

The Source Of Church Characteristics (Part Two)

John W. Ritenbaugh
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I made the comment many times this past year that the church of God is one of a kind; it stands unique from all others; it has many unique spiritual qualities. It is a religious institution, and its uniqueness is what makes it stand apart. Its teachings are unique; no other religious organization has the same package of teachings, It is also, at one and the same time, both a family and a nation being formed.

John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

That level and quality of love is unique, even among church institution. The church is also one of the older continuously existing institutions.

I am continuing the message that I began on the Feast of Trumpets, in which I was showing the source of all the characteristics those not a part of the church perceive as being peculiar and are even antagonistic toward them in some degree.

The first thing that I did in that sermon was to begin to fit the church of God into the times that we live in. The church began its formal operations in 31 ^{AD}, following the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the dramatic announcement of the arrival of God's Holy Spirit.

We are no longer in that period of time. We are living in the days of the beginnings of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the book of Revelation. The church of God now has existed for roughly two thousand years.

Jesus Christ stated that He would build His church. The key word is ‘build’—to build is an active process, and He has done so. This is important because it is from Him the church receives its characteristics. If it has a different builder than Jesus Christ, then the characteristics are going to be different.

Jesus is the architect, and He has designed it to carry out the functions He desires it performs. He is the one hiring, training, and using those He places within it in order that it complete the purposes He has designed it for.

It is Jesus Christ that creates the characteristics He desires in each part of His operations. Not everybody is a preacher. Other people do other things. I think you can see that principle. So, Christ gifts people with abilities to carry out responsibilities that He wants them to carry out. When He gives that gift, it does not mean that they have it immediately in full force with all the clarity in the world. They must be trained, so He chooses people and then He trains them before He actually puts them on the firing line to carry out the functions that He wants them to perform.

This operation of God's overall purpose has been underway for two thousand years. Where is it all headed? I do not know much in the way of details. We do have a small bit of revelation from the book of Revelation, though not much detail is given. The small bit that we do have reveals an awesome and immense purpose.

Revelation 14:1-5 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

This seems to be where the operations of the church, beginning back there in the early thirties AD, conclude—the current operations. What we are looking at is the purpose that He appears to be headed toward following the resurrection that will occur at His return. He is preparing a group that will

assist Him in His operations following that resurrection. It looks like it will operate for time without end. Exactly what those operations are, He does not tell us, but it is a job with an awesome future. That is the way it looks.

We have much to look forward to if indeed we are a part of the one hundred forty-four thousand, and it does seem that way, and we will do what we are doing right now, and that is, to continue to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. We are getting on that track right now.

Timewise in His present operations, the church appears to be within Revelation 2 and 3. It appears from what is going on in the world that events are gradually speeding up. This is why He calls for us to be especially alert to our spiritual condition. We can see that cry in Mark 13, Luke 21, and in Matthew 24. It is repeated in all three of those chapters.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.

On Trumpets we covered that Jesus is the church's Architect and Builder. He is the source of its unique characteristics. These characteristics are already part of His makeup, but they are being created in us by Him with our voluntary cooperation. We are a new creation, but we are finding out that we have to cooperate with the Creator. It is important that we get this concept that it is voluntary, something that we give ourselves over to because we agree with what is going on in our life and we agree with the One who is doing the creating.

In order that this creation is enabled to take place, we must be of the same Spirit He is, otherwise there is no real communication between Him and us, because we are not of the same kind. He is of the Godkind; we of the humankind. It is essential to first understand the way the Bible is using the term spirit in this context. Again, I will give you this because it is essential that we are all on the same key here. Spirit is an invisible, immaterial power or influence that motivates to thought and action according to its characteristics.

If Jesus gives us of His Spirit, those characteristics are already in Him and we can, with His help, pick up the same characteristics that are in that Spirit. Picking that up is not all that easy, it takes time, energy, thought; it takes sacrifice, it takes yieldedness for this to occur.

