***The Uniqueness of the Church Age  
  
Colossians 1:15-20  
  
COL-134***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," segment number 24 in Colossians 1:15-20.

In Colossians 1:18, the God-Man Jesus Christ is declared to be the Head of a body of believers called the church. You cannot play loose with the words of Scripture. The words of Scripture have meaning. They have meaning that is frozen in time. And you cannot get the message of God except through the meaning of the words. Anytime you read something that someone has written, if you twist the meaning of the words, you don't get what they have said. And a special body of believers called the church is not the same thing as the special body of believers call Israel. They're two totally different things.

This special body of believers call the church is totally unrelated to Israel, and it is functioning under special powers and privileges of the grace of God. Why is so much mixture and confusion on this today? Simply because the Roman Catholic Church botched it all up; they mixed the things together; and, the Reformers never got it straight. So, to this day, we have things that belong to Israel mixed in with things that belong to the church, which makes it a mongrel at both ends, completely undermining the purpose and the plan of God.

The divine plan for the church today is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who joined together in a way that was never envisioned in the Old Testament, simply because it was never revealed there. In the Old Testament, the union of Jews and Gentiles as a special people of God was a secret. That's why the details are described as mysteries. The distinctive details about the church, which distinguishes it from Israel, are in the New Testament. That's where the secrets, or the mysteries, are unfolded and revealed.

So, get out of the Old Testament, except for, as Scripture says: they are for illustration. They are to illustrate spiritual truths. Don't be going back to Israel to find things that are pertinent to you as a Christian, as a member of the body of Christ. You're not going to find it in the Old Testament. It was never discussed there. It had nothing to do with that Old Testament system of Judaism.

However, as I showed you last week, the Old Testament Scriptures very impressively left gaps into which the church age was to be inserted. The prophets, who revealed these things through the inspiration of God, did not understand these holes. They didn't understand these gaps. Now, from the New Testament, we say, "Aha, now we understand why these gaps were left, because they were the difference between the First and Second Coming of Christ. The Old Testament never said that there was going to be a First Coming of Christ and a Second Coming of Christ. But it described that – the First Coming as coming as a suffering Lamb; and, the Second Coming as the conquering lion of Judah. And that was very confusing, because those two analogies are mutually exclusive.

However, now we see, "Aha, there was a gap between the First and Second Coming, and into that has come to church. I gave you the word the theologians like to use: intercalation. An intercalation in the dictionary says "it's something that is inserted between two things." It has nothing to do with what comes before; and, it has nothing to do with what comes after. And that's what the church is. The body of Christ, or the church, began with the brand new thing which had never happened in the human race before on the day of Pentecost. That is what the Bible calls "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." Christians were placed into Christ Himself. And this body was begun, and this church body will be completed at the rapture of the church, when all Christians, dead and alive, meet the Lord in the air, and are taken to heaven with Him. In heaven, the Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to receive rewards or loss of rewards for their Holy Spirit-produced good works, or their sin nature-produced human good, in God's service here on earth.

Meanwhile, while we are in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ, on the earth, the final seven years of God's program for Israel is fulfilled. That timetable is revealed in Daniel, that we went over last week. That seven years before the Second Coming of Christ is fulfilled while we are in heaven, awaiting our return, at which point in time we will then begin to rule the world with Christ.

There's a great contrast between the gentiles, who are outside of the covenant blessings of Israel, and the Jews, who are in the covenant blessings of Israel. We won't take time this morning to read it. If you want to jot it down, Ephesians 2:1 through Ephesians 3:12 is a beautiful description of how the gentiles were left out of everything that dealt with the Jews. They had no hope. They were outside of the commonwealth of Israel. They were outside of the blessings of God. They had no covenant relationship. And of course, gentiles and Christians still had no covenant relationship to God. But now, because of salvation, and because of the special body of Christ, the church, we have a great relationship with God, far superior to anything the Jew has.

