***A Summary of the Doctrine of the Church, No. 3

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-146***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," segment number 36 in Colossians 1:15-20.

We should all remember that it is the will of God for every church-age believer to be very accurate in handling what the Bible teaches. In 2 Timothy 2:15, the apostle Paul cautioned and advised his associate Timothy about this responsibility: "Be diligent to express yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." Christians who are sloppy in their interpretations of Scripture will someday find themselves ashamed. That often will happen here on earth. It will certainly happen in heaven.

Now, that makes a very sobering concept. My interpretations of the Scripture to which I subscribe will either give me great joy and honor, or I'll be ashamed of it in heaven, which tells us that things are going to get straightened out. If you misinterpret, and mishandle, and misapply the Word of God, you're going to get straightened out. If you misuse the Scriptures, it's not going to be just a small thing: "Well, I was wrong here, but now I know better." It will be a matter of great humiliation before God; before the angels; and, before the body of believers.

Just think how many people there must be now in heaven who have learned what fools they had been in the interpretations of the Bible to which they subscribed while they were here on earth. These are people who made it into heaven. Many people (probably most) misinterpret the Bible, and always miss it at the point of salvation as the fundamental misinterpretation. Consequently, they don't even make it into heaven. But they're also made to feel ashamed. But their tragedy is that the shame is in the lake of fire. As we know, from the historical account of Lazarus and the rich man: in hell, you don't forget. When you cross over to the other side, the mind goes with you, and the memory is sharpened. So, those people who are in the lake of fire shake their head in great agony and say, "What a fool I was. I rejected Christ. I rejected grace salvation.

Paul warns Timothy to be zealous, therefore, in his study of Scripture, so as to serve God in a manner that will not cause him to be ashamed of what he has done in heaven: not only ashamed of misinterpretation, but ashamed of the consequent lifestyle that you live, and the consequent service that you try to perform, because you have misinterpreted the Word of God. Handling accurately "orthotomeo" (or-thot-om-eh'-o) means in the Greek "to cut straight." The old King James Version said, "rightly dividing," and applying the Word of God, as it applies to Jew; to Gentile; and, to the church in our lives now. "Handling accurately" – cutting it straight.

The shame of God's disapproval certainly awaits those who mishandled His word. The mishandled it by either misinterpreting it or by misapplying it. There's a lot of that shame in heaven, I can assure you. People who have been taking what belongs to Israel, and applying it to the church. So, they have undermined and treated with contempt the concept (the principle) of the grace of God. It is God's provision, therefore, in the local church ministry to have a pastor-teacher who is capable of producing and delivering expository preaching (explanatory preaching), verse-by-verse, through a book of the Bible, based on what's in those original languages. So, the people of God are fed the Word of God, and they understand how to cut a straight line in Scripture.

Now, if you're going to insist on following with your sainted grandmother, who had no hair on her knees because she prayed so much, or whatever else was her claim to fame, and follow her as your guide, you may be sadly mistaken. Now, if you have a grandmother who is informed on the Word of God, she will help you cut the thing straight.

I'm still amazed how many people come into this life and go out into eternity deciding that what is true in religious matters is what they happen to be born into. I was just a kid when I understood that principle. I was hardly a teenager when I barely discovered that I had a mind. And it was clear to me that just because you were born into a religious system, or into a group of religious ideas, that didn't make it what God thought. I couldn't cut the Word of God straight on that basis. It had to go back to Scripture, and it had to go back to somebody who could teach me that Scripture, so that I had a frame of reference (a scaffold) on which to be able to hang with the Bible teaches.

So, be very careful about your background. This is the reason most people will be ashamed in heaven. They hung onto their background in which they were born. Worse than that, this is the reason that few find it into eternal life, because most of the religions of the world, and the cults of the world, do not have a true doctrine of salvation. Those people never even get into heaven. And they have committed themselves to nothing more than that.

It is very hard, you may have experienced (as I certainly have), trying to talk to somebody who is part of a huge powerful religious organization, like the Roman Catholic Church. And their thinking is entirely: "What the church says – that is what is truth. And the church tells me it will take me into heaven, and that is what is the truth." And when you say to them, "No, the church cannot be the authority in what is truth. Only the Word of God can be the authority. And what the church is teaching you about going to heaven is not true. That is not cutting the Word of God straight. They have zigzagged, and they have misinterpreted.

