CAN’T NOBODY DO ME LIKE JESUS!

Photographs from the Sacred Steel Community

Robert L. Stone

Foreword by Eric Lewis Williams
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House of God churches generally conduct two worship services on Sunday: morning and evening. In addition to regular weekly meetings, each state conducts a number of special events including funerals, pastor anniversaries, revivals, state assemblies, state baptisms, and Sunday school conventions. The biggest meeting is the General Assembly, held for ten days each June at the headquarters church in Nashville, Tennessee and attended by about two thousand members. The Church of the Living God has a similar range of church meetings and an annual General Assembly in July at its national headquarters church in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In both the House of God and the Church of the Living God, the electric steel guitar is at the top of the musical instrument hierarchy, and generally the only instrument to play the lead part. The churches cite literal interpretation of the Psalms of David as the basis for making loud music and dancing, or “shouting,” to give God praise. Specific citations include Psalms 149:3 (“Let them praise His name in the dance”) and Psalms 150:4 (“Praise Him with stringed instruments”).

The steel guitarist plays during most of a Sunday worship service excluding the announcements, the early part of the sermon, and congregational prayer. A service is typically two-and-one-half-hours long, but the activity of the Holy Spirit sometimes extends a service by half an hour or more. For example, congregants may spontaneously begin to sing from the pews, rise to testify, or require guidance and extended time in seeking the Holy Spirit, all of which the pastor allows.

Churches range from humble structures tucked away in rural communities and accessed by graded sand roads, to large, modern buildings such as the House of God headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee. Wherever possible, I have included an exterior view of each church prior to photographs of activities inside the church.
Church Meetings

Courtesy State of Florida Archives.