If I can identify this morning the dramatic privileges that pertain to Christians, and only Christians, in the Bible – privileges never possessed by the Jews under Judaism, perhaps you might be less inclined to attach the Mosaic lifestyle to the freedom of grace. If you can see that there are certain things that Christians have that there was no way that Jew had, you'll suddenly realize that there's a difference between Israel and the church. When you mix Judaism with Christianity, that's like attaching barnacles to the hull of a ship which spoils its smooth sailing. And if you want to spoil your smooth spiritual sailing, and create a lot of confusion, just add the barnacles of Judaism to your Christianity, and you'll have a real mess on your hands. This is why ships are put in dry dock. Finally, their speed is so cut down because of the barnacles that have attached themselves, which don't belong there. They're put in dry dock, and all that is scraped off, so that the hull is smooth again.

Christians today, in most denominations, suffer from the barnacles of Judaism which have been permitted to encrust themselves on the smooth hull of the grace of God and the ship of the church. Why on earth would a Christian want to be burdened by the barnacles of Judaism, which Paul says, when it was in effect in the Old Testament, nobody could live victoriously under it. Nobody could function under it. All of those rituals of Judaism: the robes; the priests; the incense; the candles; and, the whole bit – none of that, of course, had any meaning relative to salvation. The only purpose of it was to illustrate. These were symbols illustrating realities. And yet, people today still want to play with the symbols.

**The Church Age, and Only the Church Age**

**In Christ**

All right. Here are some characteristics of the church age that were simply not true in the Old Testament. First of all, it is true that all believers are united in Christ – the union of all believers in Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 is one of the verses that indicates that: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek." That's what Christianity is about – baptizing all believers into one body. All Christians are united by being in Christ. This is called "positional sanctification" – the setting apart to the purpose of God. And this is the only basis of unity among Christians that there is on earth during the church age. There is no such thing as organizational unity among Christians, in general, in their experience.

Every now and then, you have some mass movement that comes along, and we're going to have a great unity. One of the latest has been Promise Keepers, which has demonstrated itself to be just another one of those things that have exploded on the scene to have Christian unity, and the unity is external, but there is no substantial doctrinal unity involved. The whole thing breaks apart when it comes to the examination of its comparison to the reality of Christ. The leader of Promise Keepers can say, "Anybody who accepts Jesus Christ is part of us." And you go to a Muslim and say, "Do you accept Jesus Christ?" He might say, "Oh yes, He's one of the prophets. He's not the big prophet. Mohammad is the big prophet, but we accept Him." Are the Muslims part of us? They go to Hindus and say, "Do you accept Jesus Christ?" They says, "Yes, He was one of the great avatars. He was one of the great incarnations of deity. He was not the greatest. He can't match up to Shiva, and some of these others." Are they part of us?

You can see the subtlety of trying to have an external experiential unity. That's not what the Bible talks about here in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Even within a small church group, you are well aware of the fact that unity is not always there externally. There's not always the unity there. The only unity that God talks about is the spiritual unity in Christ. Because of that, we are commanded to love the brethren. To love the brethren calls for a lot of mental attitude goodwill tolerance, because that's what the word "love" means. It does not include, of course, accepting those who are out of the realm of the integrity, compatible with the Word of God. It does not call for accepting Christians who are negative to sound doctrine. But it calls for accepting all believers as part of the family of God, even those who are deviating.

Christians today are separated primarily over doctrine, and over the implications of doctrine. And the reason for this is that, instead of the knowledge of the Word of God and sound doctrine, zeal is substituted. The emotion is substituted for objective reality. That is why we have all the barnacles of Judaism on Christianity today, and people won't give them up. They fight tooth and nail to hang on to what Paul says the Law was: holy, good, and just, but weak through the flesh. You couldn't keep it. It's a total disaster system. And yet, people think that they gain points with God by practicing parts of Judaism. That unity that does exist is only in Christ. This side of eternity, there can be no Christian unity except that of our position in Christ at salvation.

It is this principle that gives me personally a great deal of problems when I get the announcements that the local ministerial alliance is going to have its meeting, and they're going to get with some project. I've been in those things before, and I've been in some of them not so long ago. And there I look across this conglomerate of men. They're all religious leaders, but with all kinds of deviations under the sun from the Word of God. And I'm in there, as an outsider, because I've been asked to do something special. That's why I'm there. But I can tell I don't have common spiritual ground. The only unity that I could have are those who are unified on the basis of the Word of God and the principle of the Spirit of God. Yet, you have all this external unity coming together, and everybody's a hail-fellow-well-met.

