you count or arrange them. It could be done in different ways. The Holy Days could be broken down into each Holy Day, with each one being a separately listed truth, thereby adding to the number on our list. Some of these eighteen truths could be condensed

and included as part of the understanding found in the meaning of these Holy Days. If we did that, we could reduce the overall number of truths well below eighteen.

The number is not important, but the truth is! You cannot change or alter what is true. Either it is miraculously received as a result of God's direct revelation to us or it is not. In the June-July, 1999 issue of News Watch entitled "Dead, Revived, Rejected," we discussed how Sardis was overall, a spiritually dead Church. There was not much truth left, as truth was dying out during this period of Sardis. There are three basic truths that still remained alive at the end of that time.

One truth that still remained concerned the name of the Church. It is God's Church. We are God's assembly. We are the ones God has called out of this world. Jesus asked the Father, in that last night before His death, to keep the Body of Christ in His, the Father's, name. Those who have been given to Jesus Christ bear the name of God. We are the Church of God. A very basic truth about God's true Church and those that God has called is that they will be called, by the name, the Church of God. All others are false and do not belong to God. We can accept that truth or reject it.

If we understand that God must reveal the identity of His Church to us, do we also understand that He must bring us into His Church? *"No man can come to me, except the Father who has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (Jn. 6:44). And, *"It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father"* (verses 63-65).

Certainly the name of the Church of God is only part of knowing the identity of the Church, but that name is an essential part, if it indeed belongs to God. Not all who use that name belong to God, but all who belong to God must bear that name.

A second truth that was still a part of Sardis was the knowledge of the seventh day Sabbath. The revelation of the weekly Sabbath and what is contained in its meaning and purpose is something revealed by God. Not all who keep the Sabbath have had this understanding revealed by the convicting power of God's spirit. Do we grasp the fullness of this truth and understand that anyone who disagrees with the seventh day Sabbath does not change the fact that it is still the truth of God?

A third truth understood by Sardis was about first tithe. For a time in early 1995, this truth was rejected by the Worldwide Church of God, and it is still being rejected today by other scattered brethren. Today there are far too many brethren who do not grasp the truth about God's first tithe. They do not understand its purpose and function for the Church of God. Some believe it is their responsibility to determine how this tithe is to be administered within the Church. They fail to grasp that this tithe is God's and that God has given it to His ministry for the purpose of taking care of what belongs to Him. This includes the ministry, nurturing the Church and using it for whatever need God leads the ministry to see. This truth was understood by Sardis and continued by Philadelphia. Has this truth now been changed as so many seem to believe and practice? Understanding first tithe and its purpose, in spirit and in truth, is something that is given by God, not human intellect and reasoning.

We have always known the importance of these three truths that were still a part of the Church during the time of Sardis. At the end of Philadelphia, after Mr. Herbert W.

Armstrong died, we acknowledged there had been many truths revealed and restored to the Church through him. These were later classified into a list of eighteen truths. Since this list was a compilation of foundational truths, why would anyone object to the use of this list as being basic and foundational understanding that we are to hold fast? They are true and they were revealed by God through the power of His spirit. If they were not, then our faith is in vain. If these were not revealed through the power of God's spirit, then any or all of these eighteen things may need changing. But if God did indeed reveal these, all should fear meddling with them! The truth is that those who do not like to hold fast to these truths are actually in disagreement with one or more of them.

Former brethren have made the decision that only part of that list was revealed by God and that the rest were not. How can anyone come to such conclusions? Such reasoning totally contradicts our beliefs, understanding and doctrine.

Hold Fast

These twenty-one truths have been revealed to God's Church, with eighteen being restored during the Philadelphian era. The task before us is to do what was given as an admonition toward the end of Philadelphia, just before Laodicea. *"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown"* (Revelation 3:11, KJV). Being faithful stewards and holding fast to what God delivered to the Church during Philadelphia would become a great fight during Laodicea.

God's truth weathered many storms over the centuries. False Christianity, by one great church, was having a negative effect upon the Church during Thyatira. Some brethren were warned about such spiritual fornication, and were admonished to repent. But to those who would not

corrupt themselves with such doctrine, God said "*But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come*" (Rev. 2:24-25, KJV). They still had access to the truth; and it had not been lost.

