

Development of the Fundamental Beliefs Church of God, a Worldwide Association

The current 20 fundamental beliefs are based on two historical documents:

1938 Fundamental Beliefs by Herbert W. Armstrong. This article contains 16 fundamental beliefs as first written by Mr. Armstrong in 1938. This is the basis for the fundamental beliefs of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association.

1946 Addition to Fundamental Beliefs by Herbert W. Armstrong. In 1946, after moving to Southern California, Mr. Armstrong added four doctrines to the list of fundamental beliefs. These four were (1) the Sabbath, observed from sunset to sunset; (2) the annual holy days; (3) clean and unclean meats; and (4) restriction on military service.

From the above documents, the final form of the Fundamental Beliefs was developed.

The following statements represent the fundamental beliefs of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association. These beliefs, based upon Holy Scripture, **do not constitute the entire body of beliefs of the Church** but do represent its fundamental or foundational beliefs.

1. The Godhead

God the Father is an eternally existing Spirit, a perfect, personal Being of supreme love, intelligence, knowledge, justice, power and authority. It was through the Word (who became Jesus Christ) that He created all things that exist. The Father is the Source of life, the Sustainer of the universe through His power. There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, who has eternally existed. He came to earth to do the will of the Father. He is the Messiah, the Christ and the divine Son of the living God, who was born of human flesh to the virgin Mary. God is an eternal family currently consisting of the Father and the Son. Both the Father and Son are involved in the creative work of expanding this family by bringing many children (sons and daughters) to glory. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and the Spirit of life eternal, not a separate entity or being.

Scriptural support: Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:15; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 2:10; 2 Corinthians 6:18.

2. The Angelic Realm and Satan

The angelic realm, consisting of various types of spirit beings, was created by God. A former "covering cherub," Lucifer, rebelled against God's authority and became Satan the devil. As Lucifer, he influenced one-third of the angels to follow him. Those who followed him are now evil spirits known as demons. Satan the devil is the adversary of both God and mankind. He and his demons influence mankind to reject God and His law. These evil spirits have been allowed temporary dominion over the earth and have deceived the majority of human beings. The angels who remained faithful to God serve as ministering spirits to those responding to God's calling.

Scriptural support: Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 8:12; 2 Timothy 2:26; John 12:31; 16:11; Revelation 12:4, 9; 20:1-3, 7, 10; Leviticus 16:21-22; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 2:2; Hebrews 1:14.

3. Humanity

Human beings, both male and female, were created in the image of God with the potential to partake of God's divine nature as children in His eternal family. Humans are mortal beings relying on the breath of life and are subject to corruption and decay. They do not have an immortal soul nor do they possess eternal life at this time. Eternal life is a gift of God, given only to those who accept His calling and the terms and conditions expressed in the Scriptures. God gave Adam and Eve the choice of eternal life through obedience to Him or death through sin. Adam and Eve succumbed to sin by disobeying God. As a result, death entered the world. All humans have sinned and are therefore subject to death. In God's plan it is appointed for man to "die once."

Scriptural support: Genesis 1:26; 2 Peter 1:4; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23; 8:16-17.

4. The Purpose of Human Life

God's purpose for human beings is to add them as children to His eternal family. While it is clear that eternal life is a gift from God, He expects His children to respond to His calling, develop righteous character by overcoming sin, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. When Christ returns to this earth, these faithful humans will be born as spirit beings into the family of God and will reign on earth as kings and priests with Christ.

Scriptural support: John 1:12; Romans 6:15-16; 8:14-17, 30; Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 1:6; 3:5; 5:10.

5. The Word of God

Scripture, both the Old and the New Testaments of the Holy Bible, is the Word of God and contains God's complete revelation of His will and plan for humanity. Directly inspired by God in thought and word, it is perfect and infallible as originally written. Scripture is the supreme and final authority for faith and life. It is the source for doctrine and the foundation for all truth.

Scriptural support: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 10:35; 17:17.

6. Sin and God's Law

Sin is the transgression of the law of God, which is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good. God's law is based upon the two great principles of love toward God and love toward neighbor. The Ten Commandments expound these foundational principles of God's law of love. Breaking any part of God's law brings upon a person the penalty of death. Those who love God and seek eternal life will strive to keep God's commandments. Obedience to God's law produces

happiness and peace of mind. Disobedience to God's law produces misery and strife and ultimately eternal death.

