

Church of God

The Biblical Grandview

Modern Ekklesia Centennial | 2026

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This coming Fourth of July, 2026, the United States will celebrate Independence Day with flags, fireworks, military parade, and glowing remembrance of a national birth from 250 years ago, when the people claimed civil liberty from British rule.

By contrast, from our vantage point today, in this Sabbath service of June 20, 2026, the modern history of the Church of God, known as the *ekklesia*, or *the called-out ones*, reaches back about 100 years. Yet this 100-year milestone stands under a different measure and seen in a different light.

Our purpose in this message is to reflect on the past 100 years of the Church of God and offer a reminder for the modern ekklesia to celebrate complete dependence on Jesus Christ.

Let us consider, by way of a timeline, how the Church of God's history moved in distinct stages.

First, Christ warned His sheep about the fall of the temple at Jerusalem. Second, after that visible center was shaken and the flock scattered, He continued to govern His people through the centuries that followed. Third, in our modern age, Christ regrouped the ekklesia, who then engaged in proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God and warned a world drifting toward religious deception, nuclear war, famine, pestilence, and finally, death.

The Church was never a physical temple. In Matthew 24, Jesus said the magnificent temple would be thrown down. He told those in Judea to flee when they saw the sign of coming desolation.

We must note that the Church of God, founded at Pentecost in A.D. 31, was not bound to the Jerusalem temple priesthood. The Church was never the physical temple. When Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, the temple's ritual order ended. Yet the Church of God did not end. Christ had already prepared His people for that transition.

God's Church is still alive. Around A.D. 95 to 96, near the end of Emperor Domitian's reign, the apostle John was exiled on Patmos. From there, through a vision, John received a message from Jesus Christ for His seven churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. (We can read this in Revelation 2–3.)

John's record gives a plain historical sequence. After the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70, Christ was still addressing active congregations outside Judea. Secular history confirms war and physical devastation in Jerusalem, but Scripture explains the meaning of those events. Jesus Christ warned His people before severe judgment came. He continued to govern the Church after the Jerusalem temple was cast down. Thereafter, the scattered and often persecuted flock continued unbroken for many centuries under the authority of Jesus Christ.

The ekklesia regrouped for a final witness. Let us now reflect on the modern Church of God 100-year timeline.

Starting in the 1920s, new inventions first appeared at random and seemingly unrelated to the future end-time work of Jesus Christ. Public radio entered modern life in 1922, with the first regular broadcast of the BBC from London and the first paid radio advertisement in New York. Television followed in 1926, when Scottish inventor John Logie Baird demonstrated it in London. That same year, Robert H. Goddard launched the world's first liquid-fueled rocket from a farm in Auburn, Massachusetts. In 1927, Charles Lindbergh made the first solo nonstop transatlantic flight from New York to Paris. In 1928, Baird again advanced the field by demonstrating color television.

Also, industry began to mass-produce telephones, automobiles, and airplanes, increasing consumer demands of the Western world. Mass-market advertising funded the media and helped shape a new culture of consumption.

It is in this dynamic 1920s commercial and industrial setting that Herbert W. Armstrong chose not to pursue college education.

Instead, he continually sought intellectual and practical lifelong learning through advertising, writing, conducting specialized market surveys, and guiding business entities to analyze consumer trends, and which increased their sales revenues tremendously.

In 1924, Mr. Armstrong's family moved from Iowa to Oregon. It was in Salem, Oregon, where he entered a crisis that changed his life. What happened in 1926 hurt Mr. Armstrong because his lucrative advertising business totally collapsed. Furthermore, his wife, Loma, encountered the Sabbath teaching. So, from 1926 to 1927, Mr. Armstrong conducted intensive Bible study, first to disprove his wife's new convictions, and second to prove whether the Bible or the inherited traditional mainstream Christianity actually governs belief.

By 1927, Mr. Armstrong accepted the Sabbath. By 1931, he had entered a recognized preaching role. By 1934, the modern public witness of the ekklesia began to flourish. A small radio broadcast began, and printed teaching followed, moving the ekklesia from private study and local fellowship into public proclamation.

The seemingly random and disconnected technological marvels of the 1920s did not create the modern ekklesia. Those inventions became the seeds for spreading the gospel proclamation later on, reaching national leaders and connecting scattered brethren through print, radio, television, satellite, and now pervasive Internet digital media.

As we reflect on the past 100 years, those events in the 1920s mark the rise of a world shaped by mass communication, visual reach, and long-range power. Even the liquid-fueled rocket pointed forward. The rocketry born in 1926 would one day lift satellites into orbit to spread the gospel message across the earth.

The rise of the modern Church did not rest on a new human institution. It rested on repentance, Sabbath obedience, Holy Day understanding, spreading the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and the return to apostolic teaching.

Our modern ekklesia appeared with renewed focus on biblical teaching, gospel-proclaiming witness, and recognizing its role as a spiritual organism under Jesus Christ.

When World War II ended, the gravity of the witness deepened. Scientific advances placed mankind in unprecedented danger of extinction, a danger no earlier century had known. Jesus Christ said that unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved alive, but for the elect's sake, those days would be shortened (Matthew 24:22).

That realization gave the gospel proclamation a sense of urgency. Mankind's survival does not rest in human government, military might, wealth, or science, but in the certain intervention and return of Jesus Christ.

