



## ***What brings you to this article?***

Most of you have come to this article by reading through the *Early Church History* research article, and you are obviously interested in what that article was revealing. Rest assured, I'm not trying to start something, like a new church or anything like that. Although I am tossing these ideas around in the context of a church setting. I'm merely attempting to draw some logical conclusions to the evidence presented in that *Early Church History* research article, for it does raise some good questions. Most of you are coming from one of two groups, two entirely different parts of the Body of Christ. You could be Gentile Evangelical Christians who are interested in learning more about the Jewish roots of the Christian Church, or you could be members of the various Sabbath-keeping Churches of God (which came into existence during the demise of the Worldwide Church of God). Both groups seem to be very interested in the material presented in that research article, for differing reasons, to be sure. But for you Evangelical Christians, now having read the *Early Church History* article you have come to realize that the early Christian Church was predominantly Judeo-Christian, observing the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath and Holy Days of Leviticus 23 in a decidedly grace-oriented manner (as compared to the legalistic Pharisaic obedience of the scribes and Pharisees of the 1<sup>st</sup>

century in Jerusalem, which the apostle Paul condemned in his letter to the Galatians). So having digested the information in that article, it raises certain questions. I spent 7.5 years in a Sunday observing Calvary Chapel, and soon learned that they were obeying 9 out of the 10 Commandments to their very spirit-level and intent. This is not possible without the indwelling Holy Spirit. So, say you are one of those Christians, and now realize that the early Christian Church in both Judea and Asia Minor was observing the Sabbath and Holy Days of Leviticus 23 for nearly 300 years of its early history. Maybe you've also read that article asking the question and providing some answers, about whether the 24-hour Sabbath Command has been abrogated (at <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Has%20the%20Sabbath%20Been%20Abrogated.htm>). So you may be coming to the conclusion that believers who are observing 9 out of the 10 Commandments, maybe, just maybe ought to be observing all 10. You know, by your level of obedience that the Holy Spirit is active within you. So this is not a legalistic question, but more one about knowing God's will on this subject. Calvary Chapels all know, from their good understanding of Bible prophecy about the coming Kingdom of God, that both the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath and the Holy Days of Leviticus 23 will be observed by the Church during the Millennial Kingdom of God after Jesus Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. And now evidence has been presented showing the early Christian Church was doing the same. So, based on that evidence, you may be asking the question within your mind, *'Shouldn't we as believers be doing the same? We'll be observing them in the future, in God's Kingdom, with Jesus our King, and the early Church kept them, so why not now?'* You may also be asking yourself *'If I should decide I'd like to add to my Christian walk obedience to the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment (which includes God's Holy Days, cf. Leviticus 23), where would I attend church?'* For one, looking at the various Sabbath-keeping Church of God denominations, even though one of them is growing spiritually in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (and that would be *The United Church of God*), they all tend to be a bit legalistic (most of them *are very* legalistic). For them it's not *'Come as you are, accept Jesus into your life, and he will change you from the inside-out and give you the power to obey him,'* it's more with them like *'You can't come here until you are obeying the law of God,'* which folks, obviously that is impossible without God's Holy Spirit, and it's one reason their churches are so small, because their legalistic requirements are so large before baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. All

of these Sabbath-keeping Churches of God are hierarchal in structure, usually one leader at the top, and all giving subservience to him. United is presbyterian in its church government, which is still hierarchal in structure. The congregations within early Church were semi-autonomous, with the 12 apostles gently providing guidance and leadership when and where needed, but they mostly acted as evangelists, planting churches. So, I'm just mulling over the problems and possibilities for a believer whose tossing these ideas around, having realized some things. I'm not a church planter, I just enjoy being a part of the Work of God that nourishes the rest of the Body of Christ without regard to who they are.