Scriptural support: 1 John 3:4; 5:3; Matthew 5:17-19; 19:17-19; 22:37-40; James 2:10-11; Romans 2:5-9; 6:23; 7:12-14; 13:8-10.

7. The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so humans may have eternal life. In God's perfect righteousness, the penalty for our sins must be paid in full. After living a human life without sin, even though tempted in all points as we are, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died as the perfect sacrifice for all the sins of humanity. As God in the flesh and the Creator of all humanity, His death makes it possible for each person and humanity as a whole to be forgiven of their sins, released from the death penalty that comes upon all because of sin and reconciled to God the Father. This plan of salvation for mankind existed from the foundation of the world.

Scriptural support: John 1:18; 3:16; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 1:16-17, 22; Hebrews 4:15; 9:15; 10:12; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Revelation 5:9; 13:8.

8. Three Days and Three Nights

Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the Father after His body lay for three days and three nights in the grave. The length of time that He was in the grave was the only sign He gave to prove He was the Messiah. The resurrection of Jesus Christ made immortality possible for mortal human beings. After His resurrection, Christ ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest, elder Brother and Advocate with the Father.

Scriptural support: 1 Peter 1:17-21; 3:22; Matthew 12:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:53; 2 Timothy 1:10; John 20:17; Hebrews 2:10-15; 8:1; 12:2; 1 John 2:1.

9. Repentance

Repentance is a gift from God—a gift that is necessary for salvation and a proper relationship with God. All who wish to be pardoned from the death penalty that comes through sin must genuinely repent of their sins, fully surrender their lives to God and obey His commandments. They must by faith accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, their Lord and Master, their High Priest and their soon coming King. These individuals are justified, forgiven of their sins as an act of divine grace, being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands. At baptism they become part of the spiritual Body of Christ, the true Church of God.

Scriptural support: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:29-32; 2 Corinthians 7:10; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7; 2:7-10; Romans 3:21-26; 5:5; 6:6; 8:4, 9-10, 14; 13:10; Jeremiah 33:8; John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Philippians 2:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:25.

10. Water Baptism

Water baptism by immersion after repentance pictures the forgiveness of sin, the burial of the old man and the beginning of a new life in Christ. Through prayer and the laying on of hands following baptism, repentant believers receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and become part of the spiritual Body of Jesus Christ. By yielding to and being led by the Holy Spirit, those who have repented and been baptized experience a true change in life, attitude and way of thinking.

Scriptural support: John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 8:14-17; 19:5-6; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

11. The Seventh-Day Sabbath

The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God, and on this day humans are commanded to rest from their labors and worship Him. Established and blessed by God at creation, the seventh day of the week begins at sunset on Friday and continues until sunset on Saturday. The Sabbath is an identifying sign and a perpetual covenant between God and His people. True Christians follow the example of Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church in observing the seventh-day Sabbath.

Scriptural support: Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 58:13; Hebrews 4:4-10; Mark 1:21; 2:27-28; 6:2; Acts 13:42-44; 17:2; 18:4; Luke 4:31; 1 John 2:4-6.

12. The Passover

The Passover is to be observed in the evening, at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan (Abib) in accordance with the Hebrew calendar as preserved by the Jews. The New Covenant Passover symbols instituted by Jesus Christ on the night before He died—foot-washing, unleavened bread and wine—are part of this service. Christians follow Jesus Christ's instruction and example by observing the Passover annually as a memorial of His death.

Scriptural support: Exodus 12; Matthew 26:18-30; John 13:1-15; Luke 22:1-20; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7.

13. The Festivals of God

The seven annual festivals are special times of assembly. Given to ancient Israel by God through Moses and kept by Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church, they are commanded to be observed today. These festivals reveal God's plan of salvation for mankind. They will continue to be observed during the Millennium.

Scriptural support: Colossians 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:8; 15:22-26; 16:8; James 1:18; Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23; Luke 2:41-42; 22:14-15; John 7:2, 8, 10, 14; Acts 2:1; 18:21; 20:16; Zechariah 14:16-19.

