***The Church vs. Judaism  
  
Colossians 1:1-2  
  
Col-008***

Salutation number eight, Colossians 1:1-2. The Apostle Paul, we have seen addresses the believers in Colossae with two key words. They are theological words. He calls them Saints and he calls them faithful brethren. They are Saints because they are in Christ by virtue of their trust in Him as savior. And consequently, they are separated to God for the purpose of ultimate salvation. The word sanctification means to be set apart to an ultimate goal. They are faithful because they are true to sound doctrine and, therefore, they're loyal to Jesus Christ and to His word the Bible. Paul's reference to being in Christ is another one of those technical terms that we find in the Bible and is a very important one. He is referring here to what we call, to what the Bible calls, the Church, which is also described as the invisible body of Christ.

**The Church**

The position in the Church or in Christ is secured by believing the gospel of the grace of God. Entrance into the Church Universal is by faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal savior. In this age, Jews and Gentiles are not distinguished in God's dealings. Jews and Gentiles who are saved today are united. The book of Ephesians tells us THAT one new body is called the Church. Please remember there was no Church in the Old Testament. And furthermore, there was no revelation about the Church in the Old Testament. That's why when we come to the New Testament, the Church is called a, a mustérion (moos-tay'-ree-on), the Greek says, and in the Greek language, mustérion means something which is secret in the past, and then at a certain point in time God reveals it. The whole New Testament is a revelation of an enormous secret that God was keeping in the Old Testament era.

God had in the back of His mind that once the Jews rejected Christ as savior so that He could not fulfill His covenant promises to them, everything had to be put on hold, and the kingdom promises had to be postponed. And everything that dealt with Judaism had now to be set aside and put into a holding pen until God performed what was a brand new thing. He had in mind to take Jews and Gentiles and create a group of believers so close and so intimate to the Son of God Himself, that they would be described as His very body and as His bride. The Old Testament people had nothing like that. And when the Judaism or the Old Testament is once more reconstructed and God moves back into completing His promises to Israel, they'll still never have what we as Christians have. They will never have the intimate relationship to Jesus Christ as a bride does to her husband.

It is very important that you understand that distinction. The entrance into Judaism was by being born into the Jewish commonwealth. Entrance into the body of Christ is by being born again spiritually. Now let me put it clearly right off the bat, lest somebody gets a misunderstanding. There's only one way to go to heaven. I don't care whether you're Moses or whether you're Adam or whether you're Sam Brown today. Everybody goes to heaven on the basis of a grace act of God. It's a gift from God, and it's on the basis either of a savior that you're looking forward to under Judaism who is to come or a savior that you look back to that has come under the era of the Church. Everybody Old and New Testament is saved by the grace of God through trusting in Christ as personal Savior. Many people were members of the Commonwealth of Israel, but they were not born again.

They were not trusting in the coming Savior. They were trusting instead, in those 613 commandments that made up Judaism. If you want to live under the Old Testament Judaic system, why have a ball? You got 613 rules specifically laid out for you to obey, to live by. And this is the great distinction between Judaism, a work system as a way of life, not as a salvation system or a grace system in under the era of the Church as a way of life. This means that God enables you to live like you couldn't believe you were capable of living a godly life, a fruitful life, a significant life like the Jew never even dreamed of. You see, in the Old Testament, a Jew was told to be good in order to be blessed. In the New Testament, we are told to be good because we already have all heavenly blessings in Christ distributed to us.

They're already ours. That's the big difference. So the Church age believers are totally distinct from believers under Judaism, which is based on a Mosaic law in its way of life of 613 commandments. The Church, therefore, is not a substitute for Judaism. It is a totally separate creation of God hidden in Old Testament scriptures. The principles, the rituals, the lifestyle of Judaism do not carry over into Christianity of the Church age. Get that. The way of life of Judaism does not carry over at any point whatsoever into the Church age. Okay, so now somebody popped in, I heard you 10 commandments. What about God's righteousness? Well, the righteousness of God indeed is applicable to our time as it was to the Jews. But the expression of that righteousness of God, the characteristic, the character of God that in the Old Testament was summarized under the code of the 10 Commandments. And the 10 Commandments are really 10 principles of security and preserve your freedom.

