

Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs

The Living Church of God bases its beliefs on the Holy Bible, the inspired Word of God. Our doctrines, practices, policies and traditions have their roots in the Worldwide Church of God under the leadership of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong who, in 1952, ordained Dr. Roderick C. Meredith (our Presiding Evangelist) as one of that organization's first evangelists.

Scripture says that we must "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18). Within that biblical mandate, the Presiding Evangelist and Council of Elders of the Living Church of God, led by the Holy Spirit, have the responsibility to clarify and establish doctrine, as expressed in this Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs.

THE CHURCH, ITS NAME AND ITS MISSION

The biblical *name* of the true church is "the Church of God." God names things what they are. The *name* is clearly stated in both singular and plural form in *twelve* different places in the New Testament—including Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16; 1 Timothy 3:15.

The Living Church of God, with its denominational world headquarters in San Diego, California, has members in many countries around the world and fulfills a threefold mission: 1. To preach the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14; Matthew 24:14; Ezekiel 3 and 33), and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12) to all nations as a witness. 2. To feed the flock and to organize local church congregations to provide for the spiritual and material needs of our members as God makes it possible (1 Peter 5:1–4; John 21:15–18). 3. To preach the end-time prophecies and to warn the English-speaking nations and ALL THE WORLD of the coming Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

THE HOLY BIBLE

The Bible is the inspired revelation from God to mankind. It is the true basis of all church doctrine

(Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:16). We believe the Bible is inerrant in its original manuscripts and is the authoritative foundation for all true knowledge (John 17:17).

WHO AND WHAT IS GOD?

The Father and the Son comprise the "Godhead." There is one God (1 Corinthians 8:4 and Deuteronomy 6:4). Scripture shows that God is a divine Family made up of more than one Being (Genesis 1:26; Ephesians 2:19, 3:15; Hebrews 2:10–11). God is Spirit and is eternal.

The Father is the Supreme Being in the Godhead. Jesus Christ said that He was sent to reveal the Father (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18; 17:24–26) and acknowledged that His Father was greater than He (John 10:29, 14:28).

The Son, Jesus Christ, is the "Word" (Greek *logos*), through whom the Father created all things (John 1:1–3), the "only begotten Son" of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) and Savior of all mankind (1 John 4:14). He died for our sins and was resurrected that we might be saved from eternal death (Acts 4:10–12). He now sits at the

Father's right hand and acts as our High Priest and as the Living Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22–23; Hebrews 4:14–16).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God is Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very essence, the mind, life and power of God. It is not a Being. The Spirit is inherent in the Father and the Son and emanates from Them throughout the entire universe (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7; Jeremiah 23:24). It was through the Spirit that God created all things (Genesis 1:1–2; Revelation 4:11). It is the power by which Christ maintains the universe (Hebrews 1:2–3). It is given to all who repent of their sins and are baptized (Acts 2:38–39) and is the power (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:6–7) by which all believers may be “overcomers” (Romans 8:37, KJV; Revelation 2:26–27) and will be led to eternal life.

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel of Christ is the “Good News” of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ's sacrifice and of the soon-coming Kingdom and government of God. The Gospel of Christ reveals the means by which we are to be qualified by God to be ruling members of His Kingdom (Acts 2:38–39; Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 24:14; Acts 8:12; 17:7; 28:30–31; Revelation 2:26–27).

SALVATION

Salvation is God's gift by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Romans 5:10). Upon repentance and baptism, God justifies us from our past sins. We then begin an ongoing process of “being saved” as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Our salvation will be complete at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50–54). In observing the biblical Festivals and Sabbaths, we come to understand more deeply God's plan of salvation, and the steps toward salvation that we take as Christians.

Steps toward salvation

Faith in Christ

The *first* important step toward salvation is coming to complete *faith* in God and in Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 6:1; 11:6). Peter said, “be baptized in the *name of Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:36–38).

Repentance

A vital step toward salvation is *repentance of sin*—repentance of transgressing God's law (1 John 3:4). As the New Testament Church began, Peter was inspired to command, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you...” (Acts 2:38). Since

every human being has sinned (Romans 3:23), and the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23), each sinner must turn from breaking God's law, and be willing to obey His Maker through Christ living within him (Galatians 2:20).

Baptism by immersion

After God *calls* us, brings us to *repentance*, and we *accept Christ* as our personal Lord and Savior, the *next* vital step to salvation is *water baptism*. One should be *baptized* (Acts 2:38; 8:35–39; 9:1–18) as a sign of total surrender to God and of a willingness to bury the old self (Romans 6:3–6).