You get glazed eyes. You can't get through that. And the more religious they are, the harder it is to try to say, "Listen. Look to the Word. Focus upon what God has said, and not upon what man, over the centuries, has said."

When Martin Luther had to stand before the political and the religious authorities of his day, and he met them in the Diet, the Congress at Worms, in Germany to be examined, one of the things that the interrogator threw up to him was to say, "Martin Luther, you are nothing but a humble Augustinian monk. Who are you to challenge the teachings of theologians of our church for the last 1,500 years?" Now that is very intimidating. I mean you have to realize that he stood there in this huge room with all these prelates and political leaders, including the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire himself there. And they're telling him: "Just who do you think you are?" And Luther knew who he was. He was the man who looked to the Scriptures for the truth. And because he had read the Scriptures, and because he interpreted the Scriptures properly, and because he put it together on the doctrine of salvation the way the Scriptures present it, he was able to cut the truth straight. Whereas, the theologians who had preceded him had all cut the Word crooked, because they repeated one another, and they carried on a tradition that had no foundation in Scripture.

So, this is a serious responsibility, and that is why we take the trouble to explain the Word of God. That is why you should take the trouble to attend the services where that exclamation is being given. That's a very small part of your life, but it is a crucially important part. Why do you want to stand up at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and be humiliated? Why do you want to stand up there, and be ashamed when you discover how you have been indignant toward the truth of the Word of God, and indifferent toward it?

I've heard testimonies of Christians, and you have too – people who have even sat in this congregation, listening to the exposition of the Word, and they didn't realize what on earth was happening to them – that God was giving them a chance to be able to have a standard that squared with His thinking. They were receiving the mind of God through the Word of God. So, they just sat there, lackadaisical. They didn't bother listening too carefully, let alone, often, even bringing a Bible so that they could follow the course of the thoughts. And then, suddenly, they find themselves confronted by some cultist, or some religionist who knows his stuff, who has miscut the Word of God into a crooked form and pattern, but which the Christian who sat here knows it's wrong, and he remembers having been taught that particular subject, but is completely incapable of being able to refute, as the Word of God says – that we are to refute the errors that come to us. You are not going to be able to refute errors if you have not first learned the truth. You have to find what the standard of truth is, and what the straight line is – then you'll know how to walk it.

Don't embarrass yourself by being careless about your knowledge of the Word of God. And no doctrine is more important to have straight than that of the church. And wouldn't you believe it, and wouldn't you expect it – that this is where Satan is going to bring some of the greatest confusion? The doctrine of the church is so balled up and so twisted up that it is appalling. And it's an uphill fight. I can guarantee you that what you are learning now, in these last couple of Sundays, you'll hardly find any church near around you where people can, in an orderly fashion, explain these things, and bring them together, and connect them, and get the impact of what it means to them. But they're giving their money to support the preacher who's failing to give them the standard. They're giving their skills to be able to serve that local church capacity in some way.

Do you know what shame is going to come to you when you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and you have been associated with a church that was a human viewpoint (a human works) operation, and you are operating outside the realm of the direction the Spirit of God, and you have spent Sunday after Sunday, and week after week, and months, and years of your life in that operation? I mean the humiliation is going to be enormous. Let's hope that most of us have only little periods out in the desert, and not permanent. No doctrine is more important to have straight than the doctrine of the church.

**The Doctrine of the Church**

We have thus far learned about that doctrine, these points:

1. **"Ekklesia"**

One, the Greek word "ekklesia" for "church" means an assembly of people called out from the mass of humanity.

1. **A Mystery (A Secret)**

The church is as the body of Christ was a mystery "musterion" (moos-tay'-ree-on), or secret, of God unrevealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

1. **The Gospels**

The doctrine of the church is not found in the New Testament gospels except for Matthew 16:18 and John 13–17.

1. **After Christ's Ascension**

The church could not begin until after the Lord Jesus Christ had been crucified for sin, resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven to be seated at the Father's right hand.

1. **Pentecost**

The church began on the day of Pentecost with the arrival of the Holy Spirit to replace Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. **The Dispensation of Grace**

The church age is described as the stewardship or dispensation of the grace of God, because grace is what dominates this age.

1. **The Rapture**

The church age ends at the rapture of the church, when Christians living, and dead are taken into heaven.