Let us go all the way back to Genesis 1 and clarify this thing about kind—kind after kind— so that we see the principle that is here, that we have to be of the same kind.

Genesis 1:24-26 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

This thing about *kind* is a clear truth, only exact kinds can reproduce. If the two animals are of different kinds we are going to run into trouble there. So what He is saying here is that only like kinds can truly communicate so a relationship can exist.

God created humans in His image and likeness, but humans were and still are a different kind than God. We are in His image, but we are a different kind. All humans have a spirit different from God's. We look like God because we are created after His image, but we are *not* God.

This difference is overcome by what Jesus teaches Nicodemus in John 3. here is what occurs: God on His own accord voluntarily bridges the difference in kind between Himself and the human He chooses by giving the human a measure of His Holy Spirit. When I say measure, I do not know what the quantity is. My own thought is that it is very, very small but it is enough to bridge the gap so that there can be communication between the human and God.

The communication can be in terms of speech. You know very well that people who do not have God's Spirit do not understand spiritual things very deeply—they hear the words, but they do not get it. The communication is incomplete. Do you understand? That difference has to be bridged over, and this is how it is done. God on His own moves to bridge that but He only bridges it in those that He chooses to do so with.

What this does, this action by God, creates a spiritual birth within the chosen one's human heart. This is why Jesus stated in,

John 3:6 “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

You are beginning to see a miraculous thing taking place, it is the transformation of the heart.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind [human heart] is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

The carnal mind is enmity against God. That has to be bridged, and it is only bridged by those in which God does this miraculous, significant thing. This does not in any way refer to the human becoming composed of the Spirit. It effects only the heart, and the transformation begins.

What God does by this merciful operation is ignite the change in the human heart, and it called by Paul in Titus 3 as regeneration and renewal. I want you to see this in your own Bible.

Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

He took it upon Himself to ignite a change in the heart. Where do our words come from? From the heart. The heart has to be a spiritual heart. As long as we have that old human heart is there we are going to keep on doing what we always do.

This term *regeneration* literally means “to start again.” What God does is to enable those receiving this gift to grasp, to understand, and to make use of spiritual teachings. It does not all by itself convert the person, that is a long process. All it does is give the person the *tool* to work with, because that person is going to be put in a position where he has to make a lot of decisions about what to say, what not to say; what to do, what not to do, and he has to be able to think spiritually in order to make them correctly.

What God does is make it possible for the person to be communicated with by spiritual truth, by God Himself through His Word, by the ministry that God has, and so the spiritual words come out or the spiritual principles come out, and it makes us aware we need to repent.

Without what God does we cannot cooperate with Them—Father and Son—in Their purpose any more than an unconverted person because our carnal heart, in its natural state, does not agree with God. It is *enmity* against God and it is not subject to Him. Some miraculous thing has to be done to overcome that because our resistance is built right in.

Paul said something very significant in verse 5.

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing that we can do on our own without the Spirit of God will make God respond to us by Him calling us. It is completely and totally His choice, His decision.

What would be a work of righteousness which we have done? It would be our attempt to get God to call us by means of our actions, words, without the Spirit of God. That would be completely and totally a carnal work. Without

the Spirit of God dwelling in us it makes everything just simply carnal, because that is all the mind, the spirit of man, has to work with. To attempt to do that will utterly fail.

You might recall that Hebert W. Armstrong said regarding the building of character within God's purpose that we must voluntarily choose to obey, otherwise we are simply being forced to do something that our carnal nature does not want to do. If we have to be forced to do what our heart does not want to do, godly character and understanding will not be created. Those convinced against their will remain unconvinced still, and they will not change until they agree with God.

But if God does not first do what He taught Nicodemus in John 3, the person will never become converted. God has to lead the way. Our salvation, our change, has God leading. In fact, we are going to find that He does virtually everything so that we are indeed *His* creation. We do not make ourselves; we are His creation.