There's only one commandment, however, that is not repeated in the New Testament. All those commandments of the righteousness of God are repeated in a New Testament except one. And that is going to Church on Saturday, worshiping on Saturday, and keeping the Sabbath day holy. And because the law is a unit, as Paul pointed out, you can't say I live under the Old Testament Jewish system. I subscribe to the Old Testament system because if you break one of them, you've broken it off. You cannot, you cannot have a cup that falls off the table and you break the handle off and the cup is still okay. It is now imperfect. It is not a perfect item. It has been broken; even though there's a lot of the cup left that you can still use, it's still broken. And the Jewish law system, if you broke one place, that that was it; you were finished; and there's no way anybody could not break it at some point. So the whole point of the Judaism is that it was a way of life.

If you understand that that was one of the most magnificent technical phrases that Dr. Lewis, Barry Chafer of Dallas Seminary who was always trying to think of how to say theological terms in ordinary language. When he hit upon saying that Judaism was one way of life, Christianity was another way of life, then you remove the issue of salvation. It's the way you're going to live your way of life system. Under Judaism was one thing, 613 commandments. Under Christianity, the indwelling Holy Spirit. No Jew ever had the spirit of God indwelling permanently. The indwelling Holy Spirit is leading you on the basis of doctrine, how to live your life so that you live and walk in the principles that please God.

**Judaism**

So the principles, the ritualism, and the lifestyle of Judaism do not carry over into Christianity in any respect. In maximizing your blessings in time and your rewards for your Christian service in eternity requires a total separation between Old Testament Judaism and New Testament Christianity. Now you can go home and say you've had a worthwhile meeting just because I said that. Maximizing your blessings and time and your eternal rewards for Christian service are structured upon your understanding the difference between Judaism and New Testament Christianity and that the two are totally separate. And you cannot say I'm bringing something over from the Old Testament because it's a continuation in Christianity; that is false. Judaism will once more be reactivated after the rapture of the Church. God will then go back to the Jew. And that's why only 483 years of Daniel's timetable has been fulfilled after the 483rd year, which was by the way, we are able to figure chronologically to the very day, to the very day on that Palm Sunday, it was the very end of that day. That's when the nation finally rejected Christ. Then the prophetic clock stopped ticking, the pendulum stopped swinging, and all of the program that God told Daniel, 490 years, and all of my dealings with Israel will be over. All covenants will be fulfilled, all promises will be fulfilled. 483 years went by and then the pendulum stopped swinging and those seven years have to be fulfilled. God is not a liar. And when God says that something is going to happen chronologically, it's precise to the day and to the very day. The chronologist amazingly shows us 483 years completed, seven more to go that will take place after the Church is completed. This whole special secret that God is working out now we're taking to heaven, meet the Lord in the air. And then we'll begin once more God's program with the Jews in Judaism; it will come back with a roaring tiger lion power once more upon the face of the earth, and we will be up there watching it from heaven.

There are two great sources of falsehoods about Judaism and Christianity. After God solved the enormous problem of the era when people did what was right in their own eyes, as the scripture says, that was a dispensation of conscience. You did what seemed right to you, and the earth turned into a jungle. God wiped it all out with the flood. After the flood He changed the dispensation. He gave a new way of life. So all the dispensation is so lifestyle says for now we're going to have magistrates, we're going to have courts, we're going to have punishment for what you do wrong. And for the ultimate punishment of first-degree murder, you will pay for it with your life. And everything was set up now to keep what happened before the flood from ever happening again. But the sin nature man doesn't like that. The sin nature man says, I want to be able to do what I want to be able to do.

