

Modern Day Pharisees

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By Robert G. Theophilus

THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD. The information provided is for the benefit of former members of the congregations of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), and of current and prospective members of God's Church.

Christ severely criticized the scribes and the Pharisees at His First Coming to Israel. They had created a new religion, Judaism, out of the law of Moses by adding requirements to it which made it unpleasant and difficult to observe. They feared ever going back into captivity for disobeying God's law. They rewrote God's law to be so strict and demanding that they would never get close again to not keeping it but exempted themselves from following it.

Preamble

Please Note: All comments in brackets [] or in parentheses () as well as highlighted text (bolded and/or in blue) are from the author of this study. Bible quotations are in maroon.

I think it is essential to clarify the question of the “Holy Spirit” before we begin this study. If we say that who or what is the “Holy Spirit” is the question that needs to be answered, we are starting from the assumption that there exists such a being as the Holy Spirit and that it is a separate and distinct being from God and the Word. The question which should be asked is who are the beings the Bible tell us are holy, whose composition is spirit and who have existed eternally? Either the Bible plainly tells us who are the separate and distinct beings that existed from all eternity who created all things (spirit beings and the material universe) or we have no way of getting an answer to our question.

The Holy Spirits of the God Family

The Bible tells us in Gen 1:1 that:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word translated “God” is “Eloheem” which is the plural form of “Eloah which means “God”. The word “Eloheem” refers to “gods.” It is a uniplural noun like family, group, team, etc. In the beginning, there was therefore more than one God being in existence but how many were there?

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was God and there was another being with God who was also God, the Word. How can these two beings both be God; isn't that impossible?

The word God indicates the kind of existence of these 2 beings: their nature is to be God in the same way that all human beings have the same human nature. However, having the same nature does not mean that all human beings constitute a single being; indeed, they are all separate and distinct beings with their own personalities. God and the Word have in common the same nature or, level and type of existence, but they are separate and distinct beings just like all human beings who have the same human nature are separate and distinct beings.

God the Father

We read in the Bible that God became a father when the Word became flesh (Phi 2:5-8) by being born of woman after having been conceived in the virgin Mary by the holy spirit being called God (Luke 1:35). God from that point on became God the Father and the Word, who was born as the flesh-and-blood Jesus of Nazareth became God's Son or the Son of God. He was both fully God (his father was God and fully human (his mother was the virgin Mary).

Jesus was God the Father's only begotten son at the time when He was conceived in Mary's womb but He was not to be the only one begotten of the Father. God the Father is the holy spirit being in the Godhead that calls men to salvation.

Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Joh 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou [God the Father] gavest me have I lost none.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God the Word and Spokesman

The Bible term for being called is to be spiritually begotten by God the Father (1Pe 1:3). When we are begotten, we become a spiritual embryo that can be born again as a glorified spirit being with eternal life. Those begotten of the holy spirit God the Father who follow their calling are then able to come to the holy spirit being called the Word and Spokesman (John 6:44; 65; 18:9) who then teaches them. The glorified Jesus-Christ as God the Father's Word and Spokesman is the holy spirit being that works in the minds of God the Father's called and chosen ones.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Jesus had to first be glorified for it to be possible for Christians to have access to the holy spirit called the Word and Spokesman because the glorified Christ is the holy spirit being who works in the minds of God's saints (John 14:17) in the same way that Satan is the evil spirit that works in the minds of the children of disobedience (Eph2:2).

Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he [Christ] dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [On the day of Pentecost, it would be in them and in all true Christians.]

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [Satan] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The holy spirit God the Father calls men and those who follow their calling are then taught by the holy spirit called the Word and God the Father's Spokesman.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Ghost

The expression “Holy Ghost” used in the Bible is in error as there are no ghosts in the Godhead but rather 2 beings that are holy (John 17:11; Isa 6:3) and spirit (John 4:24).

Joh 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

These 2 God beings who are holy and spirit are the holy spirit beings of the God family who existed in the beginning at the creation of all things.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

And, the Word who was with God is before all things i.e., *nothing* existed before He created them whether made of spirit or matter.

Col 1:15 [Christ] Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him [the Word who became Jesus-Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

In the beginning before anything either physical or spiritual was created, there was God and the Word who existed before all things and no other being is mentioned as having existed with them. There is no bib-

lical evidence that there ever existed a third, separate and distinct personage in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit” who dwelt in eternity with God and the Word.