This is a hard thing for people to accept. From the beginning when God calls us, He gives us the power to work with by His Spirit, so that when we hear the truth that is going to convert us, we choose willingly to do it on the basis of the Spirit that He has provided us with, the kind of mind that will yield to what He wants.

In religious circles regeneration is used as indicating a moral renewal. In addition it marks the beginning of everlasting life, but do not misunderstand this because it does not mean the person is already saved. It does mean the process toward salvation has begun, because the human can now grasp the spiritual truth and apply it to his life and thereby glorifying God. From that point on there is much, much growth that must take place.

If you are thinking along with me you will understand this. Unless there is spiritual help given by God for what we are talking about, we cannot even *repent* in order to be ready for a baptism that really counts. You might have to think that through. That is how much what God explained through Jesus Christ means to us there in John 3. God is setting the table so that we can repent. It is that simple but so meaningful.

The process toward salvation has begun because the human can now grasp spiritual truth and apply it to his life, and thereby glorify God. This miraculous event takes place before one is baptized, before one has hands laid on him, and it is done so the person can be baptized in agreement with God.

As long as the human is dominating everything you cannot do that. Jesus is a clear example of one who is baptized by John the Baptist, after having received the Holy Spirit. What did Jesus say? Why are you doing this? John asked. Jesus answered, "To fulfill all unrighteousness." It was right for Him to get baptized!

You have to agree with that, even though He already had God's Holy Spirit. You can find other places in the Bible where people received God's Spirit before they were baptized. Acts 10 is very clear.

It is the indwelling of that Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son working through it, and us cooperating with them, that produces a spiritually minded person being formed into the image of God. It is the enabling of us by the Holy Spirit that produces the unique characteristics of the church and enables us to be created in the spiritual image of our Father in heaven.

The process continues on and this is why Jesus said what He did here in John 14, so that we can understand.

John 14:14-18 "If you ask anything in My name I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you."

The process of change is long, in many cases many years, In Evelyn and my case we are having an anniversary today, it is the fifty-sixth-year anniversary today of our baptism. It has taken a long time to get here, there is a lot of growing taking place. We must have really started at the bottom of things! But at any rate, we needed the time and God foresaw that.

John 15:26-27 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

We are promised help for performing our part in this spiritual creation transaction. In other words, we receive a very tiny amount in the beginning and God increases it as we go along.

John 17:20-23 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Here is the ultimate goal: oneness with the Father and the Son. But none of the characteristics of these two will occur in us unless we are of the same spiritual makeup. You should be able to determine by now that God does not give us His Holy Spirit all at once, we grow in it.

Christ as the Builder of the church also plays a role in our calling. It is important that we grasp that the Father and Son are working in perfect concert with each other. The unity of the relationship between the Father and the Son is described by Jesus as Them being one. This gradually becomes our goal in life—to be one with the Father, to be one with the Son. We have a lot of growing to do.

Jesus Christ said this despite the fact that They are indeed separate individuals. This harmony is important in this badly divided world, because our unity with Them is what unites the church as a whole. We are united with Them, They are united with us. We are a part of that operation.

It should be easily seen that our calling is a foundational guide to the church uniqueness. The calling is totally in God's hands and then after that we have a small role to play, but the Son is the Creator.

Matthew 20:1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”

Matthew 20:15-16 “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good? So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

John 15:15-16 “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

John 15:19 If you were of the world the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

We are beginning to see something develop here. As the Father and the Son create us and we become more and more in His image, we become more and more like the Father and the Son. Why did they persecute the Son despite all of the good things that He was doing? It was in their carnal mind to do that, because Satan puts it in their mind to automatically hate the Father and the Son, what they are, and what they do.

If you are thinking with me you will begin to see why the church is going to be persecuted and that is because, as we become created to be more like the Father and the Son, then we become prime targets for Satan to get rid of us, to persecute us, to try to make us to lose hope and to lose our faith.

What He is talking about specifically here in John 15 is that the choosing that He is talking about has nothing to do with God eliminating some of the

called from salvation. However, it does show that choices are made by Jesus Christ among the called of God for the purpose of some function to be performed.