Receiving God's grace

Salvation is the result of the application of *both* God's “law” *and* His “grace” (Greek *charis*). “For by *GRACE* you have been saved through *faith*, and that not of yourselves; it [that faith] is the *gift of God*, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9)! We are “justified by His [Christ's] *blood*” and are “*reconciled* to God through the death of His Son [but] we shall be *saved* by His *life*” (Romans 5:9–10).

At baptism, the Christian enters the “new covenant” with God (Matthew 26:28). That *new covenant* does *not* do away with the law of God. God writes His laws in our minds and hearts (Hebrews 8:8–10). When one is baptized, he or she makes a *solemn covenant* with God that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, he will keep His commandments and live a godly life from that day onward! It is *Christ* who actually lives His obedient life within us through the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, KJV).

Receiving God's Holy Spirit

When we *repent*, *accept Jesus* and are *baptized*, God forgives us our sins (Acts 2:38; cf. Psalm 103:3, 10–13). If we are to truly overcome sin, we must receive God's “power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Through God's dynamic Spirit we can keep His commandments. According to New Testament teaching, the Holy Spirit was given through the *laying on of the hands of Christ's Apostles, or elders* (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Exercising “living” faith

According to the Word of God, faith is vital for salvation, being one of the foundational doctrines of the Bible (Hebrews 6:1). “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). But living faith involves *doing what God says, obeying Him!* “Faith without works is *dead*” (James 2:20).

Growing in the “grace and knowledge of God”

After *repentance, acceptance of Christ, baptism* and receipt of the *Holy Spirit* by the *laying on of hands* (Acts 8:17–18), the recently baptized and newly begotten child of God must continue to “grow in the *grace and knowledge* of our Lord” (2 Peter 3:18). “Glorification”—putting on immortality—is the final step in receiving salvation (1 Corinthians 15:53). Ultimate salvation for mankind comes at *glorification* in His Kingdom. (Ephesians 5:27; Philippians 3:21; 2 Timothy 2:10).

ANNUAL FESTIVALS PICTURE GOD’S MASTER PLAN OF SALVATION

God’s annual Festivals are listed in Leviticus 23 and in Deuteronomy 16. These God-given holy days were commanded to be observed “forever” (Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41). The Apostolic Church observed the annual Sabbaths (Acts 2; 12:3–4; 18:21; 20:6, 16; 27:9; 1 Corinthians 16:8). They will continue to be observed during Christ’s millennial rule (Zechariah 14:1, 9, 16–19).

God’s annual Festivals picture the *seven* vital steps in His plan of salvation:

1. The Passover pictures the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29; 36; Revelation 5:6) sacrificed for us, (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus established the New Testament Passover with the symbols of bread and wine (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).
2. The Seven Days of Unleavened Bread typify purging the leaven of malice and wickedness out of the believer’s life, and partaking of God’s nature, the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6–13; Luke 12:1).
3. The Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost) pictures the small harvest of “begotten” followers of Christ who will be harvested at the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4–5), as “a kind of firstfruits” (James 1:18).

4. The Feast of Trumpets points prophetically to the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; Revelation 11:15–18; 19:15; Zechariah 14:9).

5. The Day of Atonement pictures the banishment of Satan, and man’s becoming “at one” with God (Leviticus 16:8, 10, 15–27; Revelation 20:1–3).

6. The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the soon-coming wonderful world under the government of Jesus Christ and His saints (Zechariah 14; Matthew 9:37–38; 13:1–30; Luke 12:32; John 7:6–14; Acts 17:31; Revelation 12:9; 20:4–6).

7. The Last Great Day features the great judgment that will occur at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on earth (John 7:37; Leviticus 23:36, 39; vv. 33–34; Revelation 20:11–12).

THE LAW OF GOD

God’s basic *spiritual law* is summed up in the “Ten Commandments” (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4). In the “Sermon on the Mount” and elsewhere, Jesus *magnified* God’s law (Matthew chapters 5, 6, 7 and Isaiah 42:21), showing His followers that they must obey both the *letter* and the “spirit.” “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). It is *practicing* this way of life—through Christ living in us (Galatians 2:20)—that makes one a true “saint” (Revelation 14:12).