1. **Jews and Gentiles**

The church is made up of Jews and gentiles who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior, from whatever religious denomination they may come. They are then no longer Jew or Gentile, but are Christians.

1. **Biblical Illustrations**

Seven figures are used in the New Testament to portray the special relationship of Christ to the Christians, in contrast to Israel:

* 1. **The Shepherd and His Sheep**

Christ is the shepherd, and the Christians are a sheep.

* 1. **The Vine and His Branches**

Christ is the vine, and the Christians are branches in Him.

* 1. **The Chief Cornerstone and the Building Blocks**

Christ is the Chief Cornerstone, and Christians are the building blocks.

* 1. **The Head and the Body**

Christ is the Head of the church body, and Christians are the parts of the body.

* 1. **The High Priest and His Priesthood**

Christ is the High Priest, and Christians are His priesthood.

* 1. **A New Creation**

Christ is the head of a new creation, and Christians are members of that creation.

* 1. **The Bridegroom and His Bride**

Christ is the bridegroom, and Christians are His bride.

These are all amazing, wonderful relationships that clearly distinguish us from being under the drudge system of the Old Testament Mosaic Law and Judaism.

So continuing with the doctrine of the church:

1. **A Growing Structure**

The church is likened to a growing, but not yet completed, structure. We have this pointed out to us in Ephesians 2:21-22: "In Whom the whole building (that is, in Christ Jesus), being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple of the Lord, in Whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God the Spirit." The church is a growing operation. It's likened to a building which is being built, and built, and built, and will not be finished until the very day of the rapture. When the last person destined to be part of the church body is saved, then the Christians will be taken to heaven. We refer to that as a rapture, which comes from a Latin word "rapturo," which means "to be caught away." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 tell us about that great event. The witnessing of church age believers is what builds up the church body, as people believe the gospel, and then are trained in doctrine.

It takes both. That's why the only communicator gifts you have left in the church age, now that we have no longer have prophets or apostles – the only communicator gifts we have is, first, the evangelist, whose specialty is the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God. And secondly, after he's done his job, the pastor-teacher then takes that believer, and trains him in the full counsel of the Word of God.

1. **Unity**

God the Holy Spirit creates a unity in the church body which is to be observed in Christians' relationships with one another. Ephesians 4:1-3: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve (got it? to preserve – not to create) – to preserve the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace." God the Holy Spirit has made the unity which constitutes the church body. It is our responsibility, as believers, not to fracture that unity in its local church organizational expression. A lot of Christians should remember that – not fracturing the unity of the body.

This concept of the ecumenical movement, getting all churches together, or these mass rallies, which get every breed and every character under the sun together from every religious background in order to express Christian unity is not of God. God the Holy Spirit's unity is based upon Christ, and it is based upon truth of the Word of God. If it is not on Christ, and if it is not on truth according to Scripture, then there's no unity there that you can possibly have. We are already united one to another. It is not just a cute remark to say that Christians are your true family. They are. You have a unity with them that you'll never have with your human family, no matter what the relationship is within that family. So, we Christians ought to act accordingly.

1. **Christians have Certain Things in Common**

There are certain things that Christians all have in common during the church age, and they are distinct to the church age:

* 1. **Union with Jesus Christ**

All Christians are in union with Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." We are all in union with Christ – every one of us. No one is left out.

* 1. **Indwelt by Jesus Christ**

What we all have in common is that we are all in dwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:27: "To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery." The church itself per se is not called a mystery in Scripture. As we have pointed out, what is described – the details about the church is what is called a mystery. Well, if the details are a mystery, then the church itself (the whole doctrine) is a mystery – a secret in the Old Testament. So, he's talking about another detail of that secret: "Among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Because Jesus Christ indwells you, you're going to have a glorified body someday. You'll be raised from the dead if you do not make it to the rapture. And when you are raised, you will have an immortal body, totally free of a sin nature, never capable of sinning again.

* 1. **Indwelt by God the Holy Spirit**

The third thing we Christians have in common is that we are all indwelt permanently by God the Holy Spirit. John 14:17: "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 He will be in you." Now, this is certainly a most astounding bit of truth. No Jew could ever conceive of God in dwelling a human being. But here you are, before the living God, and you are the temple of that God. 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Now, if you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God permanently indwells within you, then He's always there. As Christ is in you, He is there. As the Spirit of God is in you, He is always there. And neither one of them are blind. And neither one of them are deaf. They hear, and they see, what is your day, and what is your action. Furthermore, because they are deity, you don't even have to say it. They're standing right there in the middle of all those thoughts that swirl through your mind, and through your thinking.

