



Does God only work through One Man at a time?

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BICOG Publication

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Does God only work through One Man at a time?

Some Churches of God Believe today what Herbert W Armstrong taught, that God only works through one man at a time. HWA preached this in the church of God and that he was an Apostle and God was only “working” through him. Is this true? Does God only work through one man at a time? What does your Bible say?

In the beginning of his ministry HWA just called himself an evangelist. The bold claims of Apostle, Zerubabel, Elijah, etc... came after by many who convinced him of these things. HWA was easily influenced due to his age, Garner Ted Armstrong his son wrote that, "...I realized my father was, indeed, becoming senile..." (The Origin and History of the Church of God International, p.59). He also said that, "my father was surrounded by evil influences; [and] that he was being manipulated..." (ibid, p.65). But nonetheless he did teach these things and responsibility is on him as well-as these false doctrines are still floating around in the churches.

One Man at a time

What of this doctrine that God only works through one man at a time? HWA claimed he was the only one who could preach the Gospel, and that God was *only* working through him. Well what of the others in the church of God? The pastors, teachers, college professors, Ted Armstrong on radio and Television, the writers of the Plain Truth Magazine etc...God wasn't working with these people? Was all their work to get the Gospel out all in vain? Not to mention the tithe money from these people to help finance the work-don't these people deserve any credit? People sacrificed and gave so the work could go out to the world. Ministers relied on the tithes so the work could function; in reality the tithes given are *put to work for* the church of God! So the members could have a place to go, to have a minister for them, for literature to study and read, for the Gospel to be preached to reach the world. Not to line the pockets of people, and have them get all the credit. HWA seems to get all the credit, what about the other 150,000 members?

Stephen Flurry son of Gerald Flurry of the Philadelphia church of God wrote an article called "And God Raised Up ... One Man... True religion shows that God works through one man at a time." (November 1999), and he emphasizes, "God works through one man at a time." He then cites various examples in the Bible like Abraham, Adam, Samuel, David, Joshua etc... But was that God's *only* way of working, through just *one* man? Or did God use one man for a specific purpose, for a specific time and situation, and the bible focused on that particular situation, and at the *same time* when God was working with these men, God was also working *elsewhere*?

God's works

Some people have an "idea baby." These ideas are conceived in the minds of people. It is coddled and fed, and grows up to become absolute truth, and taught to others. So is this idea that God only works through one man at a time.

If God was going to work with just one man at a time-the time when Jesus was on the earth *was the time*. But, this was *not* the case. One of the disciples said to Jesus, "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one *casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us.*" (Luke 9:49). The disciples had the same mentality as many in the church of God have today, that "God is only working with them." Or that God limits himself to "one

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man at a time.” They, like the disciples, forbade others to preach the Gospel saying it’s only appointed for the so-called “Apostle” to do. How did Jesus answer?

“And Jesus said unto him, *Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.*” (v.50).

Expanded in Mark it says, “But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, *that can lightly speak evil of me.*”

“For he that is not against us *is on our part.*” (Mark 9:39-40). Don’t these so-called ministers understand that all who preach the Gospel in the church of God-*we are all on the same side as Jesus said!*

Barnes puts it so eloquently, “Christians should rejoice in *good done by their brethren of any denomination.* There are men calling themselves Christians who seem to look with doubt and suspicion on all that is done by those who do not walk with them. They undervalue their labors, and attempt to lessen the evidences of their success and to diminish their influence. True likeness to the Saviour would lead us to rejoice in all the good accomplished, by whomsoever it may be done.” (emphasis added).

The People’s New Testament comments on this very mistake, “He simply declares that he must not be forbidden, and *that those who work the same kind of work that we do should be regarded, not as enemies, but allies.* Thousands, in every period of church history, have spent their lives in copying John’s mistake. They have labored to stop every man *who will not work for Christ in their way* from working for Christ at all.” (emphasis added).