God, through Jesus Christ, appointed the Twelve. He appointed the Twelve from a larger group that was part of those who were forming around Him. That is what He means when He said, "I chose you." He picked them out of the body of people that were being called. What He is leading to eventually is, He is going to do the same thing in the organized church today. He will move people in and around within the functions of the church and put them in a position where they are going to be prepared to carry out an operation.

Maybe for a little more understanding of Jesus' statement regarding choosing, note that it is made right at the conclusion of the parable where I read the first verse where He is the landowner.

Partly what Jesus is saying here is, He owns us, lock stock, and barrel. How did He do this? He bought us with His life. When we accepted His blood for the forgiveness of sin we literally became His. That is why He says, "Is not lawful for Me to do what I wish with My own things?" Yes, it is.

Christ in the parable is the landowner and He wants us to understand that among the called, He will be making choices for His purpose, and Jesus affirmed this when He said to the apostles, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." He chose them to be apostles.

Paul had to deal with problems that arose in the Corinthian church, because the inevitable challenges of human nature brings forth out of covetousness, jealousy, and sometimes simply not understanding. Please turn to I Corinthians 12, where he dealt with this.

I Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

I Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

We do not want to lose sight of the fact that God supplies to enable us to perform the function assigned as God pleases. In businesses employers commonly supply some of the means for employees to perform the task by providing tools and instructions. What this is showing us is that God follows the same principles, but it is on a higher level, and He gives us the tools calling them gifts.

What this means is that there should be no dead wood in the church. Everybody called is called purposefully by God upon His evaluation to choose that person and give that person His Spirit, and also give them gifts. He already has it in mind that He is going to place that person in a certain place within that body, and He is going to give them the tools that they need to perform that function.

That ought to be somewhat encouraging, if we can just figure out what we are supposed to do, that is the hardest part. Sometimes it becomes very noticeable and sometimes others see the gifts and they take it upon themselves to appoint that person. I think I can say from experience, that is what happened to me, I did not train to be a minister. I was sitting in the congregation and one day they called me up on the stage and ordained me as a local church elder. I did not apply, never talked to the minister about being a minister, not one word. I have experienced that personally, where I am sure that Jimmy Friddle was moved by God to do that, because it worked. Not because of me, it worked because God gave me the gifts and I was willing to yield to what He wanted to do with me. Then out of that came a fully paid scholarship to Ambassador College, another gift from God to enabled me to be prepared for the job that He called me to do.

In 1959 I had no idea that this is what He called me to do, it never entered my mind on September 19, 1959, when we were baptized. All I know is I went into the water and I got wet. I had no idea what lay in store for the Ritenbaugh family.

I can use that as an example. That is what He does with everybody. Sometimes people's gifts are obvious, but it is not always that way. Maybe

the gifts that He gives are getting down on our knees and praying, sometimes it is doing little helpful things for others in the congregation, sometimes people who have a gift to be able to exhort, to encourage, they are up-building, and they make the person feel as though they are loved, they are needed. That kind of thing is a gift of God given to His church but communicated by another person by the Spirit of God to do that kind of thing.

There are all kinds of jobs available within the congregation to do, we have to be a thinking person, and learn from the Scriptures what kind of things can be done.

The overriding point for this sermon is the spiritual connection that the Father initiates between us and the Son and the group forming under Him—Jesus Christ—remains unbroken. Can you see that the characteristics of the church are being formed from on high? We have to be able to see that. That is what makes us unique, the church too is not of this world.

I am going to read this next set of scriptures to you from the Revised English Bible because it is so clear.

II Corinthians 5:17-18 (REB) “For anyone united to Christ, there is a new creation [it has already begun], the old order has gone, a new order has already begun. [Here comes a very important statement.] All this has been the work of God. . .

That is so clear. From beginning to end. From John 3 up to the time that we are transformed and put into the Kingdom of God, all this has been the work of God! He is the Creator! All we do is follow some orders. But the doing of that, of following the orders, and understanding why we are having to do it, creates the character.