So, the next time you're in the process of mulling over something sinful. The next time you're in the presence of what is evil, just think about that.

If you are this kind of a person, you are indwelt by Jesus Christ, and you are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, and neither one of them will ever leave you on any account, what kind of people should you be associated with? Where should your intimacy come? When you're going to marry somebody, what kind of a person would you marry? What kind of a person will you take to your bosom? Somebody in whom Satan lives when you are a child of God? If you're a sheep, you don't hang around with goats. That's why this is an important thing for us to understand about ourselves as Christians. We should never forget that God lives within us.

What does Satan do? He causes people to get all excited and thrilled about a building – a temple. That's a big thing with Mormonism: their temples; and, the activities of being baptized for the dead; and, going through the Masonic lodge rituals so that they can go to the third heaven, the highest heaven, the celestial heaven. And all of that completely ignores the fact that the real temple is this body, and all the parts of that body including the brain.

* 1. **Priests**

Another thing we all hold in common is the fact that we are all the priests of God. 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood." We are the royal priesthood of God – every Christian representing himself.

* 1. **Ambassadors for Christ**

Then, of course, we hold the honored position of being the ambassadors for Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us, we beg you, on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to Christ." That is our calling. That is our job – calling upon unbelievers to be reconciled to God.

In our study here in the book of Colossians, we are shortly going to come to Colossians 1:20. And there we will jump right into the magnificent doctrine of reconciliation. And I think that, when we get through reviewing and reminding you of what it means to be reconciled to God, you'll see what an important message that is as the representative of the Most High God that people should be told.

* 1. **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Another thing that we Christians all share in common is that we have the baptism of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13, once more: "For by one Spirit we Christians were all baptized into one body." That happens at the point of your salvation. If you do not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you're not in the church. That's how you get in. That's how the people got in, in the first place. So, if you're in a denomination that is telling you to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a Christian, boy is that a red flag? That is flapping in the breeze. You have to be blind, dumb, and stupid, and everything else, if you are with a group like that, that says that you should seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is all you need to know that you are in a group is not of God, but it is of the deception of Satan. Get out. Make a distance from it. This is a very important understanding. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that enables you to go to heaven, because that's what puts you in Christ. And when you are in Christ, you become part of the new creation.

* 1. **The Sealing of the Holy Spirit**

There's one more thing all of us share together the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13: "To Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed you were sealed in Him (Note: Greek passive voice; by outside force acting on you) with the Holy Spirit of promise." When you put a seal on a thing, that determines where it's going to go. A seal means that you cannot change the destiny of something. If something goes to somebody, and you seal it to that person, that's the only place it'll go. And this is one of the evidences that our salvation is permanent, because when we are saved, God the Holy Spirit stamps us with the word "heaven," and nobody can ever remove that from you. You are sealed for eternal life.

So, here are some magnificent relationships that all of us have in common, that we share with one another: union with Christ; indwelt by Jesus Christ; indwelt by the Holy Spirit; priests of the living God; ambassadors for Christ; the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and, the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

* 1. **A Living Human Spirit**

Now there's something else that every Christian has, which we share with one another. Every Christian has a living human spirit. When you come into the human race, you come in physically alive, but spiritually dead. Maybe that spiritual death takes place when you take your first breath, but you are spiritually dead. And until you are regenerated (brought back to life spiritually), your destiny is the lake of fire. Every Christian has a soul. That means that you have a mind; you have a will; and, you have emotions. This is the way you function in life. And, as we have learned in our study of Ephesians 4:19, in past times. It is these things that become callous toward God. Your mind becomes hardened toward God. Your will becomes hardened toward God. Your emotions become hardened toward God. And then you are nothing in life.

I find it very hard to understand why Christians are not more concerned about living their lives out on a treadmill – a treadmill that goes nowhere, and they're just walking the clock off of their lives, doing nothing for God. They're walking on that stupid treadmill, and making great plans of what they're going to do someday for God, but they never get off the treadmill. This is a terrible thing to go through life; gain the whole world; and, lose your own: what? Your own soul. Your own life, because this is what your life is: it's your will; it's your mind; and, it's your emotions.