Yes the Bible says we must “try” (1 John 4:1) them to see if they are from God, and not imposters, and if they are of God then they are *allies* not enemies. This scripture proves that God was working *outside* of Jesus’ group, for miracles were being produced in his “name.”

I believe that people who forbid other people from doing the work are really glory hogs. Looking to be recognized and glorified by men. The Bible warns not to seek that kind of glory, but to be humble, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God *is witness:*

“*Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.*”

“*But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:*” (1 Thess 2:4-7).

Those that seek the glory of men, Jesus said, “have their reward.” (Matthew 6:2). But it’s not from God.

Jesus in Nazareth

In Luke the 4th chapter Jesus gives another example of God working outside of his called and chosen nation Israel.

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Jesus said, “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; “But unto *none of them was Elias sent*, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow.

“And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; *and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*” (vv.25-27). Notice God sent his prophet outside his chosen nation Israel and worked miracles among the heathen. Must we limit God to one nation, or one person? God doesn’t limit himself, “With men this is impossible; but with God *all things are possible.*” (Matthew 19:26).

Of course the people rejected what Jesus said, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, *were filled with wrath*,

“And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

“But he passing through the midst of them went his way,” (vv.28-30). This is what happens when you mess with someone’s “idea baby.” People get upset, wrathful, and just lose control of all of their senses. Many in the churches of God react the same way when you expose the truth about some of the Armstrongism doctrines that are floating around the churches of God today.

Primacy of Peter

To support their theory that God works only through one man at a time, Stephen Flurry writes, “Christ personally taught 12 disciples to fulfill this responsibility, but there was one, even among these 12, whom Jesus selected to be the leader—Peter. His original name was actually Simon. But Christ gave him the surname Peter *because of his unique position as chief apostle. Prior to this time, the surname Peter had been a title designating a religious leader or head.*” (And God Raised Up ... One Man, Nov 1999, emphasis added). Is this true? Or was Jesus working with all the Apostles at the same time?

The Catholic Church claims Peter was the designated LEADER of all other apostles; that there has been an unbroken “succession of popes” which has ruled the Catholic Church from that time—and that the pope (called the “vicar of Christ”), when speaking from his official seat in St. Peter’s, is INFALLIBLE. But was Peter the “pope” over the other 11? Was he in complete autocratic authority over them? Did he, alone, RULE over God’s church, with all other apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, under that ONE MAN in whom was vested absolute authority? Sounds like Stephen Flurry from his quote above, is taking up Catholic Doctrine to support his “idea baby”!

Never did Jesus indicate His true church was to become a powerful, influential, politically oriented organization which would become part of this world; having concourse with this world’s government and governmental leaders, becoming a large, visible church, capable of influencing legislation, wielding political power through numbers and financial resources! Instead it would be a small persecuted church keeping the commandments of God (Read our booklet Where is the True Church for more details).

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When Jesus established His true church, did He intend to *relinquish control* of it—giving the total *headship* of the church into the hands of one of the apostles?

Let the Bible answer. Jesus said, “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter [Greek: *Petros*, meaning a “pebble” or a small “rock”] and upon this rock [Greek: *Petra*, meaning a whole mass of rock, like a craggy cliff or mountain] I *will build my church*; and the gates of hell [Greek: “hades,” meaning the *grave*] shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Peter had two “nicknames,” one in Greek and the other in Aramaic. *Jesus* supplied Peter this name when He said, “Thou art Peter” (using the Greek, “*Petros*”) and said He would make Peter a “fisher of men.” The other is “*Cephas*” (pronounced KE-fus), which is the Aramaic *equivalent* to “a stone.”

The fact that Jesus called Peter a “little pebble,” or a small “stone,” did not indicate He was placing a **TITLE** on Peter’s name. *Names have meanings*. Titles are *added* to names. If Peter had been given a “title,” it would have been obvious, for Jesus would have called him “*Peter Primus*” or “*Peter the First*.”