GOD’S SABBATH

The Word of God reveals that “the *seventh day* is the Sabbath of the LORD” (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14). It is to be observed from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. It is God’s “sign” between Him and His faithful people—picturing God’s “rest” and reminding us that He is the Creator. It also pictures the Millennium—the coming one-thousand year “rest” when Christ returns as King of kings (Hebrews 4:1–4; Revelation 20:4–6). Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the early Church always observed God’s commanded Sabbath, (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2), and it will be observed by “all flesh” during Christ’s coming millennial rule over the earth (Isaiah 66:23).

SIN—AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

“Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). “Sin is the *transgression of the LAW* [of God]” (1 John 3:4, KJV). “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and “the wages [payoff] of sin is *death*” (Romans 6:23).

THE FIRST DEATH

Death is the natural “cessation of life” (Genesis 2:17, Ezekiel 18:4). “In Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22). “It is appointed for men to die *once*” (Hebrews 9:27). After experiencing the “first death,” all human beings will be resurrected back to life. The Bible reveals that *all human beings*, eventually, will be resurrected (John 5:28; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

THE SECOND DEATH

The “second death” is *eternal* death—total annihilation. Those who experience the second death shall never again regain consciousness (Malachi 4:1; Matthew 10:28; 25:46). The *second death* is, in fact, *total extinction*, (Revelation 20:14–15). “If we *sin willfully*” after having received the knowledge of the truth there is no forgiveness of such willful sin (Hebrews 6:4–8; 10:26–31).

THE MEANING OF “BORN AGAIN”

With a *physical human birth*, there must first be “begettal” (by the *male*), and “conception” (by the *female*). With a *spiritual birth*, there must first be a spiritual *begettal and conception*. Then after a period of “spiritual gestation” or spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18), true Christians will someday experience a literal spiritual “birth,” thereby becoming *immortal* children of God. We will literally be born again at the resurrection as Christ Himself was, “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

GOD’S FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The Father is supreme in authority, and His Son Jesus Christ is under Him in rank and authority (John 14:28). The “head [leader] of Christ is *God* [the Father]” (1 Corinthians 11:3), and “Christ is the HEAD of the Church” (Ephesians 5:23). God governs with love, and continues this pattern throughout His Church. Under the Father and under His Son, Jesus Christ, are “[1] apostles, [2] prophets, [3] evangelists, [4] pastors and [5] teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). God’s way of governing has always been *government from the top down* (Exodus 18:21–26).

Jesus taught “Servant Leadership” by His Word and example (Matthew 20:25–28). He said, “You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

TITHING

God is the *Creator* of everything that exists (Revelation 4:11). As *Lord* of the universe, He exercises ownership and control over all His creation (Acts 17:24–29). Jesus Christ said men “ought” to tithe (Matthew 23:23). The Bible shows that “All the tithe... is the LORD’S” (Leviticus 27:30). Long before the Old Covenant, Abraham—“the father of the faithful”—paid a tithe to God’s representative (Genesis 14:20). Through tithing, Christians serve God by supporting the preaching of the Gospel, attendance at His festivals and the care of the Church and the needy.

DEFINING MARRIAGE

Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. Since God made us *male* and *female*, He is the Author of marriage. Marriage is a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22–33). With a very few God-given exceptions (Matthew 19:8; 1 Corinthians 7), it is binding on Christians until death (Matthew 19:3–9).

OVERCOMING RACIAL PREJUDICE

God’s Word commands all mankind to *love their neighbors as themselves* (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Acts 17:24–29). God reveals that salvation is now freely offered to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:34–35; Romans 10:12–13; cf. Joel 2:32). We believe love and deep respect should be shown to people of all ethnicities (Romans 13:10).

MILITARY SERVICE AND WAR

The Living Church of God follows the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles. Jesus said, “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either” (Luke 6:27–29). The Apostle James, brother of Jesus, continued teaching Jesus’ message concerning violence and war (James 4:1–10).

The Church of God has historically considered military service wrong for its members. Records show that from the American Revolution through the two World Wars and subsequent police actions, members of the Church of God have consistently held to conscientious objection against military participation.

DIVINE HEALING

Healing is one of the “spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:1, 9). One of God’s Hebrew names is *Yahweh Ropheka*, meaning the *Eternal who heals*. God told the Israelites, “If

you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight... I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the *LORD who heals you* [Yahweh Ropheka]” (Exodus 15:26). The Lord is a Great God who “forgives all your iniquities, who *heals* all your diseases” (Psalm 103:3; 1 Peter 2:24). “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:14–16).