The Church of God's public witness carries a warning. Jesus said, "Take heed that no man deceives you" (Matthew 24:4). He warned of false Christs, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, betrayal, hatred, and rampant lawlessness (Matthew 24:5–12). That is why the ekklesia does not preach prophecy to instill fear. Prophecy involves warning, witness, repentance, and preparation.

In 1947, Mr. Armstrong founded Ambassador College. The school was opened to train workers for the growing work. Ministers, writers, teachers, and administrators were formed through discipline and biblical doctrine.

From the 1950s through the 1960s, the work expanded beyond one nation. Printed media and radio broadcasts reached many lands, and congregations formed. The modern ekklesia became visible to the scattered people prepared and willing to hear.

Eventually, the scattering of the flock became a test. By 1986, the first modern 60 years of our timeline came to a close. Mr. Armstrong died after decades of preaching, publishing, teaching, and building a visible work. But his death did not end the modern ekklesia. His death exposed the next test. Would the flock hold doctrine under Christ, or would they attach their calling and faith to man-made organized religions?

After 1986, testing intensified. Doctrinal confidence weakened. Teachings once presented as restored truth were rejected and replaced with evangelical doctrines of traditional mainstream Christianity.

In May 1997, one of Mr. Armstrong's successors from a younger Church of God generation, along with his associates, bowed to the dictates of the National Association of Evangelicals. That moment marked an institutional and doctrinal departure, but it was not the death of the modern ekklesia.

The flock scattered: some into new fellowships, some into small local groups, and some as isolated households. But faithful brethren continued to honor God's Sabbath, keep His Holy Days, preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and spiritually obey God's Ten Commandments, while rejecting the false doctrines of the Trinity, Easter, and Christmas.

Moving fast forward to our day, the year 2026 marks 100 years after the personal crisis that gripped and redirected Mr. Armstrong in Salem, Oregon. In hindsight, 1926 was that year of the appointed time when God launched His end-time work. And so, from 1986 to 2026, the second timeline of 40 years unfolded, and is testing the collective memory of the ekklesia.

Moving forward, the ekklesia must uphold true doctrines, exercise humility and endurance, and protect its spiritual identity. We now see that the modern ekklesia arose within an age of expanding technology, global commerce, digital media, and weapons of mass destruction.

We must also consider the relatively widespread affluence and personal conveniences that easily creep into ordinary life. Materialism and secular immersion can seduce God's people into spiritual sleep. When God's warning goes unheeded. One can argue that today's scattered ekklesia faces not just organizational loss, but spiritual dullness, doctrinal drift, and a return to worldly cares.

Christ compared our end-time society to the days of Lot. People bought, sold, planted, built, and feasted until judgment came suddenly (Luke 17:28–30). In addition, Paul’s warning about perilous times fits our condition today: self-love, pride, betrayal, pleasure-seeking, and a form of godliness while denying the authority of God (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

The book of Revelation adds a larger prophetic angle. The four horsemen of the apocalypse—false religion, war, famine, and pestilence—will be moving across the age before the intervention of Jesus Christ and His second coming (Revelation 6:1–8). The modern ekklesia did not invent those gruesome end-time warnings. It carried them forward.

The approaching global end-time tribulation gives weight to the commission of the Church: preach the true gospel, warn against deception, call for repentance, and prepare people for the Kingdom of God.

We all know that the ekklesia will also be hated. Hatred does not prove failure. It reveals the cost of being a witness. The true gospel challenges the world’s religion, national politics, and confidence in human rule. The ekklesia must expect dangerous resistance or severe persecution. Christ said His servants would be hated by all nations for His name’s sake (Matthew 24:9).

While the ekklesia remains scattered in our day, it is not extinct. It will never be so. The instruments of civilization changed, but the work of the modern ekklesia remains constant: fidelity to Scripture, preaching the Kingdom of God, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days as signs of obedience, repentance, endurance, warning, and the central governance of Jesus Christ.

For the modern ekklesia, the pattern of Jesus Christ’s governance demands deep and sober attention. When a visible center falls, Jesus Christ does not fall. When human church administration changes, Jesus Christ does not change. When the flock scatters, Jesus Christ still knows where His sheep are.

The Church of God must put front and center continual dependence on God, submission to Jesus Christ, obedience to His law, and faith in His coming Kingdom. In this regard, the modern ekklesia must remember its spiritual calling, warning message, and repentance from sin.

In conclusion, from Pentecost in A.D. 31, the Church of God timeline traces periods of recovery, restoration, warning, and renewed public witness.

Brethren, the record is plain. This centennial timeline shows that Christ preserves His people when visible centers fall, when biblical doctrine comes under attack, and whenever the flock is scattered.

One hundred years of hindsight points us back to the warning of Jesus Christ, His commission to us, and His abiding love. Our centennial celebration is not a call for nostalgia. Rather, it celebrates our vigilance and total dependence on Jesus Christ.

While the United States prepares to celebrate 250 years of Independence Day, the modern ekklesia must look beyond national celebration and ask: will God's people remain faithful under Jesus Christ?

The takeaway from this message for the modern-day ekklesia is this. Last scripture: Romans 13:11–12, from the God's Word Translation combined with the King James Version:

Verse 11: You know the times in which we are living. It is time to wake up. Our salvation is nearer now than when we first became believers.

Verse 12: The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.