God is a Family

Throughout the Bible we can find many verses which clearly indicates the existence of family relations between God and the Word and God’s called, chosen and faithful.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

God is clearly a family in which many can be ultimately born again by a resurrection from the dead to eternal, glorified spirit life in God’s Kingdom.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [God’s Son] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Col 1:18 And he [the glorified Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ was the first to be born again by a resurrection from the dead to be followed by many brethren.

Bible Writing Convention

The practice in the Bible has been to simply use the expression “the Holy Spirit” without indicating which God personage in the Godhead the expression represents. Over time, because of this practice, just about everybody has come to believe that the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct God being in the Godhead but, there is no single verse or group of verses in the Bible that prove the existence of such a third being in the Godhead. The words “holy” and “spirit” are adjectives that describe the nature of

God the Father and of God the Word i.e., they are holy beings made of spirit.

Whenever we encounter the expressions the “Holy Spirit” or simply the “Holy Spirit” in the Bible we must look at the context to determine of which holy spirit being of the Godhead the Bible is talking about: the holy spirit, God the Father or the holy spirit, the Word and Spokesman.

The Word is the holy spirit being in the Godhead who carries out the instructions and wishes of the holy spirit, God. He is the faithful son who seeks to do his father’s will in all things. He is the member of the God family that did the work of creating the heaven and the earth, who ruled over ancient Israel through Moses and his human successors, He is the one who became a man who suffered and died to be God the Father’s perfect sacrifice for sin and make the salvation of mankind possible, etc. and He came to reveal the Father to those who follow the Father’s calling.

Making Things Clearer

In this study, when referring to God’s spirit who, depending on the circumstances can be the holy spirit personage called God the Father or the holy spirit personage called God the Word and Spokesman, I will not capitalize either of the adjectives “holy” and “spirit”. This is in order to not perpetuate the false impression in the minds of readers that there is a 3rd being in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit.” Instead, I will refer to either of the holy spirits in the God family as being God’s spirit without capitalizing the word “spirit” to make it plain that we are not referring to a third God being in the God family called the “Holy Spirit” but to one of the 2 God beings in the Godhead.

God’s family is presently made up of 2 holy spirit beings to which are to be added thousands and possibly millions of other holy spirit beings when God’s plan of salvation for mankind has reached its end. The saints that endure in the faith until the end of their natural human life, will be resurrected as individual holy spirit beings in God’s Kingdom when it is established.

There are two studies which you can read regarding what is the “Holy Spirit” and decide for yourself in light of the Bible-based evidence offered if such a being exists in the Godhead. These studies are: [What is the Holy Spirit? Cliff Notes Version](#) and [Who or What is the Holy Spirit?](#)

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In the Bible, we find the interesting and at times puzzling story of the clash that occurred between Christ and the religious elite of the day who were the Scribes and the Pharisees. They saw themselves as being the only ones who understood the Scriptures and they expected everyone to recognize their superior knowledge. They were the priestly class of Israel who also had limited civil powers given them by the Roman government. Israel was then a conquered nation; Israel was under Roman domination.

In Old Testament Israel, the law was administered by judges appointed by Moses. There was no separation of church and state; it was a theocracy administered through men based on the laws recorded in the Bible. Religion was an integral part of the lives of people living in Israel and the overseers and teachers of the people were the priests. They had power and prestige, a class apart from the general population, they were the leaders of the people who saw themselves as being owed respect and admiration. They reveled in their status as the great teachers of God's law and in their authority over the people.

The Scribes and the Pharisees

Mat 23:1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

Mat 23:2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

Mat 23:3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The scribes and the Pharisees knew the law and taught it correctly to the people which is why Jesus told His disciples to follow their teachings but not to do as they do. They taught the law but themselves they didn't follow it.

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

They wanted to be sure that the people saw how important they were so they dressed in a way that drew attention to them and that made them stand out when among the people.

Mat 23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

Mat 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

They loved to be given special treatment as guests of honor at feasts and in the synagogues; to be noticed and greeted by people in the marketplace and to be called Rabbi which is to say master and teacher.

Did Christ find their behavior acceptable?

Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

A hypocrite is someone who makes a show before others of holding certain beliefs, in this instance, religious ones, but who does not apply them in his private life. In public, a religious hypocrite acts as an up-holder and strict defender of God's law and urges everyone to follow it but in his private life he follows little or none of it.

Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!**

for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence [pretending with the intention to deceive] make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Widows and orphans were to be cared for, not be exploited according to God's law, but the scribes and Pharisees were impoverishing them and though doing those things, were making long pretentious prayers to make people believe how much they loved God and His law.

Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!**
for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when
he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than
yourselves.

They spent a lot of time and effort to make one proselyte (someone who has just converted to a new religion, in this case, Judaism) and then proceed to make him twice as bad as they were in terms of being hypocrites and wanting to be noticed and honored by the general population.

Mat 23:16 Woe unto you, ye **blind guides**, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the **gold of the temple**, he is a debtor!

Now, what really mattered to them wasn't the temple and what it represented but the gold that was in the temple. If anyone swore by the temple, they didn't see him as being bound to do what he swore to do, but if he swore by the gold of the temple, he then had to do what he swore he would do.

Mat 23:17 Ye **fools and blind**: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

Mat 23:18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; [He doesn't have to fulfill his vow.] but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. [If he does not fulfill his vow.]

Mat 23:19 Ye **fools and blind**: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Mat 23:20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

Mat 23:21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him [God] that dwelleth therein.

Mat 23:22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

The scribes and the Pharisees attached a lot more importance to money (gold) than to the altar, the temple and heaven and what they represented which is God.

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

They were making a show of being meticulous in paying tithes but they were not administering correctly God's law over the people.

Mat 23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

They considered small infractions to the law to be of great consequence and grave infractions not to be of any great importance. It's like getting all worked up because someone had said "Geez" as it is a distortion or euphemism of the word "Jesus" but not taking any notice of someone committing adultery.

Mat 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Mat 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

They worried greatly about how they would appear to others so they made sure to appear as religious as they could while living their private lives entirely differently.

Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Mat 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

This verse sums up perfectly how they acted. They knew and taught the law correctly but themselves followed none of it in their private lives. They sought the admiration of men in their public lives and to be thought of as the great and honorable teachers of God's law leading exemplary lives of obedience to God. They were hypocrites wanting to appear to people as being strict observers of God's law while living their private lives entirely differently.

Why would they behave like that?

The Unconverted Minds of Religious Men

When Jesus came to Israel, it was still an unconverted nation who was unable to follow God's law even in the letter. In order to have understanding of the God's spiritual law, it is necessary for men to have dwelling in them, the holy spirits of the God family. ([Who or What is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit Cliffs Notes Version](#))

1Co 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Eph 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

But Christ had not yet been sacrificed and men could not then be called and chosen by God the Father.

Joh 7:37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

Joh 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet

given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

God's Church only started on the day of Pentecost when God the Father and God the Word became accessible to those men who God the Father would call and choose. Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees were unconverted and though they correctly taught the law they did not follow it themselves. They were just as blind to the spiritual aspects of God's law as are all the unconverted of the world and not being converted, saw no need to apply it in their personal lives. So, here we have men for whom religion was a job and when they were not working, they lived their lives according to their own standards.

Their attitude remained as described in Rom 8:7.

Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Unconverted Religious Men's Reaction to the Truth

When Jesus came along, a rather odd situation was created where, men who professed to know God's truth and to be able to teach it to others, the scribes and the Pharisees, rejected the words spoken by Christ. They fought against Him as hard as they could; they tried to discredit Him in the eyes of the people, to make Him look like a fool who didn't really understand the Scriptures, they accused Him of being demon-possessed and when finally, they were unsuccessful in their efforts to destroy His popularity with the people, they decided that He would have to die to save the nation from this great impostor and false prophet who was succeeding in deceiving the people.

Joh 18:14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that **one man should die** for the people.

Caiaphas was the high priest.

Mat 26:57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

They had before tried to kill Christ but had been unsuccessful.

Luk 4:28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

Luk 4:29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led

him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

Luk 4:30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

Yet, they knew who Jesus was.

Joh 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, **we know** that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Still, they continued to try to find fault with Him and to get the people to turn against Him. In the following verses of John 9, the Pharisees were refusing to believe that a young man who was blind from birth had been healed by Jesus. They questioned him trying to disprove what he says Jesus had done for him.

Joh 9:24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we **[Pharisees]** know that this man **[Jesus]** is a sinner.

Joh 9:25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

Joh 9:26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

Joh 9:27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

Joh 9:28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

In other words, you are following a sinner but we are following Moses; you're wrong and we're right.

Joh 9:29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, **[Jesus]** we know not from whence he is.

Then the young man that was healed started to express his great surprise that they, the Pharisees, who wanted to be thought of as the great and highly knowledgeable teachers of God's law didn't know who Jesus was.