Now, the Jews never had this kind of unity with one another. They didn't have this kind of unity with God. This is a special characteristic of believers in Christ. Yes, the Jews had a unity as a nation. They had a unity under God as their King, but they were never part of God. They were never in Christ. They were never joined in an intimate relationship to God. Their unity was all on externals.

**Indwelt by the Holy Spirit**

Point number two (distinctives of the Christian life) is that every believer is in indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:27: "To whom God will to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery (referring to the church – this secret) among the gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Isn't that tremendous. Christ is abiding in us. And because He is there, He is our hope of eternal glory in heaven. Please remember that when the Bible uses the word "hope," not a possibility. It's a sure thing.

Now this is the basis for the Christian's fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is in us. I don't have to go looking for Him, and I don't have to try finding Him. He indwells us 24 hours of the day. And our fellowship with Him is the result of our being filled with the Spirit – temporal fellowship. If you are not under the control of the Holy Spirit, you do not have fellowship with Jesus Christ. And when you do not have fellowship with Jesus Christ, you start reaching for barnacles to hang onto your Christian life to make it. You start making a religious system for yourself.

The principle is 1 John 1:9, that tells us how to stay in fellowship with God our Father. 1 John 1:9 speaking to Christians, "If," and this is a third-class condition in the Greek: maybe you will; and, maybe you won't. But "If we confess our sins (admit them; name them; and, cite them), He (God the Father) is faithful and righteous." He's faithful. He'll forgive you every time, even if you've done it before. He's righteous because Christ has paid for that sin. He can forgive us: "To forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" – the sins we forgot, or when we aren't aware we sin. When we confess the sins we know, the unknown is covered.

Do not make the mistake to think that this passage has to do with becoming a Christian. If you go back in the context, you'll find that John repeatedly speaks to these people as "My little children." This is a family verse. This has to do with people who are already in the family of God. And if we confess our sins, God, the Father immediately removes them, and we are back in fellowship, and we're back in the power of Jesus Christ who indwells us.

This picture of fellowship with Christ is very forcibly portrayed in Revelation 3:20. And wouldn't you know it, here's another verse that people keep taking and pretending that this has to do with salvation: sloppy doctrine; sloppy teachers; and, sloppy believers. Revelation 3:20 says, Jesus speaking to the Laodicean church: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He is knocking on the door of the Christian's heart. "If anyone hears My voice." This "if" is a third-class condition in Greek: maybe you will; and, maybe you won't. "If anyone hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come into him, and will dine with him, and he with Me." What is eating with people a sign of? Fellowship. And here, again speaking to Christians, as all these seven letters do: "I stand," Jesus says. "I'm knocking at your door." Why do you knock at a door? Because you're on the outside, and you want to come in. And here, sin has put Christ on the outside of the believer's life. So, Christ knocks on the door. And if anybody will listen, and not pretend that He's not speaking to you, because the Spirit of God will make you very miserable. It'll bring conviction upon you. You open the door. He says, "I'll come in." And how you open the door? By confession of known sins.

Every believer is indwelt by Jesus Christ, but you can slam the door shut on His influence, and you can slam the door shut on the consciousness of His presence with unconfessed sins. The carnal heart is never open to Christ through salvation. You don't open your heart through salvation. You open your heart through confession after you have been saved. What does this do when you respond and confess sin? It makes you a spiritual Christian. Please remember that there's a big difference between being a spiritual Christian and being a mature Christian. The moment you are born again, you are a spiritual Christian. All sin has been wiped out. You are in fellowship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, but you're not a mature Christian by a long shot. Maturity comes through learning the Word of God, and developing the experience of walking with God. But spirituality is a matter of letting the Holy Spirit run the life. That's a confessing of known sins.

