



About The Author

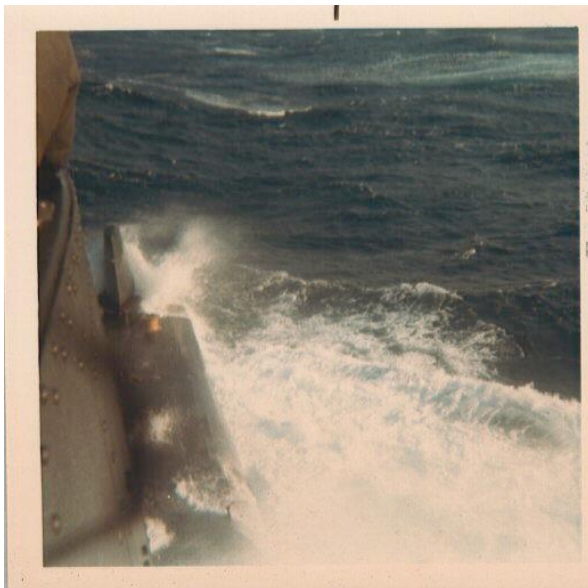
I grew up in eastern Massachusetts in a suburb town near Boston called Belmont. As a nine-year-old I was attending the Episcopal Church and basically taking the Bible at face value even though I wasn't that familiar with what it had to say. (But I was in the habit of believing what I read, whether a narrative or command, which set my spiritual course early on and made for an interesting spiritual journey which is still in progress.

I remember I once read (in those early days) a Bible command in the Old Testament not to eat the blood, so not realizing the meat juice from a cooked steak or roast wasn't blood at all, I ceased consuming those juices with a meal. This was the nature of my faith in the

Word of God, which hasn't diminished.) Once, when the U.S. Army moved its anti-aircraft battery out of a field on Belmont Hill right near where I lived, a couple of us kids scoured the grounds for what we could find. I found an olive-green can about the size and shape of a Hunts tomato paste can. It turned out to be a detonator-canister of fulminate of mercury, used to set off the large sacks of powder that propelled the anti-aircraft shells miles into the sky. I threw it at a large rock about 20 feet away. (I was a good pitcher.) It flew right toward the rock, and then at the last moment it veered away from the rock at an angle, which left us two boys scratching our heads. We then took the canister to our parents, who immediately called the police. A little while later a bomb-squad van pulled up and two guys got out with a bucket of

water and tiptoed over to where we had placed the canister. They picked it up and gently placed it in the bucket, took bucket with detonator and tiptoed back to the van and slowly drove away. That was the first of a couple very real miracles I have witnessed that saved my life. My angel was working overtime that day.

In the fall of 1968 when I was 22 years old, I went to sea on an old WWII submarine, the U.S.S. Blenny (SS 324), headed for Lisbon, Portugal, then Rota, Spain, and then the Mediterranean Sea for a wonderful three month patrol



I had grown up sailing small sailboats, so I loved it out at sea on a submarine, which spent most of its time on the surface crashing through immense waves (serving on that boat was like

being on a peace-time version of that German movie, "The Boat"). After I had gotten off active duty, sometime in the spring of 1970 I became a baptized member of the Worldwide Church of God. Although this small denomination was at that time an old covenant biased Sabbatarian Christian church, we were imbued with the Holy Spirit as a group and individually, even though many outside our fellowship didn't think so and labeled us a cult. We were cult-like, but decidedly not a cult. In the most simplistic way possible the apostle Paul defined a Christian as someone who has the indwelling Holy Spirit and is actively being led by this Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9,14).

So, as some denominations like to call it, I was born-again, or received the Holy Spirit at my baptism, or even before, looking back in time. I had a saving knowledge of God's Word then, and even more so now. Worldwide Church of God members knew their Bible from one end to the other, and we were a praying church as well (Mr. Armstrong was always saying a church walks forward on its knees). Herbert Armstrong laid a very good, and very thorough foundation for Sabbath-keeping Churches of God. But that is as far as he went. Foundations need buildings built upon them. Be sure to check out the Worldwide Church of God section and article to see what I mean by that.