Joh 9:30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

Joh 9:31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

Joh 9:32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

Joh 9:33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

The young man told them he knew Jesus was a man from God by the miracle He had done in restoring his eyesight and that it should also be obvious to them. The Pharisees were supremely insulted that someone else than themselves could ever claim to have any knowledge of God and to be so bold as to correct them.

Joh 9:34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Joh 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

Joh 9:36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

Joh 9:37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

Joh 9:38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Joh 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

Jesus came to make it possible for men to be called and know the truth,

for the spiritually blind to be given sight and that those who have been given to see, spiritually speaking, might be made blind if they refuse to accept the truth given them.

Joh 9:40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

The Pharisees who were with the young man healed by Jesus, were asking Jesus if they were among those who knew the truth and because of their refusal to follow it, were spiritually blind.

Joh 9:41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, [didn't know the truth] ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; [we know the truth] therefore your sin remaineth. [Your sins are not forgiven.]

Since you say you know who I am but continue rejecting me, you continue to be blind.

The Fate of the Scribes and Pharisees

Did the scribes and the Pharisees lose their salvation? If we go by what the Bible tells us, it would seem that they did.

Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The one that was greater than Jonas who was among them was Christ. The people of Nineveh repented which is to say they ceased doing whatever it was God didn't want them to do. Their repentance was at the physical level only; they stopped doing what God told them to stop doing. They could not repent at the spiritual level i.e., become converted as conversion is possible only by the holy spirits of the God family who would not be available until the day of Pentecost.

Mat 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment [at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment] with this generation, [the one that was there when Christ came to Israel] and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost

parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

The queen of the south will repent in the resurrection of the Last Great Day and condemn the Pharisees who lived in the days when Christ came among them and who refused to believe what He said.

The Pharisees knew who Jesus was and they still fought against Him and eventually had Him put to death by the Roman authorities as a subversive who was trying to overthrow Rome's government over Israel. Did they lose their salvation? It would appear that they did. The many miracles Christ did should have been enough to convince them that He was not just another man and that they should listen to what He said rather than try to discredit Him in the eyes of the people.

The Spiritual Leaders of This World

As we have seen, the Pharisees were hypocrites living a double life: publicly, they pretended to be God's faithful servants and privately, they lived their lives according to their own standards.

Luk 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, **Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.**

The scribes and the Pharisees were the religious rulers of Israel when Jesus came to Israel. Judaism was the state religion of Israel and they were its priests. Nowadays, we have several large Christian religious groups all claiming to know the truth. Each of them says it is the other groups that have to come to them as they are "the ones" who have the truth. Many are the religious groups competing for members who will financially support their organization.

The very same situation exists among the many doctrinally different churches of God that formed after the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, its Pastor General. They too all say that they are "the ones" who have the truth and that it is the other churches of God that have to come to them and join them. They like all the other Christian churches of the world, totally reject any teaching of which they are not the author; they have the truth and there is no one else in their opinion who could possibly have any of it unless it came from them.

What is the driving force behind the absolute unwillingness of these

religious organizations to accept that anyone else but them could ever have any truth?

In the days of the scribes and of the Pharisees, it was their not wanting to lose the privileged, high social status they enjoyed as the great teachers of God's truth. Then when Christianity came into being with the foundation of God's Church on the day of Pentecost, the motivation became money and this is something which has continued onto our days. This is why none of the several churches of God will accept to come under the authority of another church of God. Many of these newly created "true" churches of God own large properties on which they have built impressive and expensive buildings and where, one of them, is the proud owner of an executive jet which he says he needs to do what he calls "The Work." Most started with few members and little money but as they got bigger, they purchased land and began ambitious building projects.

Just do a Google search: "Images of church of God campuses" and you will see the monuments these humble men of God have raised to themselves from the money they get from their supporters. These men prior to establishing their "church of God" were of modest means and could never have been able to buy large properties and build on them multi-million-dollar buildings.

Some of these new "true" churches of God don't yet have the financial means to buy land and build on it but they are seriously thinking about it as you will see if you will take the time to do the previously suggested Google search. It will be a huge eye opener as to what is being done with the money these organizations get from their followers. Click on the images shown and you will be provided with more images showing their land holdings and current and proposed buildings.

All these riches to say the least is very much at odds with Christ's teachings.

Religion and Money

Before Christianity came into being, there were a lot of pagan (these are those who don't know the real God) religions being followed by people and whose purpose was to make money. And, once Christianity began, this would also take place in God's Church.