*What Kind Of Church Would I Be Looking For?  
or, If I Could Make A Church, What Would It Be  
Like?*

Again, I'm just tossing around some ideas, because I've faced the exact same problem. As a matter of fact, I attend a United Church of God part of the year (and they're very Holy Spirit indwelt and inspired, and very friendly), but I also spend the other half of the year, fall through spring, attending a wonderful grace-oriented Messianic Jewish congregation. Between the two, I'm provided with a spiritual balance for what I am ultimately looking for. So what exactly am I looking for in a Sabbath-keeping Church of God? Again, this is just a mental exercise, I'm not trying to start one of these. I am assuming what I am looking for would be something similar to one of those early Judeo-Christian Churches of God of the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century, but plugged into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (dare I say a Sabbath/Holy Day observing Calvary Chapel?). Let's take this a little further. So we're in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the body of Christ has been given the huge responsibility to evangelize the whole world before Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming (Matthew 28:18-20). So #

**1. Evangelism:** this ideal semi-autonomous church would support the major international evangelistic organizations. This website has a proposal on how to do that, by the way (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/missionstatement.htm>).

That's just to give you some ideas to roll around in your head. The idea of local evangelism through good works is also explored in these articles, <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/wearesalt.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Questions.htm>.

Also the support of short-term missions is a viable option for

supporting evangelism (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/evangelism/Short-TermMissions.htm>). By the way, the Holy Day links on the next few pages describe the spiritual understanding the early Church attached to these days, days of worship God gave originally to the 12 tribes of Israel, the very days the early Church worshipped on during the first 290 years of their history. Supporting evangelism means preaching the Gospel. A good working knowledge of what the Gospel is, is essential (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/misc/WhatIsTheGospel%20.htm> ).

### *What Are Two More Distinctives This Church Should Have?*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Distinctive, Prayer:** One thing I've noticed about the Sabbath-keeping Church of God denominations (which came out of the Worldwide Church of God), they're all for the most part (except for *the United Church of God*) **static**, stuck in place with only some core members attending each congregation, many of whom came out of the original Worldwide Church of God. They're successfully "holding the fort" but not advancing in the first part of the Lord's great commission, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." They do have the second part right, in a Torah-observant manner, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." I really don't think this has anything to do with the fact that they are Torah-observant (legalistic) Sabbatarian. The Worldwide Church of God was this way, and boy through their evangelism did they grow in leaps and bounds. I do think this has everything to do with the lack of concerted group-prayer within their congregations and services. They have the Holy Spirit richly evident within their members, and they have a sound biblical understanding. But the Holy Spirit isn't drawing new members, new converts out of Satan's world and into their congregations. They remain as they are, tiny little Sabbatarian Church of God denominations, tiny remnants of the early Churches of God of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, yet not dynamic, not growing and expanding in new members.

#### *The Power of Group-Prayer*

Now let's look at the power of prayer. Jesus said this to the disciples giving them a very important principle in prayer. This

is what makes group-prayer so very powerful and vital for our congregations. Group-prayer in the name of Jesus, prayed by Holy Spirit indwelt believers in Jesus, can pull down the very power of God from on high to accomplish what we are helpless to accomplish---which includes unlocking the mind of a deceived, blinded person of this present evil world, bringing that person to Christ. Let's see what Jesus said. **Matthew 18:19-20, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."** In the realm of prayer, that has to be one of the most powerful and important passages in the Bible. And yet so few churches, so very few congregations take proper advantage of this prayer-law set in place by Jesus. Some vital principles about group-prayer are explained on this link: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/prayer-teamessentials.htm>. A whole church congregation in Brooklyn, New York has successfully applied these principles. It grew from 25 members (who were ready to close the church doors and give up) to over 4,000 regular attending members. Now while it's true, God isn't into the numbers game, quantity without quality, there is no reason why a sound ministry cannot receive the blessings of God and be large. Pastor Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle where this miracle of prayer occurred, writes about this in his book "*FRESH WIND, FRESH FIRE*." While I was part of a tiny Sabbath/Holy Day observing house-church, I got the woman who oversaw it (she in a sense was the Elder of that house-church, loosely associated with Fred Coulter's *Christian Biblical Church of God*) to do a spiritual experiment and the two of us started up a prayer-group after everyone else had left the house. We expanded it to some of the other members as time went on. While I was a part of it, we got 17 major prayer requests answered, some of them just about instantly. I wrote a couple articles detailing this for the benefit of the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God in the Worldwide Church of God section of this site, at: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Prayer-groupGuidelines.htm> and for family prayer <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/FamilyPrayer-group%20guideline.htm> So in this imaginary church I'd make prayer, effective prayer, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Distinctive. Some of the things we prayed about are listed at that link, and the astounding answers we received. Someone once said "*Prayer begets revival, which begets more prayer.*" It must not be



overlooked that prayer, this group-prayer within a congregation like this, will also draw believers from other parts of the Body of Christ into a congregation like this. There is a whole section on prayer in this website, at: <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/bibleway.htm>.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Distinctive, Days of Worship, Sabbath & Holy**