Those who argue that Peter’s name meant he had the “primacy” **OVER** the other apostles—that they had to be *subject* to him—are in error. Peter himself was to write that each minister—whether apostle, elder, or whatever—was to be “subject one to another”! (1 Peter 5:5).

Jesus said He would build His church “*upon this ROCK*”! Who did He mean?

When Jesus said, “Thou art *Petros*, and upon this ‘*PETRA*’ I *will build my church*,” He used, first, the *masculine* ending of the root Greek word which means “a rock” When He said “upon this *rock*” [*Petra*] I will build my church, He used the *feminine*, which has a *different meaning*. Jesus changed the *gender* of the root Greek word *deliberately*.

To what—or to whom—did He refer? Let the Bible answer!

Notice: “...And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual **ROCK** that followed them: and that **ROCK** [*Petra*, in the Greek] **WAS CHRIST!**”(1 Corinthians 10:4). Jesus is the *Petra*, and he is the one who builds his church on the foundation that is himself! And he is the one who head the Church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:15; 5:23).

Some, in attempting to prove one-man **RULE** over the church, cite the remainder of the passage in Matthew 16:19: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

However, Jesus was speaking to *all the disciples* at this moment (read the entire chapter in context), and only two chapters later tells *all the disciples*, “Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

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“*Again* I say unto you [emphasizing that this is at least the *second* time He has given them this charge], that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything 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 am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:18-20).

Jesus did NOT say where “Peter” is—there am *I with Peter*; that I only work through, in and by this ONE MAN!

No, He required *checks and balances* in His early church government, plainly saying it required at least *two* of the disciples (apostles) or *three* to be in complete *harmony and agreement* and THEN Jesus would be “in the midst of them.”

Notice He did not say He would be with ONE—but said “there am I in the midst of THEM”! (Matthew 18:20).

When Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you always,” (Matthew 28:20) He plainly revealed that HE would remain the active, *living* HEAD of His true church!

Also, notice, Jesus when he spoke to Peter exclusively he said, “And I say *also* unto thee” (v.18). But then in verse 19, he says, “And I will give unto thee.” It does not say I will “also” give unto thee. Comparing Matthew 18:18; John 20:23, it is obvious that after speaking with Peter, he turned to his disciples and said, “And I will give unto you [all the disciples] the keys of the Kingdom.” F.F. Bruce in his commentary says, “...the *clear suggestion of the text*, we picture Jesus as turning from Peter to the others...” (International Bible Commentary, p.1138, emphasis added).

Now did Jesus Christ ever intend exalting *only one man* to the position of “No. 2” under Jesus Christ?

In short, was it Jesus Christ as the Head of the church in *heaven—but* PETER, having the “primacy,” as the “No. 2” individual in the church hierarchy (meaning the No. 1 *on this earth*)—*who was OVER* all the other 11, over all the prophets, evangelists, pastors of churches, deacons and others?

Was it ONE MAN, plus 11 others who were *under* him?

Let the *Bible*, the sacred Word of God, which is going to JUDGE, us, answer!

Peter, himself, certainly never tried to assert himself as a “chief apostle.”

NEVER did he claim to be “the one and only apostle,” or “the leading apostle,” or “the chief apostle,” or even THE apostle!

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Did he feel such a claim would be blasphemous? After all, it is *only Jesus Christ* who is called THE APOSTLE in the Bible!

Paul calls himself “an apostle,” *as does Peter*. But notice what the Bible says of Jesus Christ: “...*THE* apostle and high priest of our profession. . .” (Hebrews 3:1). Christ, *ONLY*, is called “THE APOSTLE.”

Peter never took such office to himself!

He wrote, after describing himself as “an apostle,” “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am *also an elder*, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God ... neither as being *lords over God’s heritage*, but being examples to the flock. And when the CHIEF SHEPHERD [referring to Jesus Christ, not himself!] shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Peter plainly referred to himself as an elder. This merely meant an older, more mature and more experienced person *spiritually—usually* an older person in physical years—and was a term which found its way in the early New Testament church directly from the status of the “elders” in village and tribal society in the nations of Israel and Judah!