From Sabbath to Sunday to Sabbath again

In 1986 Mr. Armstrong died, and Mr. Tkach Sr. took over the church, having been appointed by Mr. Armstrong a year or two before his death to succeed him. Then in the year 1995 this Sabbath-keeping Church of God went through a very painful and interesting experience. As purported to be "a better understanding of the Scriptures" this Sabbath-keeping Church of God with historic roots going back to the 300s AD said that "days of worship were an optional choice for believers." (To see the doctrinal/historic and somewhat literal connection between the Worldwide Church of God, the early Church, and the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God in the 1600s, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/earlychurch1.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/historycog1.htm>.) Mr. Tkach Sr. did not live past 1995 and the monumental doctrinal changes he brought the Worldwide Church of God into. As he was dying of cancer he appointed his son, Joe Tkach Jr. as the next hierarchal leader over the Worldwide Church of God. Under Joe

Tkach Jr.'s leadership Worldwide essentially ceased to be a Sabbath/Holy Day observing denomination by the year 2001. The whole painful experience that 89,000 Worldwide Church of God members went through is explained in the lead article in the Worldwide Church of God section of this website (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/wwcofgod.html>). Be sure to read that article to better understand the spiritual journey I made. Initially, I came through the doctrinal changes Joe Tkach Sr. made, so I now believed that Sunday observing Christians could also possess and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (I was soon to learn by direct experience and observation just how true that is, but I'm getting ahead of myself.) Under Joe Tkach Jr., at least from a member-level perspective, and maybe pastor-level perspective too, Worldwide had become so unstable in its beliefs that I sought spiritual nourishment elsewhere. I had been a member of this fellowship for about 30 years now, but very sadly their headquarters and many of their pastors had lost the ability to give a nourishing sermon, probably due to the fact that doctrinal beliefs within the Worldwide Church of God were changing at times, week by week. I also learned at a mini-conference for New England pastors (I helped run the sound system for that event) that Headquarters and thus the denomination was quietly, but very forcefully from the top down, drifting into Amillennialism and "replacement theology," which doctrinal eschatological interpretations I viewed and still view as being extremely inaccurate and having strong anti-Semitic bias that has contributed to anti-Semitism in Europe for 1700 years of 'Church history.' Quite naturally, as a hungry sheep, looking for a group that taught accurately from the Word of God, when a tiny Bible study that met on Sundays started up in the town I lived in, I started to attend. They taught a pre-millennial prophetic interpretation on prophecy which I was used to, and they also taught very effectively from an expositional format, teaching verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, through the whole Word of God. I attended their small Sunday Bible study for two and a half years, initially, and witnessed their astounding growth from 12 members to about 125 members. Then within the next four years they mushroomed to around 400 + members. I watched people coming in from the local area, casting off addictions and sins, and then over the years, I watched them grow in God's agape-love for others, becoming selfless Christians caring for the community in love and service for others. This church was a Calvary Chapel, affiliated with Pastor Chuck

Smith's Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California. (See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/smith.htm> to see how this recent Christian revival started in the early 1970s, started by God through Pastor Chuck Smith. Pastor Chuck just died in 2014.) What I came to realize by direct contact, observation and experience, was that the Holy Spirit could exist and actually indwell some Sunday-observing Christians and groups. All Sabbath-keeping Church of God believers, from their doctrinal stance and understanding don't believe Sunday-keepers can have the indwelling Holy Spirit. That is something the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God down through history didn't always believe was possible. It's a sincerely held doctrinal view, and for the most part no animosity is held toward Sunday-keepers, they just believe they're sincerely deceived, they don't believe they're "real Christians." But by direct observation within a loving Calvary Chapel congregation in my hometown, I could see people I knew keeping 9 out of the 10 Commandments, not just in the letter, but in the spirit, as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 5:17-48 (something not really possible without God's Holy Spirit). I spent 7.5 years in this local Calvary Chapel.