* 1. **A Complete Canon of Scripture**

All of us Christians share together a completed Bible. We have a completed "canon," C A N O N. That means a standard of the mind of God – a standard of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21). These verses tell us that the Bible we have come from God. It is absolutely accurate, and it is not optional.

* 1. **Spiritual Gifts**

Every one of us shares at least one spiritual gift with which to serve God.

* 1. **Prayer and Worship**

Every one of us has a privilege of prayer and of worship. We have the privilege to come to prayer meeting. We have the privilege to begin our day, or to spend part of our day in prayer. We have the privilege of worshiping God by reading Scripture. That's how you worship him. It is not by lighting candles, and burning incense, and making crosses, or wearing religious things on you. The Mormons feel they worship God because they wear the sacred underwear. Yes, Mormons wear sacred underwear, and it has changed over the years. It used to be long-johns. That became uncomfortable. Ladies stopped wearing stopped wearing those long skirts and clothes, so the Long Johns look kind of bad when they started wearing short dresses. So, gradually the church got revelations from God to readjust it. But they have little sacred marks on certain parts of the underwear – sacred marks so as to protect them from harm.

Isn't it interesting – the same concepts the devil has in one religious system, like wearing a certain medal in Roman Catholicism, the Saint Christopher medal. You take it, and you hang it on the front of your rear view mirror in your car to protect you from accidents. Many a Saint Christopher medal has been picked up in a car which has been a wreck. But this is what people believe, because some ecclesiastical authority tells them that. We have the privilege of worshiping God, and that worship is honoring him through the Word of God.

* 1. **Temporal Fellowship**

We all have also in common the capacity to stay in temporal fellowship. That is the confession of known sins of 1 John 1:9. How many times, when you have been in other religious circles, have you heard that doctrine taught? And do you realize that, without that doctrine, you can go your whole life through church, and go through all kinds of religious service, and doing of things, and you've got nothing but a wasted life. Does that send the chill up your spine? Confession of known sins is crucial. Without it, the Spirit of God will not do anything with you. He is Christ's agent, but he doesn't work with people who are out of step with God the Father.

* 1. **The Grace System of Perception**

Then one thing we all have in common is we have the grace system. The grace system of perception for learning doctrine. Everybody, no matter what your intellectual capacity is, can learn doctrine. And you can build a huge spiritual IQ. You can see why the gang who's at home tonight is dumbing themselves down spiritually. They're cutting themselves down on their IQ points spiritually. Every time you miss a service, you dumb yourself down. But when you are here, and the instruction is given, and you are positive to it, your IQ goes up.

**Certain Things that are True of Every Christian**

There are certain things that are true of every Christian.

1. **A Supernatural Way of Life**

Every Christian, first of all, is commanded to live a supernatural way of life. 1 Peter 1:15-16: "But like the holy one who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" Now, how holy is God? He's absolute perfection. He is absolute righteousness. And we are supposed to imitate that standard? Can we do that? The Jews had all of their 613 laws given to them to guide them to what made a standard of holiness, and they couldn't do it. Yet, you Christians are capable, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, of rising to the standards of divine holiness. That's why we consider it a serious matter when we see a Christian who picks up the ways of the world – when a Christian picks up from the world's lifestyle, things that are unbecoming to us as Christians: the way we speak; the way we dress; the bad language we use; the entertainments we go to; and, the focus of our lives. I mean you all need to understand that, sooner or later, we are in a world of sin, and it's going to get socked to us. And every time somebody comes up with a physical ailment (a physical debility), like I heard of one today, you're brought up short, and you realize again: here today– gone tomorrow, like the old saying says. And that is why Scripture says, "Today is the appointed time."

So, we have to realize that we are commanded to live a godly life. And staying in temporal fellowship with 1 John 1:9 is the only way to do that. This requires having a spiritual maturity structure built in your soul through the grace system of perception, so that doctrine has kept given you the capacity to be guided by God.

1. **Responsible for Representing Jesus Christ Accurately**

Furthermore, one thing every Christian is, is that you are all responsible for representing Jesus Christ accurately. That's what the Lord told the disciples just before he ascended to heaven (Acts 1:8). And we are to represent him by rightly dividing the word of truth.