It is quite likely that, in the early New Testament church, the title “elder” was already attached to an older gentleman who, upon conversion and baptism, would continue to be viewed as “an elder” among members of the church.

By the time Peter wrote his letter (1 Peter 5), he may well have been in his 60s or 70s.

This was not an exalted title—and Peter’s statement to other older, mature leaders in the church, calling them “elders,” shows he viewed himself as being *on an equal footing* with the other leaders he had addressed!

He said, “Likewise, you younger [elders—for he was writing to the “elders of the church”], submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be *subject one to another*, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” (1 Peter 5:5, 6).

Peter urged absolute *equality* (each being *subject to* the other); unanimity, and Christian *humility*.

Paul Humbles Peter

God used *another apostle*, *Paul* who came along *years* after the original 12 apostles, to *humble* Peter!

Read the first two chapters of Galatians!

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Peter had allowed feelings of *racism* to creep into his heart. The confrontation you read of in the second chapter very probably occurred during the *Feast of Tabernacles*, or another annual Holy Day!

Quite a number of leaders were present; a number of *mixed* converts representing both *gentile* and *Jews* were also present. The area in the province of Galatia to which Paul writes included the congregations of converted Christians at Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

First, you notice the apostle Paul continually reinforcing his *absolute equality* with the other apostles! In the first chapter, he clearly shows that he did not “confer with flesh and blood” or “go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him” but that he was *directed by Jesus Christ* (see 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8).

In chapter 2, verses 1-9, you notice the apostle Paul encountered *party spirit* in Jerusalem; He said, “But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in *conference* added nothing to me” (Galatians 2:1-6).

Notice the *order* in which the apostle Paul lists the “apostles” who are “pillars” plural not one, “And when James, Cephas [Petros’, Peter] and John, who seemed to be *pillars*, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas [who was also an apostle!] the right hands of fellowship; that we should go to the heathen, and they to the circumcision” (Galatians 2:9).

Now read from verse 11 to the end of the chapter!

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, *I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed*. “For before that certain *came from James, he* did eat with the gentiles: but when they were come, *he* withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. “And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation” (Galatians 2:11-13).

Several authorities urge the understanding that “those certain” who “came from James” does *not* apply to Peter, but certain *other men*. This is strengthened by the use of the pronouns: “But when they [these *other men* who came from James] were come, he [Peter] withdrew ...”

Now notice how the apostle Paul, Peter’s *absolute equal*, stood up to one of the “pillars” of the church.

“But when I saw that they walked uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, ‘If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the gentiles to live as do the Jews?’” (Galatians 2:14).

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Notice that Peter did not “mark” Paul, rising up in arrogant wrath and saying, “How dare you embarrass me in front of these underlings?”

Neither did Peter embark on a *hate campaign* to “get” Paul; to assassinate character, or attempt to create a *division* in the church.

No doubt Peter was hurt by being soundly rebuked in front of others, including other apostles, elders, and laymen!

There is no “rank” at work here. No “hierarchy; no pyramid form of government,” in which Peter, on the top of a step-ladder, like a general of the army who had just been insulted by a colonel, takes out his wrath on Paul, who had affronted him!

Other Examples in the Church

Notice another example. When the Apostles heard that the Samaritans “received the word of God,” the Apostles, “sent” Peter and John! “Now when the *apostles* which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:” (Acts 8:14). If Peter were in charge shouldn’t it read “Peter sent”? Instead we see that the “*Apostles*” plural, made a decision and *they* decided to send Peter and John. They all got together and decided what to do.

The Jerusalem Conference in Acts the 15th chapter is a prime example of this. The subject came up about circumcision and salvation, and “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem *unto the apostles and elders about this question.*” (Acts 15:2). Notice it says, “they determined” that they should go to Jerusalem to ask “the apostles and elders about this question” Not to Peter, but the “Apostles” plural and “elders” plural, to discuss the issue. It was known *already* that the church functioned with an open forum, not by a hierarchy.

