

## Biography of Charles Harrison Mason

Young Mason came from a poor family, worked as a sharecropper and did not receive an early formal education, yet he still learned how to read and write. As a child, Mason was influenced by the religion of his parents and other former slaves. He admired their religious devotion to God (prayer ritual, spontaneous singing, and shouting). When he was twelve, Mason embraced the [African-American](#) Baptist faith; he was later baptized and worked in his older brother's church. Mason experienced an extreme and convincing "conversion experience" at the age of 18 when "the glory of God came down upon him" and his health was restored to him. He went out among the community with only the rudimentary education already achieved, feeling that God would lead him. At this period he became enamored of the autobiography of Reverend Amanda Smith, an African American Holiness preacher, and began to claim that he had likewise undergone the experience of complete sanctification. Mason also became acquainted with Charles Price Jones, a popular Baptist preacher from Mississippi who shared his enthusiasm for holiness teachings. The men became embroiled in a series of disputes over the doctrine of Christian perfectionism that swept African-American Baptist ranks in [Mississippi](#), [Arkansas](#), and western Tennessee.

## Ministry

In 1897, Mason and Jones, being expelled from the local Baptist Association for preaching Holiness, formed a new fellowship of churches named simply, "Church of God." Mason suggested the name, "the Church of God in Christ", a name he said came to him during a vision in [Little Rock, Arkansas](#) to distinguish the church from a number of "Church of God" groups which were forming at that time. Mason was sent by the church to Los Angeles to investigate the revival being led by Elder William J. Seymour, and in March 1907, experienced the baptism of the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues. Soon after, back in the south, he would advocate the new Pentecostal teachings, but found that Elder Jones was opposed to it. The two men split their group; Mason won the legal rights to the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) name and was elected the General Overseer of his group. In the years that followed, Mason ably directed his fledgling, Memphis-based denomination, commissioning traveling evangelists to spread COGIC's message, establishing working partnerships with various individuals, and particularly targeting the masses of African Americans headed for work in Northern cities. At the time of Bishop Mason's death in 1961, COGIC had nearly 400,000 members. Today, it has a membership of nearly 6.7 million members, making it the fourth largest denomination in the United States. He is the creator of the Church of God in Christ.

## Personal Testimony of his Baptism of The Holy Ghost

The following are excerpts from Elder Mason's personal testimony regarding his receiving the Holy Ghost.

"The first day in the meeting I sat to myself, away from those that went with me. I began to thank God in my heart for all things, for when I heard some speak in tongues, I knew it was right though I did not understand it. Nevertheless, it was sweet to me.

I also thank God for Elder Seymour who came and preached a wonderful sermon. His words were sweet and powerful and it seems that I hear them now while writing. When he closed his sermon, he said 'All of those that want to be sanctified or baptized with the Holy Ghost, go to the upper room; and all those that want to be justified, come to the altar.'

I said that is the place for me, for it may be that I am not converted and if not, God knows it and can convert me..."

"Glory!"

"The second night of prayer I saw a vision. I saw myself standing alone and had a dry roll of paper in my mouth trying to swallow it. Looking up towards the heavens, there appeared a man at my side. I turned my eyes at once, then I awoke and the interpretation came.

God had me swallowing the whole book and if I did not turn my eyes to anyone but God and Him only, He would baptize me. I said yes to Him, and at once in the morning when I arose, I could hear a voice in me saying, " I see..."

"I got a place at the altar and began to thank God. After that, I said Lord if I could only baptize myself, I would do so; for I wanted the baptism so bad I did not know what to do. I said, Lord, You will have to do the work for me; so I turned it over into His hands."

"Then, I began to ask for the baptism of the Holy Ghost according to Acts 2:41, which readeth thus: 'Then they that gladly received His word were baptized,' Then I saw that I had a right to be glad and not sad."

"The enemy said to me, there may be something wrong with you. Then a voice spoke to me saying, if there is anything wrong with you, Christ will find it and take it away and marry you...Someone said, 'Let us sing.' I arose and the first song that came to me was 'He brought me out of the Miry Clay.' O Glory Hallelujah! Praise His most wonderful name!

The Spirit came upon the saints and upon me...Then I gave up for the Lord to have His way within me. So there came a wave of Glory into me and all of my being was filled with the Glory of the Lord.

So when He had gotten me straight on my feet, there came a light which enveloped my entire being above the brightness of the sun. When I opened my mouth to say Glory, a flame touched my tongue which ran down me. My language changed and no word could I speak in my own tongue. Oh! I was filled with the Glory of the Lord. My soul was then satisfied.