From Calvary Chapel to the Messianic Jews

But having been spiritually "brought up" in a Sabbath-keeping Church of God, I didn't feel totally comfortable with some of Calvary Chapel's secondary doctrines, and especially not keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days of Leviticus 23 (which interestingly enough, Calvary Chapels understand the prophetic/symbolic meaning of, just as we had been taught in Worldwide---they even understand that Jesus will return the Church in the Millennial Kingdom of God on earth back to Sabbath and Holy Day observance. That was a real pleasant surprise to me.) I had been quietly keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days on my own, not working on those days throughout my stay in Calvary Chapel. But I sought a church that would actively keep those days. An old exWCG friend who attended the same Calvary Chapel with me told me about a wonderful tiny Messianic Jewish congregation that met about 8 miles west of my town. I was soon to learn that God had been very busy restoring the Jewish branch of the Body of Christ, via the Messianic Jewish movement, which had really started to pick up steam around 1970, the same time-period when the Calvary Chapels got started under Pastor Chuck

Smith. Coincidence? The rabbis have a saying “With the things of God there is no such thing as coincidence.” So I started attending there for a couple years. They were a very wonderful, friendly and warm congregation. I learned enough from them and independent research to help me write the Messianic Jewish section of this website (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/messianicmovement.htm>). Their doctrinal understanding of the prophetic meaning of God’s Holy Days was quite similar to what Worldwide’s had been, but wasn’t a perfect match. I still wasn’t totally comfortable there.

Back To The Sabbath-keeping Churches of God

If you read that article about the Worldwide Church of God, you will see that after 1995 about 375 different, often squabbling, bickering Sabbath-keeping Churches of God denominations had formed, having split off of the old Worldwide Church of God. A close exWCG friend of mine I’d known for about 40 years ran a Sabbath-keeping Church of God house-church which was loosely affiliated with Fred Coulter’s Christian Biblical Church of God. I started attending to lend support to her family for reasons other than just wanting a place to attend on the Sabbath. I attended there for two years. I was sort of comfortable attending their tiny house-church, except that many in the group (as well as in Fred’s denomination) held to the old Worldwide Church of God belief that “Sunday-keeping ‘so-called’ Christians couldn’t possibly have the Holy Spirit indwelling them.” At the same time I was challenged to go into some pretty heavy research as to whether the Sabbath command had actually been abrogated in the Bible (what Constantine did in 325AD doesn’t count, only the Word of God counts to me). The article is in the WCG section of this site, more on that later. Because of my belief about Sunday-keepers having the ability (for whatever reason, I’m not totally sure) to have the indwelling Holy Spirit, I wasn’t too comfortable within this house-church and they weren’t that comfortable with me. After a couple years, though, their tiny house-church divided into two smaller house-churches, over some doctrinal differences. I went with the more independently-minded group, which was more accepting of the few members composing it, who all held somewhat differing beliefs (so we had to be accepting of minor doctrinal differences within the group). I discovered within

this tiny group two others, a husband and wife, who essentially believed just as I do about Sunday-keepers having the ability to have the Holy Spirit, for whatever reason. After a couple more years spent there, I followed this family into a local congregation of the United Church of God. Questions about unity in the Body of Christ, and especially within the terribly fractured Sabbath-keeping Church of God side of the Body of Christ have greatly concerned me of late, as I look for spiritual reasons why such disunity exists amongst people that essentially all believe the same things doctrinally. Articles on this theme will be coming up in the WCG section of the site from time to time, as unity is an issue close to my heart (it has been since the website started J). As how to explain the major dichotomy between Sabbath and Sunday-keepers having the Holy Spirit, I have repeatedly sought God for answers, and sought to find them in his Word. I think I have come close to some of the answers, discussed in two articles I wrote. You can read them at these links: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Has%20the%20Sabbath%20Been%20Abrogated.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/hebrews/Hebrews4-1-16.htm>. Part of the answer must revolve around God's sovereignty. These two articles don't totally solve the dichotomy, and it may never be solved this side of the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. I do know what I saw, observed, and experienced within those wonderfully warm, loving, spiritually obedient Christians in the Calvary Chapels, who have an understanding of God's Word par excellence. They believe, as we believe, that the Church Jesus Christ sets up in the Millennial Kingdom of God on earth will be both Sabbath and Holy Day observing (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophets/Zechariah/Zechariah4.htm> and scroll to Zechariah 14). Apart from a few other doctrinal differences, we have a lot in common. I do believe they have a far better method of preaching sermons, going expositively through the Word of God, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book. There is a lot we can learn from each other, that's for sure, if we'd only humble ourselves enough to do so. So that is the explanation of my personal journey From Sabbath to Sunday to Sabbath again. I'm currently attending a wonderful Messianic Jewish congregation in my hometown (in North Central MA), and I attend a congregation of the United Church of God from late Spring to early Fall when living in southern Maine. This website is totally non-denominational, and I am as well.

