

armstrongs church of god doctrines of devils no 1

Armstrong's Church of God Doctrines of Devils No. 1

The Armstrong's Church of God, founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in the 20th century, is a religious organization that has garnered both followers and critics over the decades. One of the more controversial aspects of this church is its interpretation of various biblical doctrines, which some critics have labeled as "doctrines of devils." This article aims to provide a detailed exploration of the first doctrine categorized as such by critics, examining its origins, implications, and the responses from the church itself.

Historical Background

Herbert W. Armstrong and the Formation of the Church

Herbert W. Armstrong began his religious journey in the 1920s, initially as a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day). Over time, he developed a distinct theological perspective that emphasized the observance of Old Testament laws, the significance of biblical prophecy, and a unique understanding of salvation. In 1934, he founded the Radio Church of God, which later became known as the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Armstrong's teachings were further disseminated through his radio broadcasts and publications, attracting a substantial following.

Core Teachings

Armstrong's Church of God is characterized by several core teachings that differentiate it from mainstream Christianity. Some of these include:

1. **Sabbath Observance:** The church advocates for the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday rather than Sunday, arguing that the latter is a man-made tradition.
2. **Holy Days:** Members are encouraged to observe the biblical Holy Days outlined in the Old Testament, such as Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.
3. **The Identity of Israel:** Armstrong taught that the United States and Britain are the modern-day descendants of the biblical Israelites.
4. **The Nature of God:** The church adheres to a belief known as binitarianism, positing that God is composed of two beings: the Father and the Son, rejecting the traditional trinitarian view.

Doctrines of Devils: Understanding the Criticism

Definition and Context

The term "doctrines of devils" originates from the Bible, specifically 1 Timothy 4:1, which warns of the dangers of teachings that deviate from sound doctrine. Critics of Armstrong's Church of God often use this phrase to describe what they see as unorthodox beliefs that stray from traditional Christian teachings. The first doctrine classified as such by these critics centers around the church's eschatological views—specifically, its interpretations of prophecy and the end times.

Armstrong's Eschatology

Armstrong's teachings on eschatology include several key elements:

1. The Great Tribulation: Armstrong predicted a future time of unprecedented suffering and turmoil, which he believed would precede the Second Coming of Christ.
2. The Kingdom of God: He taught that the Kingdom of God would be established on Earth, with Jesus Christ reigning as the King.
3. The Role of the Church: Armstrong emphasized that the Church would play a crucial role in preparing the world for Christ's return and the establishment of God's Kingdom.

These eschatological views diverge from mainstream Christian eschatology, leading some to label them as "doctrines of devils."

The Implications of Armstrong's Doctrines

The Impact on Followers

The teachings of Armstrong's Church of God have had profound implications for its followers. For many, the church provided a sense of purpose and community, as well as a framework for understanding current events in light of biblical prophecy. However, the church's doctrines also fostered a sense of fear and urgency regarding the end times, leading some members to adopt extreme lifestyle changes.

1. Isolationism: Many followers distanced themselves from mainstream society, believing that they were part of a select group destined for salvation.
2. Emotional Manipulation: The strong emphasis on prophecy created a climate of fear that some critics argue manipulated followers into compliance with church doctrines.
3. Disillusionment: As some prophecies failed to materialize, disillusionment grew among former members, leading to a significant exodus from the church.

Theological Debates

Armstrong's teachings have sparked significant theological debates within Christianity. Critics argue

that his interpretations distort traditional Christian beliefs, while supporters maintain that they offer a more accurate understanding of Scripture.

1. **Biblical Authority:** Critics question the legitimacy of Armstrong's interpretations, emphasizing that they often hinge on selective readings of biblical texts.
2. **Doctrinal Changes:** Over the years, the Worldwide Church of God has undergone significant changes, especially after Armstrong's death in 1986. Some former members argue that these changes are evidence of the instability of Armstrong's doctrines.
3. **Cultural Relevance:** Supporters of Armstrong's teachings argue that they provide relevant insights into contemporary issues, while critics contend that they are out of touch with modern theological discourse.