People are only saved by believing the gospel, and that's how Christ enters a life. Before salvation, the mind of the believer is a disaster area of disorientation to spiritual things, filled with human viewpoint. Faith in Christ removes this garbage pile of human viewpoint in the soul, and then Christ comes into our lives to indwell us for fellowship. Don't forget that the Jew never had God indwelling him. But Christians have God the Son indwelling us.

Well, if that isn't enough, there's a third distinctive of the Christian life, and that is that every Christian is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. John 14:17 verse seven points that out to us: "That is the Spirit of truth Whom the world cannot receive because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you." Here, in the upper room discourse, John 13–17 of the gospel of John, Christ is giving special instruction, which He has never given before, because now He's talking to the church. He's through talking to Judaism. He's through talking to the Jews about Judaism. He has now switched gears, since they're going to crucify Him, to reveal the details concerning his new era of life, the body of Christ. John 14:17 says, "He'll not only be with you, but He will be in you."

This is further stressed in 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God" – that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" "Do you not know that your body is the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?" No one before the church age was ever permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Some in the Old Testament era were empowered by the Holy Spirit on a temporary basis. In the church age, every believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And that Holy Spirit never will leave the Christian. What does this mean? This means that in the Old Testament, all the requirements of God upon the Jews had to be fulfilled by his own efforts – his willpower. And the sin nature constantly brought him down. That's why Paul said, "There was nothing wrong with the Law. It was holy, just, and good. But it was weak through the sin nature. But if God Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, indwells you, now you have the capacity to do right. Without Him, you'll do wrong every time. But you are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and Christians do terrible wrong things – things that are frightfully disgustingly wrong. How does it happen? It happens because you've neutralized the power of the Spirit of God through unconfessed sin. You've chosen to walk in sin. You've chosen to wipe out and pretend something isn't so, which is. And the result is that now the Spirit of God, who could do so much for you, can't do anything. And suddenly, as I told the boys around the campfire, and I'll tell the girls one of the nights, "You can now choose to be a prince or a pig. It's up to you. And you can choose to be a prince as a Christian, and choose to be a pig as a Christian." How could that happen? Because the Spirit of God is not in charge.

We are permanently indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. So, every Christian has the power to do right, and to use his spiritual gift effectively. The Jew never dreamed of such power. The Jew never dreamed of such a relationship. He would never have conceived to look at his body and say, "God the Holy Spirit lives in me, and I am his temple." All the Jew knew was an external temple in Jerusalem, where you went through external rituals which reflected spiritual things. But he never knew for one moment what it was to have the power of God running through him, giving him that intuitive guidance of the Spirit of God. All of us have trouble keeping those sins confessed. But God comes through with prayer responses, because the Spirit of God in your body temple is free to act, not the least of which is upon your mind.

In summer camp, I lost my watch. One day I went swimming, and we have this new, inflatable, aquatic device called the chariot. And I said, that seems very Roman and elitist and manly. I'd like to ride a chariot. So, I muscled my way in ahead of the kids; put the jacket on; and, got in the chariot. Before I did, I said, "I've got to be careful not to lose my watch." So, I took it off. Mr. Rouch's nice truck had been assigned to me to get around at camp, and I put it on the seat. I knew I had. I thought I had. I'm not sure. Anyhow, I got on the chariot, and it was a Mr. Toad's Wild ride. I can't even remember who gave us that chariot, but boy do the kids love it. And you just go bouncing across the waves. And after I got in it, about halfway around the lake, I had second thoughts about it. But it's like taking your first solo flight in an airplane. Once you leave the ground, you have to go through with it.

Anyhow, we got back, and it was a great afternoon. So, I get back. And I'm looking for my watch. I can't find it. And I've been drilling all the staff: "We've revised the schedule. You watch the clocks that we put in your cabins. You stay on time." So, I just finally had to give up. I was just going to get one of those big round clocks that we have with a battery in it, and hang it around my neck, and walk around with this clock on my chest all the time so I'd know what's going on. But that night, but just before I'm falling asleep, and I'm praying about this, in comes the intuitive thought. I thought I had taken it off in the cabin. And the thought hit me: "How about checking the seats in the truck, which I'd already looked over. Could it have slipped behind something? The next morning, I walked to that truck, and put my hand right behind the driver's seat, between the seat and the back, and there is the watch. It was just a coincidence. And suddenly, summer camp was back on schedule.