The Bible refers to these people as being gainsayers, they preach for money.

2Pe 2:1 But there were false prophets also **among the people**, even as there shall be false teachers among you, **[Truly converted Christians]** who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2Pe 2:2 And **many [Truly converted Christians]** shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

2Pe 2:3 And through covetousness **[greediness]** shall they with feigned **[pretending to believe something in order to deceive others]** words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because **many false prophets** are gone out into the world.

Tit 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. **[Those preaching for money.]**

Tit 1:10 For there are many unruly and **vain talkers and deceivers**, specially they of the circumcision: **[the Jews]**

Tit 1:11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for **filthy lucre's sake**.

Act 20:17 And from Miletus he **[the apostle Paul]** sent to Ephesus, and called **the elders** of the church.

Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Act 20:30 Also of your own selves **[the elders of the Church]** shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Religion and money don't go together well. This is why Christ told His disciples when He sent them out to preach to do the following:

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, **Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:**

Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Mat 10:9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

Mat 10:10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Mat 10:11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

Mat 10:12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

Mat 10:13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Mat 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

When preaching becomes a means to earn a living, those preaching for money rapidly become dependent on it especially, when it is realized that there is a lot of money to be made by preaching the right message; one that will attract, retain and please the greatest number of people.

Mat 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. [The word translated mammon is "money."]

People are looking for someone who can justify them in their sinfulness

and reassure them that they will be saved. This is the kind of message that can be found in the many false Christians churches of this world. But not only will it be attractive to the unconverted but to the converted as well.

2Ti 4:1 I [Paul] charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they [truly converted Christians] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

2Ti 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto [believe] fables. [lies]

However, lately in the churches of God founded by those who previously were ministers in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), the hold that they have on people is the fear of the dreaded and frightful Great Tribulation (GT) which, they preach, will soon arrive. No one, but no one, wants to find themselves having to go through the Great Tribulation. They are willing to endure being disrespected, harassed, mistreated and financially exploited so as not to miss out going to the Place of Safety promised in the Bible. However, though the Great Tribulation is always just about to happen, the churches they attend are busily buying and developing land, building impressive buildings, buying executive jets, etc. but if the GT is so close and about to happen, why spend all this money on these material things that will soon be destroyed. The GT has been soon coming for the last 40 years or more.

By one means or another, men greedy for money, have been using religion since before the days of the apostles, to make money from those they can get to follow them.

Modern Day Scribes and Pharisees

The scribes and Pharisees mentioned in the Gospels are an example and a warning unto all truly converted Christians of how unconverted religious men and organizations of unconverted religious men will conduct themselves.

Money will be what is most important to them as gold was what was the most important thing to the scribes and the Pharisees. They will refuse to accept that anyone but themselves can know the truth like the scribes and the Pharisees. They will do everything they can to get people to follow them and then make them just as fanatical (intense uncritical devotion to the beliefs of their organization) as they are. They will not tolerate anyone disagreeing with them and will not hesitate to expel them from their organization like the Pharisees did with the young man blind from birth who was healed by Jesus.

Is that what's going on in the religious organization you currently follow?

Having the words "church of God" somewhere in the title of an organization does not make it God's Church. There are now many "churches of God" who are splinter groups from the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and there are hundreds of organizations calling themselves "church of God" who were never part of the WCG. Which one of them is God's one true Church or is it any of them?

This is something you must determine for yourself; no one else can do it for you. Your only sure guide is the Bible.

God tells us that His temple or church is a spiritual one, not a physical organization of men and that it is Him who is building it, not men. If it is spiritual it cannot at the same time be physical. Is the mighty and all-powerful creator of the universe and of mankind unable to save men without using men who will always be sinners and who therefor cannot be trusted to never become corrupted and overcome by their desire for fame, money and power. Are men indispensable to the successful administration of God's plan of salvation for mankind? Many are those who think they are.

Again, just look at the pictures of the magnificent buildings they own. It is not something they inherited, it is something they have built and purchased with the money taken from those who follow them.

What did Christ say to those who want to follow Him?

Mat 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

Mat 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, **The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**

Following in the footsteps of Jesus will not make anyone rich nor famous in this world. They will have enough to live on but will not be rich, famous nor powerful.

Mat 19:16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Mat 19:17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Mat 19:18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Mat 19:19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Mat 19:20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Mat 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

Mat 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Mat 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Christ didn't tell the young rich man to go into poverty by selling all he had. Poverty is not virtue. Rather Christ told him to rid himself of all the excess riches that he had but he couldn't as they were more important to him than God. They were an idol to him and Christ said He had to get rid of it.