**Nimrod and the Tower of Babel**

And pretty soon along came a powerful man like Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Eventually the whole false religion of Nimrod was brought into being where man was his own God, and he worshiped the heavenly bodies. So, they built the Tower of Babel as a worship point of that structure. Along came early Christianity, and when Emperor Constantine made it the Department of Religion of the Roman Empire, in came all the pagans with all of the Babylonian mystery religious beliefs of every kind, rituals that you would be amazed. I'm not going to take time today to tell you in detail, but rituals that you'd be amazed that people do today in religious systems. They came from Babylon, not from the Bible because you don't even find them in the Bible. And the result is that out of that Babylonian system, there came an amalgamation with Christianity that we call today the Roman Catholic Church. It's a perverted hybrid, and nobody who follows the Catholic system of doctrine for salvation will ever get to heaven. So, first of all, people came out of the Reformation, and they carried over things from Roman Catholicism which were practices in the medieval Church which they had absorbed previously from paganism of Babylon. Secondly, the great confusion comes when people do not understand that Judaism is a way of life, and it is separate from Christianity as a way of life. And two, don't mix.

So when Paul says to the people of Colossae, he is greeting them as brethren in Christ; that technical term is referring to what elsewhere is called the Church. And so we looked this morning at the nature of the Church invisible. If you get this straight, the vast portions of the Bible will fall together for you. You will understand them. You'll see that there are not contradictions. You will not be going over to the Old Testament and bringing over commandments from the Old Testament and spiritualizing them. So you can pretend that you keep them like when you go to Church on Sunday, but you want to be a real Jewish boy or girl. So you say you're going to worship on the Christian Sabbath day. There's no such thing as a Christian Sabbath day. To call about the Christian Sabbath day is like talking about a prostitute virgin; that's called an oxymoron. They're mutually exclusive. You can't have them both. And there's no such thing as a Sabbath day, which is Saturday and the day of total rest, and Sunday, which is the Lord's Day, which is the Christian Day of worship, which is a day of enormous activity and great joy. That's what we were told to do. The first Christian Sunday was to exercise great joy, and nobody's going to put you to death. Which one of the 613 rules of Judaism said to do if you went out and washed your car or if you went out shopping and carried the groceries home on Sunday. Nobody's going to stone you to death for that. You see the system is gone and leave it with God to bring it back when He's ready. He has a purpose for it, but is not today. What He has today is this invisible body of believers call the Church.

**The "Ekklesia"**

The Greek word looks like this. It's the E K K L E S I A, ekklésia (ek-klay-see'-ah). And this means one thing. It means very simply the assembly. Ekklésia means an assembly, and it's an ordinary word out of the Greek New Testament world that people used on the streets of that era. The Greek of the New Testament time is called in the Koine Greek. Koine means common. This was an ordinary common word. People would come say, Hey, you're going to come down to our Ekklésia tonight. What's that? Well, it's the Veterans of Foreign War meeting. Oh you having an assembly tonight? Yeah, I'll be down to the Church with you. And that's all they meant. They just going to gather together someplace where there was a gathering. But as often happens, God, the Holy Spirit came along, said, I'm going to take that word. I'm going to make it a technical word. I'm going to give it a very specific spiritual meaning now in scripture. But all it meant was an assembly of people of some kind. Let me show you how it was used in the New Testament time. Notice Book of Acts 7:38, this is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness. Now if you have a King James Bible, it's called the Church in the wilderness; here is translated as the congregation in the wilderness. It could also be translated as the assembly in the wilderness. The footnote in my New American standard Scofield Bible here does indeed point out that the word here is Church, Ekklésia. This is the one who was in the Church in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai and who was with our fathers. And he received living oracles to pass on to you. Now this is speaking, of course, of Moses. And I show you this verse because the legalists want to come back and say, you see there was a Church in the Old Testament. Here it is right here speaking about the Church in the Old Testament. But this is not the meaning of Church in the technical sense of which we use it in a New Testament, that the Holy Spirit uses it in a New Testament. This is simply as a general assembly, a general gathering. You had the same problem when you use the word baptism in the Bible. How many baptisms are there in the Bible in a New Testament? How many? Seven. Seven baptisms in the Bible. Three of them are wet, four of them are dry. And you have to distinguish anytime you see the word baptism, which one of the baptisms it is. And which one of the dry baptisms in view it is. The baptism of the Holy Spirit. That's a dry baptism. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized. What does that mean? Some people foolishly think that that means believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and experience water baptism, Christian baptism and you'll be saved. That's what the Church of Christ believes. And you go, you go before God and say, I believe in Jesus Christ as my savior and I offer you my water baptism, which is a good word, and you're out. You're never going to go to heaven.