**Differences between Christians**

There are certain areas of differences between Christians which we should observe because sometimes Christians seem to think they have to be like one another. They don't.

1. **Sin Natures**

We have differences in our sin natures. Each Christian has a sin nature which differs from the next believer in its expressions: the patterns of interests; the patterns of lust; the nature of our weaknesses; and, the nature of our strengths. Whatever the nature of old sin nature is, remember that it is all unacceptable to God. The human good works and the sins – they're both evil. Isaiah 64:6 says that it's all "filthy rags." So, you have to realize that we deal with one another on a basis of different sin natures.

1. **Spirituality**

We have a different quality of spirituality. A Christian is either spiritual or carnal at any given moment. It means that he is either in the inner circle of temporal fellowship; or, he is in the outer circle of carnality of the sin nature. It depends on whether he's keeping short records with God, and making things right when things go wrong. While he is in temporal fellowship, that's the only way he can produce divine good works.

1. **Spiritual Maturity**

All of us have differences in our spiritual maturity. In 1 John 2:12-14, these are described as being a baby; a teenager; and, an adult Christian. This depends on the volume of our learning of doctrine, so that we have developed a spiritual IQ. Unfortunately, in most Christian communities, those people are always babies. This is what drives you crazy about your relatives. They are so stupid in what they believe, and yet they're so arrogant. They're babies when it comes to doctrinal understanding. And they always will remain babies, because they have no pastor-teacher who is faithfully explaining the Scriptures to them, and tying the thing together, like in the summary of the doctrine of the church.

1. **Physical and Personality Differences**

There's a difference also physically between believers. And there's also personality differences. Those two are very distinct. Believers do not all appeal to each other. Did you realize that? Some of our temperaments do not appeal to some of our fellow Christians. Yet, God has made every one of us the way we are, and the shape we are – not the shape we're in. That's something you do by what you eat; what you don't eat; what you exercise; and what you don't exercise. But we're all made with a certain temperament. And we're that because of a different purpose. So, don't get all irritated, and get your back up because some Christian is just so terrible, as far as you're concerned, because of that person's temperament.

Many years ago, we had a man in our church who did a very significant area of ministry. And one lady in our church said to me, "When he gets up, I just can't stand him." Now she wasn't talking about me. You might think that, but that wasn't true. Nobody thinks that. Well, now she has gone to that great church in the sky. And has she ever learned better? That man is still cranking it out probably. And she's looking back and realizing that what he was, was what God had made of him. Irritation with another Christian's appearance or personality, or his ways, does not mean that that Christian should change.

Now, if a person is irritated because you're reflecting the world, maybe you should change. If you're acting, dressing, speaking, and thinking like the world, you should change. But that's your priesthood. And we have to leave you with God in dealing with that.

1. **Spiritual Gifts**

We are all different in our spiritual gifts also. Each Christian has spiritual abilities in various combinations. Spiritual gifts determine what authority and what responsibility you have in the local church ministry. These are given sovereignly by God at our salvation.

1. **The Divine Purpose for the Church – not Israel**

The next point is that the divine purpose for the church is not the fulfilling of God's covenants with the nation of Israel. God's covenants with Israel are now on hold. They have not been abrogated. And when the church age is over, they will come back into operation – the Abrahamic Covenant, and the subsequent three covenants expanding it. That will be completed. After the church age is over, God will fulfill all of His promises with the nation Israel.

**The Church vs. Israel**

Let me repeat again, very quickly, as we close, features which distinguish the church from Israel. I hope by now that you have understood this. You cannot believe how resistant reformation churches are to the concept that Israel is not the fulfillment of the church – that the church has not received what Israel once had.

I read of a little article this past week of a group that is arguing that the church is the inheritor of Israel. And very logically, they want to start having church on Saturday. Now there are some Christian groups, particularly if they get into Bible study groups of their own, that like to do this. Bible study groups do not substitute for the local church ministry. When our friends up in Alaska tell us that they conduct a local church service, because there is none in town, with Berean tapes, they're perfectly on track, because they have taken me over as the pastor-teacher instructor. So, they're operating within the context of biblical local church ministry. If you start running your own little Bible class and say, "This is what I do – who I meet with on Sunday morning, or I teach myself on Sunday morning,' you are in violation of the assembling together that the Word of God commands us with the local believers. And usually, these self-home Bible study groups, sooner or later, I've noticed, now are beginning to do their study on Saturday, so that they can get it out of the way, and have Sunday free, to visit K-Mart, and go to entertainment. And suddenly, the Lord's Day is gone. The Lord's Day is the new day that is representative of the church.