If Christ says riches are an impediment (something that makes it more difficult to achieve something) to obeying God would it be that those

who truly wanted to obey God would also be seeking after riches and once having become rich, continue to want to become richer still?

Conclusion

The true preachers of God's truth will not be found using preaching as a means to make a living or to enrich themselves; they won't be preaching for money. The disciples didn't need money when Christ sent them out to preach. If money had been important and getting more and more of it to make it easier for them to do the work Christ had given them to do, Christ would have told them. In a truly converted Christian's life, money has its importance but it mustn't become an idol. Christians are not to live in poverty and misery; there is no godliness in doing so. It follows that those who would be their teachers should also not be striving to become rich and lust after fame and power like the non-converted. Truly converted Christians have realized what Solomon came to understand at the end of his life and that is that trying to get lasting satisfaction from accumulating more and more wealth is vanity. The Hebrew word translated "vanity" means "something transitory and unsatisfactory." The blessing from God that true Christians can have is the ability to enjoy and be satisfied with what they have gotten by their own efforts or work.

Ecc 3:22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? **[He should be able to rejoice in his accomplishments.]**

Ecc 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:

Ecc 6:2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, **[enjoy what he has]** but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

What should be the attitude of a truly converted Christian when it comes to making money and accumulating wealth?

1Ti 6:5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, **supposing that gain is godliness:** from such withdraw thyself.

1Ti 6:6 **But godliness with contentment is great gain.**

1Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

1Ti 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

1Ti 6:9 But they that will be rich [whose goal is to become rich] fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Instead of striving for ever greater amounts of money God tells all Christians to get wisdom and understanding which are better than rubies, silver, gold and riches.

Pro 3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

Pro 8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Pro 16:16 How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Pro 23:4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

The wise of this world, those who have Godly wisdom, will not have the accumulation of wealth way beyond what they need to live comfortably as the focus of their lives. Being able to be content with the adequate level of comfort we have is a blessing from God to truly converted Christians.

We should all then be very suspicious of religious organizations of men who claim to be the only ones who know the truth and who see themselves as having the mission to preach it to others, who are preaching for money and for whom religion is a money making business.

Their carnal-minded pursuit of riches exposes their lack of conversion. They are the ravening wolves in sheep's clothing (having a great appetite for money) who not only would come among the truly converted but who have been using religion to provide a living for themselves

since the foundation of Christianity.

Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

They have a great hunger for money, fame and power and they see religion as the means for them to acquire them. They are hypocrites pretending to be God's humble servants dedicating themselves to preaching the truth when their real goal is simply to use religion as a means for them to satisfy their lust for money, fame and power. What they do betrays and makes evident the lie of what they say.

Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

When the disciples were sent out by Christ to preach, as we have previously seen, He told them not to be preoccupied with having money and to freely give unto others what they have freely received from Him. He didn't say, freely give unto others what is being paid for by the money you have earned or which you get from others who may be following you. Free is free, if paid by others, it is not free as self-evident a statement this may be. There are no verses in the Bible saying money is needed to spread the truth to the unconverted of the world.

Why would that be?

God is not using men in NT times as His prophets to administer His plan of salvation for mankind.

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

His plan of salvation for mankind was made sure not by men but by Christ who was God the Word in the flesh. **Only God the Father can call men and only God the Word can give men understanding of the spiritual truths of the Bible.** God is the one building His spiritual temple which is His Church and He is doing so not by men but by Himself and God the Word. God and the Word are holy and they are spirit, they are the holy spirits of your Bible. God the Word is the faithful son who obeys His Father in all things. The Father commands it and the Son does it. God the Word is God the Father's spirit or God's spirit who does the work commanded by Him.

God's NT Church is a spiritual nation; it is not a physical organization as it was in the OT. It is all those called and chosen by the holy spirit God the Father and who are taught by the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman. They are not being taught by men or organizations of men.

Truly converted Christians must be careful so as not to become the victims of the modern day scribes and Pharisees heading up the many different so-called churches of God.

Please see the following studies where you will find detailed explanations of how God's Church is a spiritual nation.

References

Just click on the titles to be taken to the document.

- [God's Church is Spiritual](#)
- [God's Church Today](#)
- [Who Can Feed the Flock?](#)
- [God's Church after its Scattering](#)
- [Why God's Church?](#)