Responses from Armstrong's Church of God

Defending the Doctrines

In response to criticisms, leaders within the Armstrong's Church of God have defended their doctrines as rooted in a sincere interpretation of Scripture. They argue that their teachings are consistent with biblical principles and that the label "doctrines of devils" is a mischaracterization of their beliefs.

1. **Scriptural Justification:** Proponents assert that their teachings are based on direct biblical references, emphasizing the need for a return to the original teachings of Christ and the apostles.
2. **Historical Context:** The church often points to historical Christian practices and beliefs that align with their teachings, arguing that they are a restoration of early Christianity.
3. **Evolving Understanding:** In light of the church's evolution, current leaders emphasize a commitment to ongoing study and interpretation of Scripture, distancing themselves from some of Armstrong's more controversial positions.

Engagement with Critics

The church has also engaged with critics through various means, including public statements, literature, and outreach programs.

1. **Open Dialogue:** Some church leaders express a willingness to engage in discussions with former members and critics to clarify misunderstandings and promote a more nuanced understanding of their beliefs.
2. **Educational Initiatives:** The church has launched educational initiatives aimed at teaching members about their doctrines and the scriptural basis for them.
3. **Community Involvement:** By participating in community service and outreach, the church aims to demonstrate the positive impact of its teachings on society.

Conclusion

The Armstrong's Church of God remains a contentious subject within the broader Christian community. While its doctrines, particularly those labeled as "doctrines of devils," have faced significant scrutiny and criticism, they continue to resonate with a segment of believers who find meaning and purpose in Armstrong's teachings. As the church navigates its complex legacy, ongoing discussions about its doctrines highlight the challenges of interpreting scripture in a diverse and evolving religious landscape. Whether viewed as a restoration of early Christian teachings or as a deviation from traditional beliefs, the doctrines of Armstrong's Church of God provoke important conversations about faith, authority, and the nature of truth in Christianity.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the core beliefs of Armstrong's Church of God?

Armstrong's Church of God adheres to beliefs such as the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday, the observance of biblical feasts, and the idea of a restored understanding of early Christianity.

What does 'doctrines of devils' refer to in Armstrong's teachings?

In Armstrong's teachings, 'doctrines of devils' refers to teachings that deviate from biblical truths, which they believe lead believers away from God's intended path.

How does Armstrong's Church differentiate itself from mainstream Christianity?

Armstrong's Church distinguishes itself through its emphasis on prophetic teachings, observance of Old Testament laws, and a unique interpretation of scripture that often diverges from traditional Christian doctrines.

What is the significance of the Sabbath in Armstrong's Church?

The Sabbath is seen as a holy day of rest and worship, observed on Saturday, which members believe is a commandment from God that should be followed to maintain a righteous life.

Are there any specific doctrines that Armstrong's Church criticizes as 'doctrines of devils'?

Yes, Armstrong's Church criticizes doctrines such as the Trinity, the immortality of the soul, and the belief in heaven as a place of eternal reward, viewing them as misinterpretations of the Bible.

What role does prophecy play in Armstrong's Church teachings?

Prophecy plays a significant role, as Armstrong's Church teaches that understanding biblical prophecy is crucial for comprehending God's plan for humanity and the events leading up to the end times.

How does Armstrong's Church view the concept of salvation?

Armstrong's Church believes that salvation is a process involving faith, obedience to God's laws, and the acceptance of Jesus Christ, rather than a one-time event.

What are some common criticisms faced by Armstrong's Church?

Common criticisms include accusations of legalism, isolationism, and the promotion of unorthodox beliefs that are not aligned with mainstream Christianity.

How can one learn more about Armstrong's Church and its doctrines?

Interested individuals can learn more through the church's official publications, websites, and by attending services or meetings to gain a deeper understanding of their beliefs.

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