This is the kind of subtlety of the leading of Christ in us, the hope of glory, and the Spirit of God who leads us to do what's right, and gives us the power to have the judgment calls that we have to make that are right. Now, if you don't believe in that kind of power of God, then you're going to keep muddling through life. But if you get yourself on target with the fact that you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and you keep your sins confessed, you can really turn him loose to do terrific things.

Isn't it amazing how people are so concerned about keeping a church building holy in how you treat it, and keeping a magnificent cathedral holy in what you do in it? But the real temple today is your body. And what evil do people do with their bodies, and they don't give a second thought to it, not the least of which is the evil of the mind. Our whole society is geared to practicing the evils that are abominations by God's statement, but the heart of man wants to make it acceptable. Do you remember when Jesus said that one of the signs preceding His Second Coming is that conditions in society around the world would be like they were in the days of Noah? And what were those conditions in the days of Noah? I looked it up in Genesis, because I talked to the boys about this. The thought of man's mind was continually evil. All sin begins in the mind. A few verses later, it says, "The earth was filled with violence." There was corruption everywhere, from evil thinking to evil practices.

That is where our society is today. I don't have to explain that to you. We are back to conditions before the days of Noah, where evil is dignified, and where the most abominable thing is sought to be treated as normative. Every Christian is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit.

**Priesthood**

Then the next point that distinguishes us from the Jew is the universal priesthood of all believers. Now, here is something that the Reformers did get straightened out. They hit upon this, and they jumped on it with both feet. And this is what ran terror through the medieval Roman Catholic Church, when the Reformers got up and said, "We don't need a priesthood. We don't need a special sacerdotal system to bring us to God. We are each our own priest." Under Judaism, yes, you had to have a priest. And the barnacle of a specialized priesthood, such as in Roman Catholicism, has been attached to Christianity. But 1 Peter 2:9 says, "You Christians are a chosen race, different from Israel – the church, and you are a royal priesthood. You are a royal priesthood. You are a priesthood, and you are a royal priesthood because you're part of the royal family of God. You are in Christ – the royalty of Christ.

In the Old Testament, there was a priesthood, and it was restricted to the tribe of Levi. In the millennial temple in Jerusalem, the Old Testament priesthood will again function on a memorial basis. But today there is no specialized group of priests. You are your own representative before God. This was certainly never true under Judaism. There's no way you can say we are our own priest, and that we are an extension of Judaism – a refinement of Judaism. We have nothing to do with it. Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and every believer is the individual priest under Him.

As priests of God, we worship the Son of God. We do this by listening to instruction in doctrinal teaching. That's basic. We also worship through prayer: private; and, group prayer. Everything that happens in the Spirit of God is a result of somebody praying. We function as priests in our giving, with the grace method freely, joyfully, and with no pressures. Who wants the barnacle of 10%? Probably, you ought to give at least that much, but it's a barnacle from Judaism. Get rid of it, because I'll tell you what it'll do. It'll make you a greedy, stingy, stinking Midas, who wants to hang on to the nine-tenths.

Under Christianity, just read 2 Corinthians 8–9, where New Testament giving is described. You won't find the word "tithing" for one moment, because under Christianity, we don't own anything. That's why we're called stewards of God's possessions. God says, "Everything I give you because of your labors; your cleverness; your wisdom; your abilities; your entrepreneurial stress; and, your efforts – whatever I give you (call it your livelihood), I give you as a result of My grace, because I kept the sugar balance in your head so that your brain could think, and your arms and your fingers and your hands could perform. And I enabled you to secure these material things.

Now I'll tell you how to use those material things, God says. When you are in fellowship with Me, I will guide you, and you'll be far over 10%. And when you go far over 10%, I will give you far more than you gave, because now I find I've got a faithful steward on my hands. But if you're one of these people whose eyes are on your taking care of your future and your retirement, without any realization that your trust is in God and your trust is in Him, I guarantee you that your future will go down the drain: Zip! So, one of the great things about being a priest of God is that there's the sacrifice of our substance. But we do it freely and joyfully. Unless the Spirit of God leads you, you don't know how to give.