**Baptism**

The word baptism has to be identified by the context and the total teaching of scripture. Jesus Christ was baptized with water. You shouldn't tell people, as my pastor used to tell me, Follow Christ in baptism. You can't follow in baptism, it was a unique one for all baptism. It was His baptism because baptism always means identification. They didn't want to cause any trouble when they translated, so they didn't translate the word baptism. If they did, they would had to say, an identification. Instead, they just transliterated the letters from Greek to English. I Christ was identified with His mission to the cross. And if you identified with the mission to die for the sins of the world? That's what He was baptized to. And the baptism of John as that's the second wet baptism. When he baptized, and the Apostles baptized, people were identifying themselves with the Jewish kingdom. They were identifying themselves with the Abraham Covenant and the four subsequent covenants to that, they were identifying themselves with Judaism because that's the first thing Jesus Christ came to fulfill the promises to Israel. When they rejected Him and crucified Him, everything went on hold relative to those covenants until after the Church age. And, of course, the third wet baptism is the one of Christian baptism which identifies us with Christ that we are in Christ, we are immersed, we go down. That's why you can't, you can't sprinkle a person called baptisma (bap'-tis-mah). You can't pour water on them because the word baptism in Greek means you got to go under. When a Greek woman dyes a piece of cloth, she's putting it underwater to dye to color it. And she says she's baptizing the cloth. Now in the Greek Orthodox Church because they're better at the language and more consistent. You want to bring a child, an infant for baptism. That priest is going to take that baby. He's going to dip him under for three times.

They never have a quiet baptism in the Greek Orthodox Church. Once that kid goes under a zip name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, they know how to baptize. If you baptize, you got to go under the water. Thus, the immersion system is inherent in the word. And it certainly was inherent in the early Church custom, when the Ethiopian treasurer said to Philip, I believe, am I not ready to be baptized? He said, Yes, you are. Now that you're a believer, can't be baptized until you're a believer but you are. Well he says, Here's this water. Phillip says, Fine, stop the chariot. And the Bible says they walked out, they got down into the water. And what do you think they did? Sprinkle each other? No, they immersed them.

One of the best places to baptize someone is at the ocean when the waves are high, takes lots less effort to put them down. Bingo the wave comes over up and it's not as much as strenuous takes a great deal of agility. My last baptism, I had 25 people. And one thing, because God knew about our problem of different weights of people, He created the principle of buoyancy. So, for every gallon of every square foot of water you displace, you become eight pounds lighter. Well, the whole point was that here was a Church in the wilderness. The word the assembly is used here and that's what it means. It is not the word Church in a technical sense. It is a word that you have to identify like you do the word baptism. It has to have what it means very specifically in any particular point. So this verse simply tells us that in the Old Testament, the Jewish people were a congregation. They were an assembly of God's people. Take a look at Acts 19:32, “So then some were shouting one thing and some another for the assembly.” The “ekklésia” was in confusion and the majority did not know for what because they had come together. This was the uproar in Ephesus when the girl who was the little fortune teller found that she was saved. And, furthermore, that Paul told him that the little images that the silversmiths were selling of Diana, or the Ephesians was a false God, and that she is not the true God. But the true God is the one that Paul was telling him about. It caused an uproar. And so they all gathered together as a congregation of people, and they were called an assembly. It is the same word, Ekklésia. Nobody would in his right mind say that that referred to the New Testament Church.