Then it says, “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.” (v.6).

Then there was much “disputing” (v.7). Peter then gives his testimony about the revelation Jesus gave him in the 10th chapter of Acts about the gentiles. (vv.7-11)

After this, “Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them” (v.12). Then Paul and Barnabas give their testimony about the miracles done among the gentiles.

Then, “And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me:” (v.13). James was then given the opportunity to speak.

And James then settled the issue, not Peter, and said, “Wherefore *my sentence* is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

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“But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood.” (vv.19-20).

James’ decision was agreed upon *by all*, “*Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:” (v.22). This is how the church was run, by an open forum, discussions and decisions were made by the church of God and all were in agreement-Not by one man, hierarchy, or dictatorship.

There is no use, *ever*, in the Bible of a *one* “chief apostle,” or “*only* apostle” in the church. Jesus is “The Apostle,” “the Chief Shepherd” and “the head” of the church. He runs it.

The Apostle Paul in the Corinthian church began to see this happen.

People started picking sides on who they were with. Some said “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

“Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

“I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;” (1 Corinth 1:12-14). People were picking leaders to rally behind. This caused, “contentions” and “divisions” in the church (see vv.10, 11).

Paul said this should not be; “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the *same thing*, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be *perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” (v.10). we are all “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28). He is the head of the church, and we should rally around him, not men. “He that glorieth, *let him glory in the Lord...* Therefore *let no man glory in men.* For all things are yours;

“Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

“*And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*” (1 Corinth 1:31; 3:21-23). Notice that Paul said that they all must speak the “same thing.” They also were preaching the word of God, but Paul wanted them to speak the same thing the Apostles were preaching. They whole church must preach and teach the same thing.

The Concept of “Chief” Apostle Mocked

Notice that the Apostle Paul *mocks the whole of idea* of those who claim to be a “chiefest” Apostle, “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

“For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.” (2 Corinth 11:4-5).

Another translation renders it, “I don’t think that those ‘super apostles’ are any better than I am.” (ERV). The People’s New Testament says, “The Greek (see Revision in the margin) implies that these men claimed to be apostles. Paul says he is not behind these ‘pre-eminent apostles’--a

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stroke of sarcasm.” (emphasis added). These so-called “Chief Apostles” are ones who preach *another* Jesus (see v.4).

The Jamieson Fausset and Brown commentary writes, “The context does *not* compare him and the apostles, *but him and the false teachers*: 2 Cor 11:6 also alludes to these: cf. also the parallel, ‘false prophets’ (note 2 Cor 11:13, and 2 Cor 12:11).” (emphasis added). Today in the church of God we have the same problem, People claiming these titles-and this doctrine are attached to other false doctrines, and as a result these are preaching *another* Jesus.

It is obvious that those who claim to be “chiefest” Apostles believe how the world believes one should be a leader, of being a dictator over the members of the church of God- and we see the same thing today from these so-called splinter groups. Splinter groups! As Paul said this was causing “contentions” and “divisions” in the church, and today we have splinter groups due to these false doctrines and false Apostles.

Jesus told his disciples about leadership, “You know that the princes of the gentiles *exercise dominion over* [lord it over] them, and they that are ‘great’ exercise authority upon them. *But it shall not be so among you*; but whosoever will be ‘great’ among you, let him be your minister [servant]; and whosoever will be *chief* among you, let him be your servant [minister]: even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-27). Jesus’ idea of “chief” was not like the world as in a boss or rank in an army, “In the church, the greatest one is he who serves most and best.” (People’s New Testament). Jesus shows the contrast between *his* way and the way of the world.

“And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.” (Mark 10:44). The chief becomes a servant, “Your servant - *the lowest secular office, as deacon was the lowest ecclesiastical office: is often put for slave.*”

“From these directions of our Lord, we may easily discern what sort of a spirit his ministers should be of.