Sardis, on the other hand, lost much truth, and what remained was also dying out. That is why God described Sardis as being spiritually dead and said that only a few would survive. That is all the more reason He told them to "*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent*" (Rev. 3:3, KJV).

Truth was revealed and again restored to God's Church during Philadelphia. Jesus told them that He was now coming quickly. The end was coming upon the Church, and Laodicea would be the last church to come on the scene, then Jesus Christ would come at the close of Laodicea. Our task is to be faithful stewards of what God has delivered to us. We are to hold fast to the truth He restored and revealed during Philadelphia, the same truth He has revealed to each of us through a special calling He has given to us.

Today some ministers are boldly and defiantly teaching against the need to hold fast to the eighteen truths revealed through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Instead, the idea of holding fast to such things is minimized, criticized, ridiculed, discredited, and disparaged. Efforts to debunk or detract from the genuine importance of these truths, as being restored to the Church during Philadelphia, are hideous acts of false witnessing.

There are several techniques used by such ministers seeking to disparage these truths. Often they will "talk down" and seek to discredit anything that comes from men. After all, we are supposed to believe that nothing good

can come through men, and you will only be disappointed in them if you follow what they say. The only problem with that is that God does work through men. Everything we have ever received that is true has come to us through men. We are to follow true ministers of God only "as" they follow Jesus Christ.

There should be obvious reasons why some would preach that we are not to follow a man. Do you understand why their actions contradict their teaching? Do you know why such strategies are used on people? Why do ministers who teach such things bother preaching if they truly believe we are not to follow a man, nor put any trust in a man? Do they expect you to place some trust in what they are telling you? Do they want you to listen to their teaching above what someone else is teaching? Surely they do!

Another ploy that such ministers use is that they minimize the need to hold to these truths by getting people to focus on the need to hold to Jesus Christ, the commandments, or the hope set before us. These things are all true, and we should indeed hold fast to them, but such tactics tend to move unsuspecting brethren into their convoluted line of reasoning. The need to hold fast to Jesus Christ, the commandments and the hope God has placed before us should be a "no-brainer." But you cannot hold to these things by rejecting any of the eighteen truths revealed through Mr. Armstrong.

What kind of hope would we have without these truths? Without the truths of the Holy Days, how would we have any hope in the plan of God? Sardis was described as being spiritually dead. What kind of hope did they have without the knowledge of the Holy Days or that God's government needed to be restored to this earth? Without the truth, you have no hope! [For a more in-depth look at such matters as this, you may want to

request a sermon tape on this subject if you are not already on our weekly mailing list. It is entitled "Holding Fast to Revealed Truth."]

Brethren truly need to become more alert to such ploys and distracting attempts of ministers to turn brethren away from the truth or from those who are faithfully preaching it. Do you think that such men have motives for misusing and misrepresenting scripture as they do? Generally this is indeed a two-fold matter. They do not agree with one or more of these truths, and they do not want you to listen to someone who upholds and preaches them. That is a threat to them!

Remember, as we discuss the truths mentioned in this article, we are not talking about matters like refined sugar, whether a person recognizes birthdays, or if you wear make-up or not. Rather, we are speaking of basic and foundational truths!

You cannot compare the basic twenty-one truths in this article with such things as birthdays. That would be like trying to compare the failure to put a quarter in a parking meter with a man who robbed a bank, then hijacked a car with a baby in the back seat and proceeded to flee authorities at speeds over 120 m.p.h. Do you grasp the difference? Many in the Church today don't seem to have the capacity to make such discernment.

No one has a right to change what is true. You only have a choice to accept or reject what is true. Most have been rejecting that truth. Will you, or have you already done so? If you have ever rejected some truth, you always have a choice to repent and seek God's loving mercy. That is a choice, but changing God's truth is not!

Since we have mentioned the three truths Sardis still had, it would be good to list the remaining eighteen for your personal examination. Are you in agreement with God? Do you accept what He has offered you through revelation and the work of His spirit in your life?

If you have become slack in holding fast to these truths, ask God to restore to you a love and zeal for His truth. And as you review these truths, please remember that just because brethren have abused and misused God's truth does not mean it is not truth. Truth, lived in spirit and truth, is the most rewarding experience in life.