GOD’S HEALTH LAW CONCERNING MEATS

Genesis 7:1–2, Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 give God’s instructions concerning what He created “clean” (edible) and “unclean” (*inedible*). Long after the crucifixion, Peter still recognized this law as binding (Acts 10:14). Moreover, after his vision of unclean animals brought down on a sheet, Peter exclaimed that “God has shown me that I should call no man common or unclean” (v. 28).

ORIGIN OF MODERN ISRAELITES

One of the most *vital keys* to understanding prophecy is to know the true *biblical* origin of the Jews and the “lost” ten tribes of Israel—and the Northwest European countries settled by their descendants.

The Anglo-American peoples are the possessors of the *birthright promises* and accompanying *blessings* of Abraham’s descendants through his grandson Jacob. God’s Word reveals that Jacob’s descendants from Joseph will be overtaken by a time of great trouble—a time called “Jacob’s trouble”—because they have dishonored the Creator who gave them the greatest national blessings in human history (Jeremiah 30: 4–7; Matthew 24:21; Daniel 12:1).

THE “GREAT TRIBULATION”

The Bible speaks of a time of great catastrophe, called the “Great Tribulation” (Matthew 24:21–22; Daniel 11:40–45; 12:1; Luke 21:19–36—also called “Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:3–7). Jesus Christ Himself will have to shorten those hellish days, otherwise “no flesh would be saved” (Matthew 24:22). We believe that we are fast approaching that time.

THE “DAY OF THE LORD”

The day of the Lord, mentioned in more than 30 places in the Bible, will be a time of God’s *intervention* in the affairs of men on this earth, when He will punish the inhabitants of the earth for their flagrant sins (Joel 1:14–20; 2:1–32; 3:9–17).

According to Matthew 24:29–31, there will be *signs* in heaven, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven” imme-

diately *after* the tribulation and *before* the day of the Lord. God said, “I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth... The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD” (Joel 2:30–31).

CHRIST’S SECOND COMING

Jesus solemnly promised His disciples *ten times* in Matthew 24 that He would assuredly “come again” to this earth (also John 14:3). He said “tribulation” would *precede* the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:29–30). His coming, with a “great sound of a trumpet” (v. 31), will occur when the “*seventh trumpet*” sounds (Revelation 11:15). That trumpet is also called the “last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). This is the “first resurrection,” and those who take part in that resurrection will reign with Christ “for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4, 6).

THE “MILLENNIUM”

Old and New Testament prophets foresaw a wonderful time of peace on this earth (Isaiah 2, 9, 11:6–9; 14:7; Jeremiah 31; Micah 4; Zechariah 8:20–23; 14; Malachi 4; Acts 3:19–21; Revelation 20:4–6). The Millennium—the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and His saints—is that time.

THE “LAST JUDGMENT”

There are *three* great periods of judgment mentioned in the Bible:

1. The *Church Age* during which God judges only His own people—those called out of the world into His church (1 Peter 4:17).
2. The *Millennial Age* in which all nations will be exposed to Christ’s truth and to His wonderful way of life for 1,000 years (Isaiah 11:9; Revelation 20:2–6).
3. The “*Last Judgment*” Age (called the “Great White Throne Judgment”) in which all who have ever lived—yet who died in *sin* and *ignorance* of God’s Truth and His way of life—will be resurrected and will have the Word of God opened to their understanding (Revelation 20:11–14; Matthew 10:15; 11:21–24; 12:41–42; Ezekiel 16; 37:1–14).

MANKIND’S ORIGIN, INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL AND ULTIMATE DESTINY

God created mankind out of the “dust of the earth” (Genesis 2:7). Human beings are made in God’s “*image*

[and] *likeness*” (Genesis 1:26; cf. 5:3); they are also given a God-like mind and emotions. God planned that those who repent of their sins and are baptized shall receive God’s Spirit, the germ of “eternal life” (Acts 2:38–39; John 3:16). At Christ’s second coming, all of those converted in this life, whether dead or alive, will be given *immortality*—born as full “sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36).

“Blessed are the *meek* for they shall inherit the *earth*” (Matthew 5:5; cf. Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34). “He who overcomes shall inherit all things [the universe]” (Revelation 21:7).

According to all the prophecies and promises of the Bible, God’s “firstfruits” (those called in this age) will be rewarded with a place or position of *rulership* in God’s Kingdom (John 14:1–3; Revelation 3:21; 20:4–6), right here *on this earth* (Revelation 2:26–27; 5:10; Daniel 2:44). The true saints will become *full* sons of God—“sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36). They will share divine glory in the resurrection. Jesus prayed, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:22–23).

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