The Lord's Supper is one of the things that we perform as priests of God. This is a testimony to the working of God's grace and salvation. And then all those spiritual gifts you have that were given to you at the point of salvation – exercising your spiritual ability in God's service.

**Ambassadors**

Another difference is that every Christian is an ambassador (a representative) of Jesus Christ. No Jew would've dared consider himself a personal representative of the Most High God. That had to be reserved to the highest priesthood, and specialized people like Moses. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "Therefore, we (Christians) are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ. Be reconciled to God." So, every believer of the church age automatically is in full-time Christian service. This is why we say that. There is no such thing as clergy and laity. We're all on the same ground. We have different responsibilities within the service of God, and within the local church structure, but we are all on the same ground of full-time Christian service.

This was not the case in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, there was definite clergy, and there was definite laity, and you didn't dare mix the two. All believers today are witnesses for the Lord in their daily life. That was not true of Jews under Judaism. Yes, most Christians today are AWOL. They're Absent WithOut Leave from their ambassadorial work of representing God and witnessing. Most of those lack the sustaining power of doctrine because nobody ever teaches them. They go to these churches where they get inspiration and challenge. And the preacher's eye is on the number of members he can bring in, and on the volume of the offering. But his eyes are not on creating a soul who can stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ with enormous eternal rewards and joy.

A Christian's livelihood is his means of financing his ambassadorship. Maybe that'll give you new meaning to your work tomorrow. The reason you're doing that work is to finance the work of the ambassador that you are. The issue is not how to use your life to make the most money. The issue is how to use the money to make the most of your life that God gives you. The amount of income must also take into account your Christian service call. If all you do is earning the livelihood, and then failing to do the Christian service, then it's useless. But this fact gives every Christian's life purpose. "I am God's ambassador. However weak, or however strong, or whatever else is true of me, nobody's going to find out about God except through me, because I've been taught the Word of God.

**A Completed Bible**

Then there's another point, a completed Bible. Wall that a completed "canon," C A N O N. That's the standard of Scripture. The Bible is explicit that we today, unlike the Jews who only had part of the Bible – we have the full revelation. That's why you cannot go to the Old Testament to find out truth about the church. It's not there. And if you do go there, it's a barnacle. 2 Timothy 3:16 gives this basic principle: "All Scripture is inspired (and that word in the Greek means 'God-breathed – He's the source of the information): "All Scripture is God-breathed, and profitable for teaching; for reproof; for correction; and, for training and righteousness." So, the information comes from God. But how did we get it?

2 Peter 1:21: "For no prophecy (which is part of the revelation of Scripture) was ever made by an act of human will. But men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The word "moved" is like the wind in the sail that carries along a sailboat. These men, when they began writing, were preserved from every error. First of all, the information was breathed into their mind by God: things that they never knew – scientific; geographic; and, future things they could never have known. Then when they wrote it down, God moved them along to write it with total accuracy. Nothing is so magnificent like being carried along in a sailboat by the wind.

Friday we had wind (almost too much) at camp. And boy did the sailors have a great day! That cabin was going all over everywhere. We have come to the point of sophistication now, where these kids who have come year after year, Mr. Short, who is in charge of our sailing skills, has been sending them out in those big laser sailboats: two-by-two, campers, out there, handling the whole thing by themselves, once they have been cleared. And they get careless. I sit on the dock and watch them, and they got careless about handling the rudder and the sail. And all of a sudden, that sail fills, and boy, that boat goes over. And so you see these two orange blobs come out of the sailboat, and they know what to do. They're wearing their orange life jackets. They get around the back. They get on the rudder, and hold the gunnels. And it pulls it. They pull it over. But if they haven't headed the thing into the wind properly, what happens? And I sit there watching them. They pulled it over, and it came upright, and it went all the way over the other way. It flopped over, so they still had it over.