How This Site Came To Be And What It's For

The Lord has been inspiring me since 1995 to use some of my skills and talents in the area of editing, transcribing and writing on this website, which has been created for the express purpose of promoting spiritual growth and unity of purpose throughout the Body of Christ, and also to help promote personal, local church, national and international evangelism (getting the Gospel to the world). The idea for this website came from a deep desire to help nourish those members within the Worldwide Church of God while it was going through all those 'doctrinal changes', which ended up destroying it as a Sabbath-keeping Church of God. I was attempting to nourish them with transcripts of excellent Calvary Chapel sermons which several Calvary Chapel pastors had graciously given me permission to transcribe. I was attempting to nourish them with the same high quality nourishment I had received (and still receive) from God's Word through these Calvary Chapels. Sadly, it didn't do any good, as far as I can see. I have a lot of talents, such as being able to absorb spiritual knowledge like a sponge for 25 years in WCG, being able to take a lot of tiny facts and put them into a big picture, things like that, but all with the inspirational aid of the Holy Spirit, I can't take credit for any of it. I could never have created this website without God's help and inspiration. And if the thought of reading an excellent Calvary Chapel sermon offends some of my Sabbath-keeping Church of God brethren, if they use any quality Bible commentaries in their own studies, they had better throw them all out, ones by Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, Wesley, JC Ryle, J. Vernon McGee, John McArthur, and The Expositors Bible Commentary, the works, just throw them all out. Why? Because I have found these connective expository sermons I transcribe are basically very honest commentaries of God's Word. And having been in WCG for 25 years and having the Holy Spirit active within me, I can discern truth from error from a Sabbath-keeping perspective, and in my estimation, these commentary-like transcripts from the Calvary Chapels are about 98 percent truth, and about 2 percent error (from our Sabbath-keeping point of view, that is J). You can't get much better than that. (I often gain more spiritual nourishment and insight from these Calvary Chapel expository sermons than I receive from listening to the topical sermons being preached in the congregation I attend.) So if one is going to discriminate against the excellent commentary-like Calvary Chapel expository sermon/studies found on this website because you're from a

Sabbath/HolyDay observing Church of God, then you'd be sort of hypocritical not to throw out all those commentaries I just listed as well. Why? Because they, for the most part, were all written by Sunday-observers. I generally try to use material by permission and not fly the Jolly Roger. As such all material is labeled as to source and where to find full versions of it in print (especially books that are still in print, and cassette sermon tapes). In one case a pastor is letting me use his material under the condition that he and his church remain anonymous. Since a good number of the quality connective expository sermons from the gospels and epistles came from him, I most certainly am going to respect his wishes. So this website has been created to help nourish all those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, as well as to help anyone who may not know Jesus to come to an accurate knowledge of who he was and is, today and forever, and enter into an active relationship with him.

Sincerely, a brother in Christ,

Pete Benson

Should any of you sincerely start to question where you should attend, what church or part of the Body of Christ you should be a part of, you might want to read this article about choosing a church,

at: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/choosingachurch.htm>