**Days:** The third major distinctive of this imaginary church are the Sabbath and Holy Days (of Leviticus 23), presumably as the early New Testament churches of God kept them. When properly understood, the Biblical symbolism of these days, whether it be historic or prophetic, is far more spiritually relevant to the overall plan of salvation God details in his Word than the Gentile days of worship (Sunday/Christmas/Easter). When properly understood, they are far superior, as long as those who are observing them do not develop an attitude of superiority toward those who do not choose them as their days of worship. ***The value is in what they teach and represent.*** But God hates pride, especially the type of pride that often accompanies obedience. We believers often tend to look down upon the unsaved world, when in fact we ought to pity them and be praying for their salvation. When those who observe God's Holy Days and Sabbath look down upon Sunday/Christmas/Easter worshipping Christians, God hates that equally as much. He hates pride in all its forms, and he hates it especially in his children, because it hurts them spiritually. So, just because these days of worship apparently have more spiritual content and meaning within them when properly understood, don't get arrogant or prideful in your observance of them.

#### *You're Not Alone*

On the other hand, do not feel that you are all alone in your grace-oriented observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days, should you choose them as your days of worship. The Lord God has just, within the past 46 years (since 1970), restored the Messianic Jewish branch of the Body of Christ (to upwards of a million Jewish believers in Yeshua, Jesus). And they all to the last man, woman and child observe these days, and most of them in a non-Torah observant manner. That means, they look upon their Sunday/Christmas/Easter observing brothers in Christ as genuine believers in Jesus, and not as "false Christians" (as the Sabbath-keeping Church of God denominations tend to do). The historic and prophetic meaning

of the Holy Days of Leviticus 23 is a huge subject, with their various themes running throughout the Bible. They represent and symbolize the entire plan of salvation, from Jesus Christ's redemptive death, burial and resurrection, to the birth of the New Testament Church and the subsequent Church Age, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ and removal of Satan and his demons from earth, to the Millennial Kingdom of God, right up to the creation of the new heavens and new earth and the coming of the New Jerusalem down to the new earth, pictured in Revelation 21. So, what does the Sabbath day represent, what huge spiritual principal does it symbolize? See this expository study on Hebrews 4 for the answer. It will amaze you. see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/hebrews/Hebrews4-1-16.htm>. To get started on the symbolic meaning of God's Holy Days of Leviticus 23, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/Holydayshadows.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/Feast%20of%20Weeks.htm> and for the Fall Holy Days, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/E-Mails/June%2014/FallHolyDays-short.htm>.

### *Be Sensitive To Other's Beliefs*

Because this imaginary grace-oriented Sabbath-keeping church will probably have and attract some members from the various Sabbath-keeping Church of God denominations, and those people adhere to the dietary laws of Leviticus 11, which are the Bible's health laws, essentially (even proven by modern medical science), within these church congregations (we're speaking imaginary, of course folks, this is a mental exercise on our part, no such church to my knowledge exists, and I'm not trying to start one), again, within these church congregations, all should adhere to those dietary laws while they are actively fellowshiping within the congregation. What you "allow" for yourself in your own home is your own business, as long as it doesn't offend others (cf. Romans 14). As far as they being health laws (God designed all the animals) shellfish have been recently proven to have trace elements of a powerful dioxin that is bad for the kidneys, pork is laced with fat inbetween the muscle fibers that cooking doesn't remove, which leads to cardiovascular disease, and the list goes on and on. They do appear to be more than mere ceremonial laws for Israel in the Torah, but appear to be very powerful health laws. You might say it falls in line with the question 'Is it a sin to smoke?' Well,

it's harming your body, which Paul said is a temple for the Holy Spirit to reside in. Is eating food that may be bad for you a sin? Same answer. You decide. Following the Holy Days of Leviticus 23 commands that all leavening be put out of your homes during the Days of Unleavened Bread, it is part of the Holy Day season requirements, and the Messianic Jews do the same. The lessons are powerfully spiritual. These days of worship are quite distinctive and although you are worshipping on them in a grace-oriented manner, if you choose them as your days of worship, they are to be taken seriously as God laid them out. You are not playing church, just as the Messianic Jews are not playing church. You are worshipping God on the days of worship the early Church worshipped God on, and on the days of worship the Church in the Millennial Kingdom of God will worship on. As a matter of fact, the whole Old Testament Torah will be the Constitution for all nations existing during the Millennial Kingdom of God on earth under Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 5:17-19).