Notice Acts 7:39. But if you want anything, this is one of the leaders speaking to the crowd. If you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful Ekklésia, the lawful assembly. He said, Knock off the riot, go to your homes and if you have a complaint, you come to the proper authorities and in the judicial court assembly, the issue will be settled. And here you have again, not the Church, you could translate this to Church. It'll be settled in the lawful Church. This is Church in the sense of a gathering. Acts 19:41, "And after saying this, he dismissed the assembly." He dismissed the Church, the gathering. So here's a pre-Christian use of the word Ekklésia. The word literally means the called-out ones. In this word here, the first two letters, e k, ek, is a preposition, it means out. The last letters klésia comes from the verb kaleó (kal-eh'-o), which means to call. So it's the called-out ones is literally that's what the word means. These who are called out from the mass of humanity. We Christians form the Church of the living God because we are called out as a special people from the mass of unsafe humanity. This word had a Hebrew equivalent indeed. And the Hebrew equivalent also meant the same thing as a Greek. It meant a group of people in assembly, a gathering the Greek looks like this.

Qahal (kaw-hawl'), in the Old Testament is the same as in the New Testament. And when they translated the Old Testament scripture into the Greek Bible, it's called a Septuagint version. Every time they came to Qahal, they translated as Ekklésia in the Greek. It's the same idea assembly. But none of those had any technical meaning as we think of the Church of God today. So I point this out to you to show you that the word Ekklésia into Christianity with two basic meanings. To the Greeks, it meant a self-governing democratic body. To the Jews it meant a theocratic society which was subject to their heavenly king. So that's the background of the Church in New Testament from the Greeks, a democratic body, from the Jews of Theocratic organization where God is running the show. Into the picture comes God. The Holy Spirit takes the word Ekklésia and He gives it a specific technical New Testament meaning based upon these two concepts to create a body of believers, which could be described as a theocratic. Democracy is a group of people called out from the mass of Jews and Gentiles to form a new and separate body of believers, new and separate, no connection to anything past, no connection to anything that follows. It is not the Greek civic organization nor is it the Jewish synagogue. The Christian Church is a special group given this technical word, the assembly.

And some Christians do not refer to them as a Church. They don't talk about going to Church. They talk about going to the assembly meeting, and that's okay. They're just being very precise in the meaning of Ekklésia. The fact that God does deal with separate groups of humanities is indicated for us here in I Corinthians 10:32. The apostle says, "Give no offense either to the Jews, that's Judaism, that's Israel, or to the Greeks, that's the Gentiles or to the Church of God." Now that puts the nail in the coffin. If anybody who still wants to suggest that it's all the same thing, do not give offense as a believer to the people of Israel. Do not give offense to the people of the Gentiles. Do not give offense to the Christians. Three distinct bodies of believers.

And you'll find in the Bible, there's a point in time when God starts dealing with the Gentiles, Adam. You'll find at the book of the Revelation, a terminal point where God finishes dealing with the Gentiles. All between they are always Gentiles, never mixed with anything else. You'll also find a point in the Bible where God begins dealing with Israel. That's Abraham. You'll find the book of the Revelation, the terminal point where God finishes dealing with the Jews as a nation. You'll also find a point in the Bible where God begins dealing with Christians the day of Pentecost. And you'll also find a terminal point, which is the rapture. In between, there are always Jews, there are always Gentiles, and there are always Christians. The three are never mixed. They start separately. They go separately and end up separately. The thing is confusing is that the Church category is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. But that's when you stop being a Jew and you stop being a Gentile. Some of you people were Jews, now you're Christians. Some of you people were Gentiles; now you're Christians. It's wrong to say a Jewish Christian or a Gentile Christian. You could say a Christian of Jewish origin or a Christian of Gentile origin. But you cannot be a mixture; you are one or the other. If you understand that, you won't be trying to grab pieces of the Old Testament and trying to live by it. Think that you're appealing to God for some blessing.