The following list does not delve into the doctrine of these truths. It is a minimally-worded listing. If you wish to focus more closely on each of these truths, you may request a series of five sermons that covers truths numbers two through eighteen, entitled "Restored and Revived." The first truth that is listed, which concerns the subject of government, is covered in a three part sermon entitled "Do We Have Government?" and in another vitally important sermon, that was a follow up to that series, entitled "What Am I To Hold Fast?"

Before you begin this next section, you need to consider one more matter. Those who minimize and try to debunk these truths say that these should not be held up as some kind of standard for salvation. People are further confused by ministers who ask, "Did the Church in Thyatira or Sardis have all these truths, if indeed they are needed for salvation?" Please understand, these two Churches were judged by what they were given! What were you given? If you were given more, are you being a faithful steward, or are you moving away from these truths that have been revealed to you? You will be judged by what you have been given. To move away from the truth is a most grievous matter. It is a matter of salvation to move away from revealed truth, because it is sin to do so. Moving toward the truth is always wrought with blessings.

18 TRUTHS

The WORLDWIDE NEWS, August 25, 1986, page 5, carried an article honoring Herbert W. Armstrong. The title was: "God restored these 18 truths: How thankful are you for them?"

"One original Church, much persecuted and opposed, but still in existence, has these evidences [proper name and true gospel] proving it to be the original true Church. And even this Church, until after the year of 1933, had lost many vital truths. At least 18 basic and essential truths have been restored to the true Church since that year." - Herbert W. Armstrong, Mystery of the Ages, p. 251 (hardcover edition)

1. The Government of God. When Christ comes, He will restore God's government to the whole earth. So you can be sure the one to come in the spirit and power of Elijah would restore God's government in His Church. When Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong came among the Oregon Conference era of the Church of God (Seventh Day), the church had the right name, the law, the Sabbath, and the tithing system. But they also had a government of men, with a biannual conference, voting just like they do in the world.

"Today, the government of God has been restored to His Church. That is the kind of government you find in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12." (Worldwide News Article) **[Please note** that the sermon entitled "Do We Have Government?" explains that since 1986, when this was written, God's government has been shattered and scattered once again, similar to the great rebellion of the fallen angels when the government on this earth was first shattered.]

2. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God. ". . .has been restored after 1,900 years." Mr. Armstrong often said that the True Gospel was given to The Church which started at Pentecost 31 AD. That Gospel then began to be changed into a false gospel by the end of the 1st century. He said that God restored that True Gospel exactly 19 centuries later when he was ordained a minister in 1931 AD, on or near Pentecost.

[To clarify this point, the gospel was still in the true Church, but it ceased to go out into all the world until the time of Philadelphia.]

3. The Purpose of God. ". . .that we are to be born of God and become God. God is reproducing Himself, and no other church on earth knows that or preaches it. As a counterfeit they talk about being already born again."

Mr. Armstrong was right. What other church on earth has taught that God is a Divine Family and the plan of God is to reproduce Himself through Divine Children, Christ being the first? Absolutely none! Mr. Armstrong taught that Satan hates this, because it means humans will become God, and has deceived the whole world into believing that God is a closed trinity.

4. Who and What is God. "Traditional Christianity believes in the trinity, that the Holy Spirit is a person. God is neither one person nor a trinity. God is a family."

Mr. Armstrong taught that God is a Divine Family. God is the Father who begets us to ultimately be born into that Divine Family-- just as Jesus Christ was the declared to be "the Son of God . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4) and is the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

5. What is man? Herbert W. Armstrong would often ask the challenging questions: "Why are you here? What is the purpose of human existence?" He alone clearly saw why human kind was placed on this earth. Traditional Christianity has never understood this, and God's Church did not even understand.

6. The Human Spirit in Man. Mr. Armstrong came to see that there is a "spirit in man" (Job 32:8), not an immortal soul, but a human spirit which is beyond the physical brain and elevates man far above animals. This spirit needs to be united with the Spirit of God. That human spirit returns to God after death (Eccl. 12:7). The

Church of God never understood this until Mr. Armstrong.

