

The Scriptural Identity of the True Church of God

Introduction

According to Christian scripture, the true church of God—the living spiritual body of Jesus Christ—is defined not by physical structures, vast corporate size, or the rolling evolution of human tradition, but by an unwavering alignment with a divine blueprint. In a religious landscape fragmented by thousands of differing factions, the New Testament outlines specific, non-negotiable spiritual, doctrinal, and behavioral identifiers. The Bible establishes that this body of believers is not tasked with fabricating new truth, nor is it given the authority to modify the laws established by the Creator. Rather, it serves as an enduring guardian of a pre-existing faith. To identify this biblical assembly, scripture provides clear parameters, demonstrating that the true church possesses a distinct name, maintains an uncompromised devotion to God's literal word, and is visibly recognizable by its faithful adherence to the biblical calendar—specifically the seventh-day Sabbath and the annual Holy Days commanded in Leviticus 23.

The Scriptural Blueprint: Doctrinal Foundation and Identification

1. The Name of the Divine Assembly

Throughout the pages of the New Testament, scripture consistently reveals that God's true people are called out and gathered under a specific, divinely mandated title. Instead of being branded by geographical locations, human leaders, or isolated doctrinal distinctives, the assembly bears the name of its Creator and Owner: the Church of God. The Greek term used for this group is *ekklēsia*, meaning a 'called-out assembly.' This dynamic title appears at least twelve separate times across the epistles, reinforcing that it serves as a core scriptural marker. The apostles applied this name both when addressing isolated, local congregations and when referring to the universal body of believers collectively:

- 'To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus...' (1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:1)
- 'Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.' (1 Corinthians 10:32)
- '...because I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.' (Galatians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 15:9)
- '...to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.' (Acts 20:28)

This name carries explicit structural authority, serving as the household definition for order and standard conduct (1 Timothy 3:5, 1 Timothy 3:15, 1 Corinthians 11:16, 1 Corinthians 11:22, 1 Thessalonians 2:14, 2 Thessalonians 1:4). It signals ownership, emphasizing that the assembly belongs uniquely to the Father and operates strictly under His governance.

2. The Pillar and Ground of Truth vs. Human Tradition

In 1 Timothy 3:15, the church of the living God is structurally described as 'the pillar and ground of the truth.' A pillar elevates a weight, and a ground provides an immovable foundation. This means the true church does not possess legislative authority to alter divine commands; its sole mandate is to uphold, support, and preserve the unchanged Word of God. Jesus Christ defined this standard with absolute precision during His high priestly prayer: 'Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth' (John 17:17).

Because God's Word is the absolute standard of truth, any custom or religious practice must be weighed against it. Jesus heavily condemned the religious authorities of His era for attempting to supplant the immutable instructions of scripture with human traditions. In Mark 7:7-9, He warned, 'And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men... All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.' Consequently, the true church stands distinct from mainstream systems by systematically rejecting pagan-rooted or humanly devised religious innovations, maintaining an unswerving commitment to the literal commands of scripture.

3. The Preservation of the Sabbaths and Holy Days of Leviticus 23

The primary mechanism by which the true church demonstrates its submission to God's Word is its historical and continuous keeping of the biblical calendar. Leviticus 23:2 states, 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.' Scripture never labels these days as temporary 'feasts of the Jews' or cultural 'laws of Moses'; they are defined as God's personal, eternal property. These appointments form a magnificent prophetic outline of Christ's multi-staged master plan of salvation for humanity, and the true church observes them precisely as commanded:

- **The Weekly Seventh-Day Sabbath:** The seventh day of the week is instituted as an everlasting holy convocation, serving as a perpetual sign between God and His sanctified people. Christ declared Himself 'Lord of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:28), and the New Testament church consistently met on this day (Acts 13:42-44, Acts 18:4).
- **The Passover:** Kept annually on the evening of the 14th day of the first biblical month (Nisan), this memorial marks the foundation of the calendar. Jesus did not abolish the Passover; rather, during His final meal on the night He was betrayed, He transitioned its symbols from the blood of a slain lamb to the unleavened bread and wine, representing His sinless body and supreme sacrifice (Luke 22:15-20). The apostle Paul commanded the Gentile-majority church in Corinth to continue keeping it on that exact anniversary night (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread:** A seven-day festival immediately following Passover, representing the believer's call to purge the 'leaven' of sin out of their life. Paul explicitly ordered the New Testament church to observe this feast, writing, 'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8).