So these are never intermixed in God's plan. It is a common and serious error to transfer elements of the Jewish religious practice into the Church age. That's the point up to this point. So where do we get altars? I had a brother-in-law once in liturgical Church out of the Reformation. They know the doctrine of salvation, but their pastor stands up there like a priest in robes, and he goes through his ritual before their magnificent altar every Sunday. And so he said, Why don't you have an altar in your Church? Well, it began with how would an altar look here in this gymnasium. Well, I said, What is an altar for? And he thought about it and said, Well, you make sacrifices, right. So, I said, What sacrifices are we Christians making that we need an altar? He had no answer.

The medieval Church had an altar because Israel had an altar for the sacrificial system. They had to have an altar to kill those animals and to offer them, burn them up to God. But we Christians have only spiritual sacrifices. The sacrifice, the praise of our lips, the sacrifice of our substance at the offering box, the spiritual sacrifices that we offer. And we don't need an altar to do that. An altar today is an insult. Yes. Yeah. I'm saying that. You walk into a Church, and you see an altar, God's insulted because that's telling you that the work of God, the work of Christ is unfinished. Now the Roman Catholics at least are consistent. They do need an altar because what do they say they're doing? They're sacrificing Jesus Christ on it every time to perform the mass. So, they properly need an altar to re-sacrifice Him in a bloodless offering. But altars are out of Judaism, and they're improper in the Christian's context. Rituals, now you can have all the rituals you want. When people come to me and want to be married, they want to know what they have to do. You need the procedure, the ceremony. And I tell them, you can do anything you want. Set it up any way you want. There's only one thing I have to do at some point near the end, whatever else I may say, and whatever else you may do in your ritual and ceremony. I mean you can have the whole place smelling with incense pots, parading around and people carrying candles in whatever you want. But I have to at some point say, I hereby declare by the power of the state vested in me that you are to each other, husband, and wife.

Now you're legally married and that's all I have to do. I do have to do that as a legal obligation. But the rest of the ceremony you can do as you wish. But in the Old Testament, those rituals had to be precise. They had to do it that way. They did not have freedom to do it one way or another. So don't get all bent out of shape because somebody says, Hey, December 25th is the worship of Saturnalia. It's the worship of the sun God coming back to life because the days are going to get longer. And so they're burning those, what they call good fires, the bonfires, the bonfires in order to help the sun get its light back and get the things refreshing so everything will grow again. We shouldn't celebrate Christmas. Boy, I've met some Christians who are very adamant about that. They won't celebrate Christ; they won't celebrate Christmas because originally the day itself was a pagan holiday.

**Priests**

But that isn't what it means to us. And don't let anybody scare you off from saying, Hey, we're going to have a wonderful time celebrating Christmas. It's your own ceremony and ritual created all you wish. Whatever else you want, just don't think that it's a holy day, will you? Don't talk about Easter as a holy day, that you get some credit from God for attending Church on that day. That's why Church services are always so well attended on Christmas Day and Easter because people have this Old Testament concept of a holy day. Now, boy, when those six holy feast states came along in the Old Testament, you better be there, and you better perform then or you're in deep trouble. You did not have freedom under that system. So we've got the rituals, we've got the holy days, we got the priestly mediators. I cannot go to God unless I approach him by a priest.