1. A minister of Christ is not to consider himself a lord over Christ’s flock.
2. He is not to conduct the concerns of the Church with an imperious spirit.
3. He is to reform the weak, after Christ’s example, more by loving instruction than by reproof or censure.
4. He should consider that true apostolic greatness consists in serving the followers of Christ with all the powers and talents he possesses.
5. That he should be ready, if required, to give up his life unto death, to promote the salvation of men.” (Clarke’s Commentary, emphasis added).

Jesus also said, “So the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31). The Greek word for “first” is “prōtos” (Strong’s 4413). The same word used for “Chief” in Matthew 20:27. The “first” is “last” and the last first, why? For the simple reason, the first have the privilege of experiencing the gifts of the kingdom much longer than the last that experience it for a short time (read the parable in Matthew 20:1-15), and because of their experience they were

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obligated to take care of the flock as Jesus told Peter “feed my sheep.” (John 21:17). So the first are last, the last first.

As the Apostle Paul said of the ministry, “Not for that we have *dominion* over your faith [like the way the world does it], but are helpers [servants to the church of God as Jesus said] of your joy:” (2 Corinth 1:24).

As noted above by Peter, “Neither *as being lords over God's heritage*, but being *ensamples* to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:3). Peter, Paul and the rest of the Apostles ran the church this way, God's way.

So the concept of Peter being the head of the church is false. The Churches of God however that continue to cling on to this doctrine of God working through one man continue to preach and teach the primacy of Peter.

Examples in the Old Testament

What of the Old Testament? Does God only work with one man at a time? Not always!

In Abraham's day, he was working with Abraham, but also, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he *was the priest of the most high God.*” (Gen 14:18). To whom Abraham gave tithes (Gen 14:20). Was not God working with him as well? The Apostle Paul said that this man was “great.” (Hebrews 7:4).

What about Moses? Was God only working with him? No! Notice, Miriam, “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.” (Ex 15:20). She was called a “prophetess.” God was working and speaking through her as well as Moses. Micah said, “For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; *and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.*” (Micah 6:4).

Miriam told Moses, “And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. “And they said, *Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?*” (Numbers 12:1-2). God rebuked them, not because they claimed God was talking to them, but because of their objection to Moses marrying an Ethiopian woman. But God was speaking and working through Aaron and Miriam as well as Moses.

What about Elijah the Prophet? At one Point Elijah thought he was the only one left in the world that followed God. But God told him, “Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19:18). God told Elijah he preserved 7000 who were faithfully following him. Was God working with them? Of course he was he was preserving them, protecting them.

Like in the book of Acts, the *focus* shifts from the Apostles to the Apostle Paul *only*-does that mean God is not working with the Apostles any longer? No! The scripture just focuses on the Apostle Paul. In the Book of Kings it's the same thing. The focus is on Elijah, it does not mean

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God is not doing something else-somewhere outside of Elijah, he was-7000 Prophets were loyal to almighty God, and God was preserving them.

What of the days of King Saul and Samuel? Was God only working with Samuel? No!

When Samuel picked Saul as King, “And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

“And when they came thither to the hill, *behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.*

“And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, *he prophesied among the prophets*, then the people said one to another, What *is this that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is Saul also among the prophets?*

“And one of the same place answered and said, But who *is* their father? Therefore it became a proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?*” (1 Sam 10:9-12). God had a “company of prophets.” God worked in those times with prophets. They, along with Samuel were doing the work of God, it wasn’t just one man. God says, “I have also *spoken by the prophets*, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the *ministry of the prophets.*” (Hosea 12:10).

In the days of Elisha you read of the “sons of the prophets.” (See 2 Kings Chapters 2-9). Elisha was *not* the only prophet in Israel. But like Paul, and Elijah, the Bible *focuses* on Elisha, and what he was doing, but God was still working with the other prophets and Apostles at *the same time*.