- **The Feast of Pentecost:** Celebrated fifty days from the Sabbath during Unleavened Bread, this holy day marks the literal birth of the New Testament Church of God, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the assembled believers (Acts 2:1).
- **The Feast of Trumpets:** The first day of the seventh biblical month, picturing the dramatic future return of Jesus Christ to the earth at the sound of the great trumpet blast (Revelation 11:15).
- **The Day of Atonement:** A solemn day of fasting, symbolizing the binding of Satan, the complete cleansing of sin, and the reconciliation of humanity with the Creator.
- **The Feast of Tabernacles:** A joyful seven-day harvest festival picturing the future thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ (the Millennium) on the earth. Jesus actively traveled to Jerusalem to observe this feast, commanding His followers to do the same (John 7:2-14).
- **The Last Great Day (Eighth Day):** Observed immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles on the eighth day, picturing the final judgment and the grand, ultimate resurrection of the billions of humans who died across the ages without ever receiving a genuine opportunity to hear and understand God's truth (John 7:37).

By observing this complete framework, the true church does not just honor the past; it walks step-by-step through a living prophecy of the future.

4. The End-Time Identity: Commandments and Prophecy

The book of Revelation provides an explicit prophetic profile of the faithful remnant of the true church under severe trial at the end of the age. Revelation 12:17 states, 'And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' Revelation 19:10 defines the latter marker directly: 'For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

These two traits represent a unified, inseparable identity. The true church is identified by its total obedience to God's literal laws, including the Fourth Commandment regarding the Sabbath and the festival statutes of Leviticus 23. This law-keeping is directly coupled with the active 'spirit of prophecy'—a deep, spiritually revealed understanding of end-time events. Because the church keeps the Holy Days, it possesses the prophetic key that unlocks the chronological timeline of human destiny, recognizing exactly how and when Christ's return will unfold.

5. The Structural Continuity of God's Assemblies

The relationship between God and His called-out people did not originate in the New Testament. Scripture meticulously documents that the New Covenant Church of God is the direct spiritual continuation and structural expansion of the ancient congregation of Israel. When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek centuries before Christ (the Septuagint), the translators utilized the exact Greek word *ekklesia* to represent the Hebrew word *qahal*, which defined the collective assembly of Israel.

This continuity is explicitly highlighted by Stephen in Acts 7:38 during his testimony before the Sanhedrin, where he refers to Moses and the Israelite camp at Mount Sinai as 'the church [ekklesia] in the wilderness.' God called Israel out of the physical bondage of Egypt, just as He calls His New Testament church out of the spiritual bondage of this present world. The exact

architectural and structural mirroring between these two historical eras can be clearly viewed in the following table:

Attribute	The Church in the Wilderness (Israel)	The New Testament Church of God
The Foundation	Built structurally upon 12 Tribes	Built structurally upon 12 Apostles
The Identity	Called the 'Congregation of the Lord'	Called the 'Church of God' throughout the Epistles
The Calendar	Commanded to keep the Sabbath and Feast Days (Leviticus 23)	Commanded to preserve the Sabbath and Feast Days (1 Corinthians 5:8)
The Core Law	Given the Ten Commandments inscribed on tablets of stone	Given the Ten Commandments inscribed upon the heart by the Holy Spirit
The Ultimate Goal	Traveling physically toward a physical Promised Land	Traveling spiritually toward the literal Kingdom of God

Conclusion

In summary, the scriptural portrait of the true church of God stands in sharp, uncompromising contrast to the traditions and syncretism of modern mainstream Christianity. By evaluating the collective witness of scripture, an unbroken historical line emerges that spans across human history. The true church is not defined by external novelty, popularity, or cultural adaptation, but by absolute fidelity to its original instructions. It is explicitly identified by its biblical name—the Church of God—proving its submission to the Father's ultimate authority. It stands as the pillar and ground of the truth, boldly elevating the pure Word of God over the convenience of human customs. Most visibly, it is defined by its steadfast, annual keeping of the weekly Sabbath and the seven annual Holy Days recorded in Leviticus 23, utilizing the Passover and the subsequent feasts to navigate the prophetic master plan of salvation. As the direct spiritual continuation of the assembly in the wilderness, this faithful collective continues to navigate its spiritual journey, holding fast to the immutable commandments of God and protecting the living, active testimony of Jesus Christ until the sounding of the final trumpet.