

Confused Critics *Limit* the Gospel

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In recent months some individuals have chosen to criticize what the *Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs* of the Living Church of God states about *the Gospel*. The essence of their challenge is that the LCG statement is different from what Mr. Herbert Armstrong taught—therefore the LCG is teaching a false Gospel. The critics project a common theme that the LCG is going off track doctrinally. Yet, in their zeal to make a religion of Mr. Armstrong’s writings, these critics appear to be *unaware* of what Mr. Armstrong actually understood about the Gospel. They also overlook or ignore the fact that their arguments and sometimes twisted reasoning actually *contradict* what the Bible says about the Gospel. Many critical comments follow or promote the erroneous ideas of the self-appointed apostle, David Pack, of the Restored Church of God—as the following quotes illustrate:

David Pack states: “LCG’s gospel has become a hybrid of truth and Protestantism, combining the Messenger with His message, the kingdom of God ... LCG goes further and actually lists Christ as the *first* element of the gospel. Notice this from their *Statement of Beliefs*: ‘The Gospel of Christ is the ‘Good News’ of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ’s sacrifice, and of the soon-coming kingdom and government of God.’ This ‘gospel’ is very different from what Mr. Armstrong taught in his booklet *What is the True Gospel?*” Mr. Pack then asserts that the “revised gospel” taught by the LCG is a false Gospel condemned as “another gospel” in the Bible (Galatians 1:6-9; II Corinthians 11:4). (quoted from *How LCG’s Teachings Differ From Those of Mr. Armstrong and RCG*)

Chris Lomas (a former LCG minister now with RCG) states: The LCG doctrinal statement about the Gospel “is contrary to what God restored to His Church through Mr. Armstrong... The LCG has begun to twist the Gospel priorities very subtly.”

Syd Hull (a former LCG minister now with RCG) states: “RCG is the *only* organization that preaches the *true* gospel to the world.”

DS (a former LCG member now with RCG) cites the LCG doctrinal statement about the Gospel and then asks: “What did Mr. Armstrong teach the Gospel was? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of the coming kingdom of God , not a gospel about Jesus Christ, or his name.”

Charles Bryce (former LCG minister) states: “LCG seems to be preaching a mixed, confusing message about the gospel, i.e. that the gospel is the good news of forgiveness of our sins through Christ’s sacrifice and of the soon-coming kingdom and government of God and the name of Jesus Christ. There seems to be a movement toward the gospel about Christ and the gospel of salvation.” Mr. Bryce uses *only one scripture* to define the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15) and then refers to the warning in Galatians 1:8-9 about preaching a different Gospel.

All these attempts to define the Gospel claim to faithfully follow the teachings of Mr. Armstrong. They also state or suggest that references to Jesus Christ or salvation are simply not part of the true Gospel. However, when you *compare* these claims with numerous Scriptures about the Gospel and with what Mr. Armstrong also wrote about the subject *you find something very different*.

Notice how the following scriptures define the Gospel:

Mark 1:14-15 – Jesus said the Gospel was about the coming Kingdom of God

Mark 16:15 – Jesus commissioned his disciples to preach the Gospel to the world

Acts 8:12 – Philip preached the Gospel of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ

Acts 20:20-27 – Paul preached the “whole counsel of God” including repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ, the Gospel of grace and the Kingdom of God (grace involves forgiveness, unmerited pardon)

Acts 28:23 – Paul preached about the Kingdom of God and about Jesus

Acts 28:30-31 – Paul preached of the Kingdom of God and things concerning Jesus Christ

I Corinthians 2:2 – Paul’s main focus was on “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”

I Corinthians 15:1-8 – Paul preached “the gospel...by which you are saved...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...and that He rose again on the third day”

Ephesians 1:13 – Paul wrote of trusting in Christ “after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”

These scriptures clearly indicate that the Gospel includes not just a message about the coming Kingdom of God, but also the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. That sacrifice, when accompanied by repentance and spiritual growth on our part, will result in our ultimate salvation—receiving eternal life in the Kingdom and family of God (see John 3:16, etc.). The Gospel is also about the exciting news that Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth as King of kings to establish the Kingdom of God and bring peace and justice to all (Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 11:15). To separate the Gospel of the Kingdom of God from the good news of the opportunity for salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is *simply not biblical or factual*.

What the critics of the LCG doctrinal statement *also overlook* is the fact that Mr. Armstrong *understood* the Gospel *encompassed more* than what he addressed in certain writings that critics have chosen to quote. Notice these statements from the *Good News*, December 1984, p. 5 – “The Gospel of Christ is Christ’s own Gospel—not a story about His person... The Gospel of Christ ‘is the power of God to salvation’ (Romans 1:16)... What is Jesus Christ’s Gospel?... It is the Good News of the Kingdom of God !... It is the message of divine government—government by God’s Laws!... **Of course that message includes the knowledge about the Savior, High Priest and coming King! Of course, it includes the true way of salvation, which the churches have lost!** [Emphasis ours]. And it includes also knowledge of the location of the territory to be ruled over by the King of the coming Kingdom—the fact it is *this earth* and not heaven.” Mr. Armstrong *clearly understood* that the true Gospel included *much more* than just a story about *the person* of Jesus Christ. However, he also clearly understood the Gospel *included* that Jesus was the promised Messiah who came to give his life as a sacrifice for mankind and to explain the way of salvation that is outlined in the great plan of God pictured by the Holy Days. When we study *all the scriptures* on the subject, there is no need to be confused about the Gospel. Even the critics should remember that Mr. Armstrong repeatedly stated, “Don’t believe me, believe your Bible.” The Bible must be our ultimate authority in this vital subject.