14. Biblical Food Laws

Meat identified as “unclean” in the Bible is not to be consumed by humans. Lists of “clean” and “unclean” meats are found in God’s instructions concerning what should and should not be eaten.

Scriptural support: Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14.

15. Tithing

Tithing is commanded by God. Through tithing, one honors God with his material goods and assists in preaching the gospel, providing for the physical needs of the Church and caring for needy members. A special festival tithe makes it possible for one to attend the commanded festivals of God.

Scriptural support: Proverbs 3:9-10; Genesis 14:17-20; Numbers 18:21; Malachi 3:8; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

16. Military Service and War

Because of Jesus’ teaching that we are to love our enemies and the instruction of God to respect human life, Christians should not serve in the military. The biblical teaching is that if anyone even hates his brother, he is a murderer. Being in the military would create problems keeping the Sabbath and holy days. Because Christians are to obey God rather than men, they need to maintain jurisdiction over their lives. Christians must be careful not to let human issues and concerns distract them from their role as ambassadors in God’s coming Kingdom. Christ declared that His Kingdom was not of this world; therefore His servants would not fight.

Scriptural support: Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-22; Luke 6:27-35; John 18:36; 1 Corinthians 7:21-23; Acts 5:29; 1 John 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

17. The Church of God

The Church of God is a spiritual body composed of believers who have and are being led by the Holy Spirit. The Church is not a denomination, a human organization or a building but the people God is working with in any age. The biblical name of this church is the “Church of God.” Its mission is to preach the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations and to make disciples of all who respond to God’s calling, assisting them in their spiritual development and reconciliation to God.

Scriptural support: Acts 2:38-39, 47; 20:28; Romans 8:14; 14:19; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 12:27; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 5:18-20; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5; Mark 16:15; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; John 6:44, 65; 17:11.

18. Promises to Abraham

God's fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, a man called the father of the faithful, represents God's enduring faithfulness and provides important keys to understanding biblical prophecy. As promised, God multiplied Abraham's descendants so that Abraham literally became the father of many nations. God materially prospered his descendants: Isaac, Jacob (also called Israel) and Jacob's 12 sons who were the progenitors of the 12 tribes of ancient Israel. Descendants of these peoples continue as prominent nations today (particularly the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh) because they have inherited the physical blessings of Abraham. In addition to the physical blessings promised Abraham, another promise was made by God to this patriarch—a promise of salvation through his Seed (Jesus Christ), which all people, regardless of their physical lineage, may receive. All who respond to God's calling belong to Christ and are considered Abraham's seed. Understanding these promises made to Abraham provides a more accurate understanding of the world today and the messages of the prophets.

Scriptural support: Genesis 12:1-3; 32:28; Psalm 111:1-10; Romans 4:12, 16; 9:7-8; Galatians 3:16, 28-29.

19. The Return of Jesus Christ to Earth

At the end of this present evil age, Jesus Christ will visibly return to earth to establish the Kingdom of God and reign forever and ever, beginning with a 1,000-year period commonly called the Millennium. He will sit upon the throne of David, ruling all nations as King of Kings and serving as High Priest to all who recognize Him as their Lord and Master. As prophesied, He will at this time restore all things and establish the Kingdom of God forever.

Scriptural support: Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 18, 27; Matthew 24:30, 44; Revelation 1:7; 11:15; 19:16; 20:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; John 14:3; Isaiah 9:7; 40:10-11; Hebrews 7:24; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 1:11; 3:21; 15:16.

20. The Resurrections

Being resurrected from the grave is the only hope of eternal life for deceased human beings. The Scriptures reveal that there will be three distinct future resurrection periods for those who have died. At the return of Jesus Christ, a first resurrection to eternal life will take place for all of God's faithful servants who have died throughout the ages. These individuals will rise from their graves and, along with living humans who have the Holy Spirit residing within them, will be changed into immortal, spirit beings. After the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth, there will be a second resurrection to physical life for the majority of all people who have ever lived. These people will then have their first and only opportunity to hear, understand and respond to God's calling. If they become converted, they will receive eternal life. There will be a third resurrection for the incorrigible to a brief period of consciousness, in which they will receive the righteous judgment of God—their destruction in the lake of fire. This resurrection is reserved for those who have rejected God's offer of salvation, reaping eternal death, also called the second death, from which there is no further resurrection.