In the days of David and Saul the Bible says again, “And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw *the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them*, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.” (1 Sam 19:20). Samuel was the “overseer” (Barnes) of these men, but God was working with these men as well as Samuel.

1 Kings 22, the Kings of Israel and Judah gathered 400 prophets of God to inquire about the war between them and Syria. There were 400 prophets, not one-God was working with them.

What of Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah? God was working with all 4 of these men to build the temple of God, and re-establish the priesthood and rule in Palestine.

“Haggai and Zechariah were commissioned by Jehovah (Hag 1:1)” (JFB Commentary).

“In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet *unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest*, saying... In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came *the word of the LORD unto Zechariah*, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,” (Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1).

Ezra says, “Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

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“Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: *and with them were the prophets of God helping them.*” (Ezra 5:1-2). They were all doing the work of God together, and God was working with them all.

How does God work?

Obvious in certain circumstances God will work with one person, but not always. Many times as the Bible demonstrates God is working with others-even though the focus is on one person-*at the same time*. Who are we to restrict God’s movements?

Jesus said, “I am the vine, *ye are* the branches:” (John 15:5). He didn’t say “I am the vine and you are the ONE BRANCH.”

“Branches”-God’s people, “...abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5). God’s people are attached to the vine which is Jesus-One vine, *many* branches. What is the one thing that attaches Christians to the vine? The Holy Spirit!

Christians who have the Holy Spirit belong to Jesus (Romans 8:9). This is how he “abides” in us, and us in him (see 1 John 3:24; 4:13). We are attached to the vine, Jesus, *not* an organization. These branches can be anywhere God puts his spirit.

Before the Apostle Paul preached to the gentiles at Corinth, Jesus already told Paul, “...for I have much people in this city.” (Act 18:10). These were called by God before Paul even spoke a word. They did not have to go through an organization, or the Apostles, God picked them, called and chosen by Jesus no one else. Then, these heard the message of Paul, and were baptized and received the Holy Spirit and became attached to the vine.

As Paul said, “For as the body is one, and hath *many members*, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” (1 Corinth 12:12). Yes there is one church, but it’s in *branches*, colonies all over the world. There is “one spirit” (Ephesians 4:4) we are all part of one family no matter where we are or go to church. We are scattered all over the world but one body all abiding in Christ by one Spirit.

The Whole Church Should be involved in the Work

God is working with all his people throughout the world where he puts his Holy Spirit. As God worked with others in the Bible, God is working with his church today. And they all function as one, and all are involved in doing the work of God.

Paul says, “For the body is not one member, but many.

“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, *I am not of the body*; is it therefore not of the body?

“And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, *I am not of the body*; is it therefore not of the body?

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“If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?”

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, *as it hath pleased him.*”(1 Corinth 12:14-18). Some in the Churches of God reason this way. Since they feel God only works with one man, then what of the *other* members of the Churches of God? To accept this doctrine, won't people feel like “I am not of the body,” as Paul says?

These boast “God is only working with me!” Or “God only worked through Herbert W Armstrong.” Does that mean all the other people in the church of God that tithe, and field phone calls, attend church, and give their time to volunteer and minister; God is *not* working with them? Without them, there would be no work! God is working with them, and God did stir up their spirits and called them to do his work.

No matter how small or large someone's work is in the church, *all of it* is important. Paul said, “And those *members* of the body, which we think to *be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour*; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

“For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given *more abundant honour to that part which lacked:*

“That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have ***the same care one for another.***

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Corinth 12:23-26).

Jesus told his church that they “all” should watch (Mark 13:37). He told them all to preach the Gospel, “Go ye [all 11 apostles see v.14 not one man] into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:15, 20). No matter how small or large your part is, you are involved in the work of God, it is relevant and important. *It is appointed for the whole church to do the work!* This doctrine of God working through one man actually hinders the work from growing and becoming larger than it is, because people feel they have no part. God is working with all of us, and all of us must be involved no matter how small or large the role God gives to us.