**4<sup>th</sup> Distinctive:** There is a 4<sup>th</sup> Distinctive I feel is really important, the type of sermon preaching. Calvary Chapels excel in their nourishing connective expository preaching style. To save repeating a long explanation, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/ConnectiveExpositoryTA.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/pom/philofmin.htm>

## ***Statement of Beliefs for this imaginary grace-oriented Sabbath-keeping Church of God***

**There is one God (Elohim), comprised of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. (Personally, I am not a Trinitarian, but I believe the Holy Spirit is in some way a part of what makes up God.) This "one God" is defined in the Old Testament in the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the LORD God is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). God in Genesis 1 is called Elohim, and in Genesis 1:26 God, Elohim said "Let us, make man in our image." Adam and Eve were created one flesh, and as the apostle Paul indicated, it is the spirit in man, their human spirits intertwining in a married couple, that really creates this "one flesh." This is a direct type and picture of the Triune God, pictured between every married**



couple. Perhaps this is why God hates divorce so much. (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/TheHolySpirit.htm>)

**God the Father:** See John 6:27b; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:1; Rev. 3:5, 21; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; Matt. 6:9, 32; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:14; 5:17-26; 6:28-46; Rom. 8:14-15.

**God the Son, Jesus Christ:** Jesus Christ (Hebrew: *Yeshua haMeschiach*) is God the Son. As John pointed out in John 1:1-14, Jesus was the pre-existent One called *the Logos* or Word, who became flesh. This very Logos was the one called Yahweh in the Old Testament, as Jesus himself admitted to seeing and talking with Abraham, and stated “before Abraham was, I am”: (John 8:58; Exodus 3:13-14). Jesus was Yahweh dwelling in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness of Sinai with Israel, and in Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus has existed, like God the Father and the Holy Spirit, eternally (Psalm 110:1, cf. Hebrews 1:13; Isaiah 9:6-7). As John points out in 1<sup>st</sup> John, those who teach and believe Jesus is just a good person, and not God the Son, come in the flesh, eternally existent, are false Christians. The Old Testament prophecies prove who Jesus of Nazareth is (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophecies/1stcoming.htm>).

**The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit (Hebrew: *Ruach HaKodesh*) is first introduced in Genesis 1:2b, where Elohim describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God moving upon the waters. The Holy Spirit indwelt Old Testament individuals and leaders such as righteous Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, king David, Solomon, Hezekiah and all the holy Prophets. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus as the “Comforter,” which he gave to his disciples after his resurrection in John 20, and to all believers afterward, from Acts 2 onward. The Holy Spirit empowers us (Acts 1:8), seals us for eternal life (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). If we have not the Spirit, we are none of his (Rom. 8:9). The Holy Spirit leads us and teaches us (John 14:15-18, 21-23, 26; 16:7-11, 13-14. Rom. 8:14-17). Acts 2:38-39 says “Repent, be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.” God used the Holy Spirit to create

the heavens and the earth, and the creation described in Genesis 1 was done through Christ by the Holy Spirit. The actual doctrine titled "the Trinity" was not initially taught in the early Church, but was teased out of the Scriptures by the proto-Catholic church toward the end of the first 300 years of the actual Church's history. It basically was a doctrine promoted by the church that became the Roman Catholic Church under Constantine. The Trinity doctrine was used to help identify the Judeo-Christian Churches in Asia Minor, so they could be extertimanted. That is why the Torah-observant Sabbatarian Churches of God, genuine remnants of these early Judeo-Christians, do not accept the Trinity doctrine, but call the Holy Spirit "the power of God." John nowhere identifies true believers from false by acceptance of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the God-head, but neither does he anywhere call the Holy Spirit a person, per se. The early Church tended to believe the Holy Spirit was in some unexplained way a part of God, not just *the power of God*. The Holy Spirit alone makes the work of Christ effective to individual sinners, enabling them to turn to God from their sin and to trust in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit makes them increasingly Christ-like in character and behavior, and gives them power for witnessing to the world. The Holy Spirit is apparently omnipresent throughout the whole entire universe, holding physical matter together at the atomic and sub-atomic level. This is what makes "God" omnipresent, and in ultimate control of the entire physical universe. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/TheHolySpirit.htm>