Can you imagine what an insult that is? Not to gather on Sunday, the resurrection day – the new memorial day that God established, and say, "We'll do it on Sunday so we can get it out of the way. Here are the differences.

1. **Israel is Earth-Centered; and, the Church is Heaven Centered**

About four-fifths of the Bible deals with the nation Israel, specifically. About one-fifth of the Bible deals distinctly deals with the church. Every covenant promise and provision for Israel is earth-centered, and it continues as a nation in the new earth, while every promise for the church is heaven-centered, and continues in heavenly citizenship forever.

1. **The Dust of the Earth vs. the Stars of Heaven**

Abraham's seed is described as a dust of the earth, referring to Israel. He also has seed like the stars of the heaven, which refer to the church.

1. **Physical Birth vs. Spiritual Birth**

Israelites hold their position by physical birth. Christians hold their position as a result of spiritual new birth.

1. **Abraham and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Abraham is the head of the Jewish race, and, Christ is the head of the church.

1. **One Nation vs. All Nations**

Israel is made up of one nation on earth. While the church is drawn from all nations.

1. **Dispensations**

Israel is present on earth in all ages from Abraham on, while the church is restricted to the present dispensation, Pentecost to the rapture.

1. **Inward Worship vs. Outward with Gospel**

Israel faced inward to its own worship and service. While the church faces outward to reach the world with the gospel.

1. **God as Father**

God was not known as Father to the individual Israelite. He is known as such to the individual Christian.

1. **Jesus Christ**

To Israel Christ is Messiah, Emmanuel, and King, but to the church He is Savior, Lord, Bridegroom, and Head.

1. **Permanently Indwelt by the Holy Spirit**

The Israelite was not permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but the Christian is.

1. **The Law vs. Grace**

The Israelites function under the Law as a way of life. But the church is freed from the law system to live by grace under the leadership of the Holy Spirit as His way of life.

1. **Divine Enablement**

Israel under law had no divine enablement for keeping the law. But the Christian has the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to do right.

1. **Christ's Farewell Message**

The Olivet Discourse is Christ's farewell message to Israel, while the upper room discourse, in John 13– 17, is His farewell message to the church. And they're both totally different from one another.

1. **Christ's Return**

Christ returns at the Second Coming as King to regather Israel from every part of the earth into her own land. But He returns as Lord to gather the church into heaven (into heaven's glory) at the rapture.

1. **Servants vs. Family Members**

Israelites were servants of Jehovah, while the Christian in the church are members of the family of God. They're royalty.

1. **The Millennium**

Israelites will be subjects of the king in His earthly kingdom, the millennium, while Christians will reign with Christ in that millennial kingdom.

1. **Priesthood**

Israel had a priesthood, but the church *is* a priesthood of believers.

1. **Wife vs. Promised Bride**

Israel will be the restored wife to Jehovah, but the church is the promised bride of Christ. These are totally different figures.

1. **The Tribulation**

Israel will pass through the tribulation. The church will be removed in the rapture before the tribulation begins.

1. **The New Jerusalem**

Israelites in the new Jerusalem are called just men made perfect, while Christians in the new Jerusalem are called the church of the firstborn.

1. **The Universal Church and the Local Church Congregation**

There is one more thing. This is our final point in the doctrine of the church. The invisible universal church organism has an earthly, visible expression as a local church congregation. Membership in the local church organization is made up of born-again believers in the body who, as a congregation, direct the ministry of their church. The local church has biblical offices. A single elder pastor-teacher supervises the spiritual aspect of the ministry, and a body of deacons supervises the material aspects. At the discretion of the congregation, other leaders in specific areas of the local ministry may be appointed. The local church organization must, in all respect, reflect the church as an organism, the body of Christ.

1. Finally, the basic principle of church operation is the grace of God, under the leadership of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Everything done in the local church has to be done on the basis of grace.

Father, we thank You for this time together and for this completion of our review of the doctrine of the church. We pray that You will help us to have a new sense of both destiny and what is proper to who we are in that body. We pray for Your blessings.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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