That's why the whole priestly system of Roman Catholicism is so important. You don't get to heaven without the priest. Yet in the New Testament, we are all our own personal private priests and, of course, the legalisms to gain merit. All of this is changed, dramatically changed from the Old Testament system. So, when Paul says I greet you in Colossae as those who are in Christ, he is talking about something that is a great honor. Something that is distinct from anything that ever happened in history before, and it has no connection with anything that happened in history before. It is a great thing that began on the day of Pentecost, and we who are called and chosen by God in this age to be part of that great enterprise of God, our privilege above all the believers of all history in the past.

**A Royal Priesthood**

What does Peter call us? He calls us a royal priesthood. You know what a person of royalty is? That means that you, Christians, are the aristocrats of all the believers of all ages. You're not just some commoner, you are magnificent aristocrats, and, therefore, you should live accordingly. But you see you're capable of doing it. If someone has well taught you in doctrine, and you know the principles saying in the inner circle of temporal fellowship with confession known sins, then doctrine functions cycles up into your mind from your human spirit where you've stored, and you are able to be guided by the spirit of God and you will live a magnificent, significant life. The Jew could never do that. He never had that help. And that's why Paul says there was nothing wrong with the law. It was holding, just, and good. But it was weak through the human flesh. You the human person couldn't do it because he has a sin nature, and on your own you break it. But suddenly you get indwelled permanently by the Holy Spirit. You have access to the full New Testament and Old Testament scriptures, you know the doctrines, and the principles of confession of known sins. And you're off and running and you'll find that then it's easy to do what is right. You'll find it's easy to say no to the sin nature. You'll find it's easy to turn your back upon the world system, and you will be nobody's fool in any institution of our society.

So the origin of the Church is very important to understand that it's brand new and also to understand its relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Judaism was God's way of dealing with mankind in the Old Testament. Christianity is his way of dealing with mankind in a New Testament. And both of them are ways of living. Both of them are lifestyles. And the apostle Paul uses them as a word that is translated as a lifestyle, a way of living an organization of life. And it is translated in the King James by the word dispensation, which is a good word. It simply means an age when God is doing things in a certain way, not relative to salvation but relative to how you live. Judaism is one thing. Christianity dramatically different. The two are totally different systems. And here, in Ephesians chapter three, here's an example of that difference of these two great dispensations between Judaism and Christianity. In Ephesians one, Paul says, For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship, here's the word for dispensation, which has translated as stewardship specifically, but the stewardship means an arrangement of living. If you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to me for you, the dispensation of the Church age, the full details were given only to Paul. The other apostles learned it from him. But Paul was the one. That's why he wrote most of the New Testament epistles. He was the one in that three-year Arabian stint after his conversion where he learned about this unique distinct work of God, the Church.

If indeed you've heard of the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to me for you, that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in brief. He has talked to them about the mystery of the Church secret in the Old Testament. And it was made known to him by Revelation. He didn't learn it for Peter, James, and John. And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and Prophets and the spirit. This is what I just told you in the Old Testament, the Church body and God's plan for the Church and all details secret never revealed. Now it is made known, verse six, to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow protectors of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Was it a secret in the Old Testament that Gentiles were going to be saved and go to heaven? No, the Bible is full of the fact that the Gentiles are going to be blessed as a result of the Savior that came to Israel. But what was a secret? That God was going to take Jews and Gentiles and mold them into a distinct new body of believers, unique to this age, only called the Church, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, an intimate relationship with the second person of the Trinity. That was never revealed in the Old Testament. Now suddenly and the full impact of that revelation that Jews and Gentiles could be in one body in the Church that didn't come till seven years after Pentecost. It happened when Peter got hit with the experience at Joppa, and he saw that sheet coming down with all those animals, the unclean animals he told to eat. And a Jew, viewed a Gentile, an unclean creature. He wouldn't have anything to do with it. Finally, there's knocking at the door, the agents from Cornelius's household, the first Gentiles born again coming into the Church of God. And Peter looked there, and he saw that they were impacted by the baptism of the Holy Spirit because they started talking in foreign languages. And when he got back to Jerusalem, he said, I don't care what you say, I was there. And when I told him the gospel, they believed and though they were Gentiles, they had the same baptism of the Holy Spirit, which in the early days was evidenced by speaking in foreign languages as we had. That settled the issue for the Jerusalem Church. Verse seven, this combination of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of his power.