**The Word of God:** We believe that the written Word of God (the Bible) is the true revelation of God to mankind (as written in it's original Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew texts), and as such is infallible. What is fallible is our total understanding of it. The Bible proves itself through fulfilled prophecies, found throughout it, as one compares when a particular Bible Prophet lived and wrote and seeing the fulfillment of those prophecies hundreds and even thousands of years later in the secular history books. To see how this works, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/ProofOfTheBible-FulfilledProphecy.htm>

**The Second Coming of Jesus Christ:** We believe in the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ to physically establish the

Kingdom and government of God on the earth, headquartered in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-15, esp. verse 9). As such the “Church” is to be a “John the Baptist” type work, heralding the Gospel of salvation, which includes a message of Jesus Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> coming to establish his Kingdom and government on earth (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophecies/2ndcoming.htm> and

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/kingdomofgod/mkg1.htm>).

As such we believe in and teach a pre-millennial view of Bible prophecy, based on more or less a literal interpretation of both Old Testament and New Testament prophecies.

**Secondary beliefs to this imaginary church:** The secondary nature of many of the doctrines we held, and some of us still believe to be true, are not fundamental to the core beliefs of the Christian Faith (as contained in the Gospel). Nonetheless, most of us tend to believe these are true, and form a distinctive of this imaginary fellowship. We’re not about to let belief or non-belief in them divide us. Most of these beliefs are found in the Jewish and Messianic Jewish prophetic interpretations of what the Holy Days of Leviticus 23 represent, symbolize (for some of these, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/Holydayshadows.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/destiny/DestinyOfMankind1.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/plaintruth/battle.htm>

**British Israelism:** The individual is free to believe or disbelieve in this doctrine, but it is not officially taught by this fellowship. If any tenants of this doctrine are true, this will become self-evident as the phases of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ unfold. It is better to wait than argue, as with all secondary doctrine. Freedom to believe what one wishes in the secondary areas exists within the congregation. But if disagreement is sufficient to cause schisms, those disagreeing individuals should find a true Christian fellowship that better suits their beliefs, and will be encouraged to do so by the congregational leader. For instance, there is much disagreement as to whether *Global Warming* is true or not. It just seems to fit some specific Old Testament prophecies, and points in that direction. But it is not “gospel” truth. The same is true with current events in the news, some of which, when viewed down the

**road, may actually be elements of prophecy being fulfilled, while some may not be that are considered to be right now. Use wisdom and keep an open mind in forming your own set of secondary beliefs, and respect the right of others within the Body of Christ for their right to believe as they do, both within this fellowship, and without.**

**Name of the church:** The early congregations of the apostle Paul were often called “churches of God,” such as “the church of God which is at Corinth.” It is sort of the Biblical name for the Church, and their congregations as a whole. It would not be wrong to call the congregation, or house-church, “the Church of God which meets at Pete’s.” Thus ends this Doctrinal Statement of Beliefs for this imaginary church. I had fun doing this.

Related links:

A general article about what a perfect church would be like:

[http://www.unityinchrist.com/perfect\\_church/ThePerfectChurch.htm](http://www.unityinchrist.com/perfect_church/ThePerfectChurch.htm)

The Sabbath-keeping Churches of God are remnants of the early Judeo-Christian Churches of God that have survived 1700 years of intense persecution from the Roman Catholic Church, from 325AD onward. They’ve held fast, and ought to be given the utmost respect for that. For some of their history, see

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/revivals.htm>

Oh, by the way, should God call any of my real and adoptive family, I’ll probably start a house-church for them based on these ideas I’ve been tossing around and mulling over---that’s if they can put up with my attempts at preaching connective expository sermons :)