7. The Church of God is Only the Firstfruits. Mr. Armstrong taught that God is not trying to save the world now. This set him at odds against traditional Christianity which thinks that God is trying desperately to save as many as possible. The Church of God lost sight of this over the centuries, until it was clearly restored. What is taken for granted by God's Church today, only came through Mr. Armstrong.

8. The Church is Not Yet the Kingdom of God. The false gospel taught that the church on earth is the Kingdom of God. Mr. Armstrong clearly saw that the coming literal Kingdom of God is the message Christ brought from The Father, and that the Church of God today is only the embryo of that Kingdom.

9. Only Those Whom God the Father Calls and Draws to Him Can Be Converted Now. "No other church knows that or believes it. That's another truth restored to the Church through Mr. Armstrong. None of us had ever heard that before, except as we received it through Mr. Armstrong. Only those God chooses and calls now can come in and become part of the firstfruits. Satan has deceived the whole world, and the Church is called out of that world" (Worldwide News article).

10. The Resurrection to Judgment. This is when God will "save the world." Herbert W. Armstrong clearly saw that there are three resurrections mentioned in scripture. The Great White Throne Judgment is the time when all who have ever lived will be given the opportunity to become members of the God Family, just as the Church is given the opportunity in advance.

11. The Millennium. The Church of God in the 1930s knew that Christ

would be returning to set up His Kingdom, but knew little about what that Millennium would be like. The Government of God will be restored over the whole earth, and the Tree of Life would be open to all for the first time since the time of Adam. The firstfruits will reign with Christ as kings and priests--teachers and rulers.

12. Only Begets Us. The Bible is a coded book, said Mr. Armstrong, which can only be unlocked by the Spirit of God. We can only come to really know God through the Holy Spirit, and we must grow in character and understanding after this begetting until our birth into the Family of God?

13. We Are Only Begotten Now, Not Born Again. We are not yet inheritors, only heirs (Rom. 8:17). The Holy Spirit only begets us and we are not yet born into that Family. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom (John 3:5-6).

14. The Identity of Modern Israel. God's Church in the 1930s officially rejected this truth, when Mr. Armstrong brought it to the leadership's attention. Again today it is being rejected. Mr. Armstrong clearly saw from the Bible that the descendants of Israel were to receive the birthright promises, and the English-speaking peoples are the descendants of Joseph's two sons.

15. Prophecy Can Only Be Understood if You Know Who Are the Israelites Today. Mr. Armstrong had a clear picture of which prophecies apply to us today, since he saw clearly who the descendants of Israel are. As well as proclaiming the Gospel, he preached the Ezekiel warning (Ez. 33), which was meant for the descendants of Israel at the end time. The Great Tribulation will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). Those who are following in the footsteps of Mr. Armstrong today are also preaching the Gospel and giving the Ezekiel warning.

16. The Annual Holy Days. What other church prior to Mr. Armstrong understood the annual Feast Days, much less kept them? The plan of God, as shown through the Holy Days, was revealed to the Church of God only through Herbert W. Armstrong. He and Loma kept them alone for 7 years because they saw it was commanded. It wasn't until after 14 years that the actual meaning of the days were understood by him. The Holy Days picture God's plan for mankind depicted through seven major events. One of the greatest blessings ever to come on God's Church was the knowledge of His Holy Days. All those who keep the Feast Days today, do so because God revealed it through His servant Herbert W. Armstrong.

17. The Authority of the Sacred Calendar. The Church of God in the 1930s was confused as to when the year should begin. People are still confused today over the calendar. Mr. Armstrong saw the importance of the Jews' preservation of the weekly and yearly calendar.

18. Second and Third Tithe. The Church of God understood first tithe, but until Mr. Armstrong, the Church did not understand that a festival tithe had to be kept since they didn't keep the Holy Days to begin with. Mr. Armstrong also saw that God provided for the needy within the Church by a third tithe. No other church had this knowledge.

This Worldwide News article had an accompanying picture of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong with a caption stating: "In the early 1930's, God began to use the Armstrong's to restore 18 essential truths to His Church. Could we, today, lose sight of them?"

This article began: "How much do you value God's truth?"

This article concluded: Where would we be without these truths? Without them -- without Herbert W. Armstrong's legacy of these 18 restored truths -- there isn't much left."