I have a movie from some years ago where Robert Nicholas did this four or five times in a row. I had him out there on the camera. He got it down; got it back; got it down; and, got it back, and he finally got it in the right way in the wind, and got it up to stay up. There's a great power in wind, and great power, when it's used properly, to carry you along. People who are rightly related to the Spirit of God have an enormous power. The men who wrote the Scriptures had that power. That's why the Bible is inerrant. It has no mistakes in it. And that being the case, we have a full revelation from God, which is not optional. We can't blow it off. We have to use it for our personal guidance.

Now, God in the past, used to direct people through dreams, and give them visions. He would speak to them, or an angel would appear. That doesn't happen anymore unless you're in a charismatic church. Then you have all kinds of bunko operations. But God is no longer leading through visions and through dreams, or anything like that, because it's all recorded accurately. Whatever God has to say to us is in writing. So, learning doctrine is the basic way to get oriented to the mind of God – it's the only way. Then the details are applied to our lives.

If you don't know doctrine, then the details of applying the Word of God to your life is impossible. The Jew only had half a Bible. We have the whole thing. What a tragedy to sit in a church where you suddenly realize, "I'm out in the desert here. I'm in a spiritual desert. I'm hearing all kinds of stuff from the pulpit, but nothing of the deep things of the Word of God, because that's an academic exercise. Somebody has to sit down and do a lot of hard study and bring it together. And then he has to be able to present it with a gift that makes it clear so that people can say, "Ah, yes. Now I understand what God thinks. Now I understand how to do this, and how to live my life in this situation. Then when you get to the crises (the temptations, or whatever), you've got the capacity to do right? But if all you've done is been in a church with some idiot preacher who's got lots of members, and lots of seats, and lots of money, and lots of interesting stories and one-liners and inspirational talks, you're going to go down the tube in sin the first good chance you get to go with it. Learning doctrine is the only way to orient yourself to the mind of God, so the Spirit of God can lead you. And that's up to the local church pastor-teacher.

**A Supernatural Life**

One final thing: Christians are called to live a supernatural way of life. We have a very sobering passage of Scripture in 1 Peter 1:14-16. Peter says, "As obedient children (these are Christians), do not be conformed to the lusts (the external patterns of life) which were yours in your ignorance." Don't live like a pig anymore – like you did before you were saved. 1 Peter 1:15: "But like the Holy One, Who called you – God the Holy One, Who called you to eternal life, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior." Oh boy, you're telling me that I'm supposed to be as holy as God is? My integrity is to be compatible with the integrity of God? 1 Peter 1:16, "Because it is written (that's right), 'You shall be holy for I am holy.' Believers in the church age are called to be as holy and righteous as God Himself. And He can ask us to do that. He can command us to do that, because He has also given us the supernatural means to do it. And His Son, Jesus Christ, in His humanity, had to use the same supernatural means. It's a combination of two things: the knowledge of doctrine; and, the application of the power of the Holy Spirit in the use of doctrine. That's what carried Jesus in His humanity. He knew doctrine. And He had the power of the Holy Spirit guiding Him, in the use of the Word, and in the application of that truth. With the word of doctrine, and the Holy Spirit free to guide, you will live that supernatural life of holiness.

We do not ask you to have a change in your personality. We do not ask you to conform to some stereotype image of spirituality. We do not ask you to use certain vocabulary words, nor to act like some loving person, nor to be friendly. What God is asking you to do is not to change who you are and what you are. He's asking you to act like Christ: to be as holy as He is holy. And He has given you the means through the Word of God, and through the indwelling Holy Spirit to do exactly that.

Now, you tell me, if these principles that are distinctive of this age of the church in any way reflect in-depth what you found under Judaism in the Old Testament. All believers are united in the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son. Every believer is personally indwelt by the Second Person of the Trinity. Every believer is personally indwelt by the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Every believer is a priest of the living God. Every believer is a personal representative (ambassador) of Jesus Christ. Every believer possesses a completed Bible. For most believers, you don't even have to bring a Bible to church to be able to listen to most sermons. You don't need the Bible. You don't have to look up anything. You don't have to read anything that God has said. And finally, every Christian is called to a life as holy as God Himself. Don't tell me that there's not a difference between Israel and the church. They were the losers. We're the winners.

God, our Father, we do thank You for this Your Word, and for what we have learned.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)