

Interpreting John

By Daniel Deininger

May 31st, 2025 - Helena, MT

Intro:

I've recently been asked a couple of times why the United Church of God Council of Elders did not extend Rick Shabi's presidency for another 3 year term?

I've also been asked questions about (new President) John Elliott's first message or messages.

Some have been concerned these decisions are about politics within the Church or that there is the possibility of a (or another) split in UCG.

Specific Purpose Of This Message:

Today I will share MY perspective on why and what we need to learn from the recent changes in the presidency of United Church of God.

(I hope all of you are staying current with what is happening at Home Office, and have listened to the recent messages by John Elliott, and were able to fast recently as he requested.)

I. The Council of Elders & Why the COE?

A. Our previous church - WCG - had "one man rule"

Pro 11:14 KJV - 14 Where no counsel [is], the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors [there is] safety.

B. Council members selected by the ministry

I know 11 of the 12 COE members

C. They are men of integrity and lead by the Holy Spirit

D. They seek to do the will of God

E. They are not perfect, but they do yield to God.

II. Angels to the Churches

A. What Church are you a part of? Can you be part of two?

1.2.1 The Church

The "Church" is that body of believers who have received, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit. The true Church of God is a spiritual organism. Its biblical name is "the Church of God." As defined in the Holy Scriptures, the Church is the Body of Christ and is greater and more inclusive than any corporate or associated organization established by human beings.

1.2.2 United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA)

The United Church of God, an International Association ("UCGIA" or "the Corporation"), is the nonprofit religious organization incorporated on May 10, 1995, for the purpose of executing the vision, mission and responsibilities enumerated in the Scriptures, in this Constitution and in the duly adopted Bylaws of UCGIA.

- B. Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18 KJV - 1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; ... 8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; ... 12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; ... 18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass;
- C. Rev 3:1, 7-8, 14, 19 KJV - 1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. ... 7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. ... 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; ... 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
- D. Mat 16:18-19, 21-23 NKJV - 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ...
- 21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."
- III. The Presidents and their focus
- A. Rick Shabi - 9 years as Treasurer and 3 as President
1. Focus on proclamation and being a watchman
 - a) Eze 3:17 NKJV - 17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me:
 - b) Eze 33:6-7 NKJV - 6 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes [any] person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' 7 "So you, son of man: I have made you a

watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me.

2. Focus on the international association
 3. Saw the need to be more effective in our outreach
 - a) <https://www.ucg.org/watch/beyond-today/biblical-worldview>
 - b) 34 Worldview messages
 - c) Many sermons and bible studies - all still on the [UCG.org](https://www.ucg.org) site
- B. John & Merrie Elliott - in the Church since birth, and over 50 years in the ministry
1. Val and I know them from Ambassador College since 1971 - now in their 70s, children, grandchildren.. In the Church
 2. John - I believe in the ministry since AC. U.S. Congregations and also many years in East Africa.
 3. Have faced challenges - Merrie's health, daughter with cancer.
 4. Is John's focus going to be on preparing the bride of Christ? To be the actual "first fruits" of God's plan?
 - a) Are we ready? Which Church in Revelation are we? What do we need to overcome?
 - b) To do this we need to grow in using the Holy Spirit

IV. God and Christ are In Charge

- A. Isa 40:15, 17-18, 21-31 NKJV - 15 Behold, the nations [are] as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. ... 17 All nations before Him [are] as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. 18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? ... 21 Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 [It is] He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants [are] like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. 23 **He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. Ie God is in Charge!** 24 Scarcely shall they be planted, Scarcely shall they be sown, Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, When He will also blow on them, And they will wither, And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble. 25 "To whom then will you liken Me, Or [to whom] shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these [things], Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of [His] power; Not one is missing. 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God"? 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the weak, And to [those who have] no might He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew [their] strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

- V. An "End Time" Charge to the Church? To become like Christ - to be like him at our end.
- A. Col 3:12-13 ESV - 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
 - B. Luk 17:3-4 ESV - 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."
 - C. Mat 13:24-30 KJV - 24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.
 - D. Luk 23:34 NKJV - 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.
 - E. Act 7:58-60 ESV - 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
 - F. Loving and forgiving are "strong meat", not milk.
- VI. We need to be unified and lead by the Spirit of God.
- A. Luk 17:3-5 ESV - 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"
 - B. Rev 3: 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
 - 1. God loves us.
 - 2. God is showing us how we need to change and grow to be in His Kingdom

Conclusion:

Rather than asking why we have a new President, we need to be asking WHAT changes do God and Jesus Christ want us to make in order to be in Their Kingdom.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.ucg.org/church/council-of-elders/bios>

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/towards-oneness-part-1>

What does it mean to be chosen for an eternal future? We have been given the incredible calling to become firstfruits in God's Kingdom—even in a world filled with chaos. However, this calling must transform our thinking toward others if we are ever to become one like Christ is one with the Father.

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/towards-oneness-part-2>

In Part Two of this sermon series, John Elliott expounds further on God's forgiveness of all of our sins, and how he sees us despite all of our shortcomings. He is excited to give us eternal life and for us to be in His family. However, God also expects us to work towards perfect unity among ourselves now by also forgiving each-other as He forgives us, and He expects us to forgive each-other of shortcomings. Do we place each-other into preconceived "boxes" because of grudges that are preventing us from achieving unity?