So, Paul says, I was called very specifically to the ministry of the Church to reveal what is distinctively true of Christianity, which is not true of Old Testament Judaism. But Judaism is older, and it's well established, and it's been there for centuries. So people just can't get over believing that it's been removed, that it's been set aside, and they fail to view Christianity as something distinct from Judaism. They think that Judaism is the stalk and that the Church is the blossom. Terrible false picture. Whatever comes out of the stalk of Judaism, it's not the Church. Those are distinctively different arrangements. While the issue of the fact that Jews and Gentiles were part of a distinctively new body, which had never been known in the history of mankind before, was settled by Peter's testimony to with the Church of Jerusalem. We had that in Acts 15:13. "After all the debate was over, James, the pastor of the Church in Jerusalem, the main Church, James gets up and he summarizes and says, Here's the decision of the apostolic group. Acts 15:13, "And after they had stopped speaking, James answered saying, Brethren, listen to me, Simeon, that is Peter, has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles to people for His name. And with this, the words of the prophet agree just as it is written."

James says, "Peter's right, I can prove it by the Old Testament." And he quotes the Old Testament scripture. After these things, I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it. James caught the understanding of this passage. He said, Judaism is down. It is like a building collapse, but the Old Testament prophets is after this thing is finished. And now James says, "I know what this thing is. It's the Church age. When that era is complete, then I will come back and rebuild Israel and Judaism. Israel will take its place among the nations. Israel will become the leading nation. Israel will become the people of God once more." Verse 17: "'In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord. And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' says the Lord, 'Who makes these things known from of Old.'" James says, "This is exactly what the Old Testament scripture says. Judaism is to be set aside, Christianity to come in when it is finished, Judaism comes back. The two never related." Verse 19, "Therefore, it is my judgment, that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they may abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

James says these Gentiles are part of the Church. They're with us. They're part of the body of Christ. Therefore, we accept them as full standing. But we do tell them out of respect for their Jewish brethren and for their own wellbeing that they abstain from anything that has been offered to an idol. Don't eat meat that's been offered to an idol. Secondly, no sexual immorality, very rampant among the Gentiles, and don't eat anything that has been strangled and they didn't drain the blood out of it. Never eat anything from which the blood has not been drained from the meat. That was one of the laws, and it was a dietary law. It's an unhealthy thing to do. Acts 15:21 says, "For Moses from ancient generations has in every cities those who preach him since he has read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

And what he meant was, there are Jews. These Jews will become Christians. They still remember their Jewish orientation. Don't offend them. The apostle Paul later said the same thing. If my brother sees me eating meat that offends him, I'm not going to eat the meat in front of him. After he goes home, Paul says, I'll pitch it in the microwave, and I'll have my little snack then where he doesn't see me, and I won't upset him because my eating that meat is no problem. But if it's a problem to him, I'm going to lay off. He hasn't grown the spiritual maturity to carry that, and I'm not going to push him and weaken his faith. So, the time order is set here, work for the Gentiles through the Church first, then the completion of the covenants with Israel after the Rapture of the Church. That's the relationship. First, the completion of God's program for the Church, those who are in Christ. Then after the Church is removed at the rapture, comes all the Old Testament system roaring back in. And the completion of the covenant with Abraham as it was subsequently expanded later in the Palestinian, the Davidic, and the New Covenants. We are privileged to be living in this age and we particularly because it seems that close on the horizon now the world has finally come to an arrangement where all the things that the book of the Revelation reveals will be in place, are now in place, when the great antichrist comes onto scene.

**Closing prayer**

Our Heavenly Father. We do thank thee for this thy word.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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