II Corinthians 5:18-19 (REB) . . . He has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and He has enlisted us in this ministry of reconciliation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, no longer holding people’s misdeeds against them and He has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation.”

Even the responsibility that we have now within the church, we have because of what God did.

Another reality can be drawn from the creation of Adam and Eve. That creation's purpose was not exactly the same as ours, nonetheless, this question must be asked: "When finished with Adam's creation, how many of Adam's characteristics did Adam contribute?" None, absolutely none. Even as Adam was created by God in God's image, God is now creating us. It is a spiritual creation and the amount that we contribute to the creation is virtually nothing, yet that *virtually nothing* is hard for us to do. We simply have to yield to what He says to do.

Now do you get the point? The church and its unique characteristics are of God's design and creation. In II Corinthians 5:18, it clearly states the spiritual creation, "Now all things are of God." That leads to the next question because in Jesus' day people were having a difficult time identifying Jesus and it is a problem today, it is a major problem in our time.

Matthew 16:13-17 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Phillippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Even to the apostles God identified the Christ to them so that they would know it was not a flesh and blood thing. Notice the names that Peter used. He said here in verse 14, "Some people say you are John the Baptist, some Elijah, others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets." This is why Jesus asked the question. Jesus could have easily said, "You have been following Me around for a year or so, listening to Me, what do you say is My true identity?"

They gave the right answer and Jesus immediately said, "God showed that to you, it was not a flesh and blood thing, God did it." What does it mean about all these people then who had trouble identifying who Jesus Christ was? God

simply had not shown them! They were not in view of His eyes for the purpose of conversion, so He simply did not by His Spirit, reveal it to them.

How can we tell today whether people who may claim that they follow Christ, they say that they are Christians, they say that they believe in Him? This question still has relevance right up to now. They say that they follow Christ. The vital question is this: do they perceive Him, Christ, as their Leader, as the apostles did? No, they do not. Out of their mouth, if you ask them, they would say, "Yes, Christ is my leader."

The vital questions includes this, do they perceive Him as their leader? Because there is a difference between one merely knowing something intellectually, contrasted as to whether one is holding it in their heart as a vital necessity.

If a person truly looks to Jesus as leader, they will do everything in their power to imitate Him. That is the difference between a real Christian and one who merely *says* he is a Christian. But he does not follow the same pattern of obedience and doctrine and so forth, that Jesus did. That person is not following Jesus. If you ask that person, "Do you keep the Sabbath?" It is so easily seen, the chances are extremely great they are going to say, "That was done away, I don't have to do it." If you would say Jesus kept the Sabbath, they would answer, "Jesus did it because He was a Jew." There are always justifications for why they are not following Christ the way they are supposed to.

What does all this say about their relationship with Christ? I have no doubt at all that these people are sincere. They know, they understand a few things, but brethren, in their heart of hearts they are not converted. If they were converted, they would align themselves with Jesus Christ in the same manner that you did. God did not do to their heart what He has done to your heart. That is why they just do not get it, that they are to keep the holy days.

I can understand clearly why Herbert Armstrong always used the Sabbath, and usually we do too. I do. Why? Because it is so clearly seen that they do not keep it. He always called the Sabbath the test commandment. That was his test. If somebody would not keep the Sabbath because it was in the Ten Commandments, but they came up with a justification for not keeping it, that

was the test of not being converted. They might have ten reasons why they did not keep the Sabbath, “Well, it’s Jewish.” “It’s done away.” But all those things are merely justifications. And you can be absolutely certain unless they are really ignorant or something, they are not converted. They might be very fine people, they might be 90 percent moral people, fine neighbors, but not converted.

This is a major part of what I have been saying to you for many years: the United States is not a Christian nation. Sincere? Yes. A lot of Christian doctrines or laws, or principles, are part of our governing laws, but they are not converted, they are not really Christians. They are not unique the way the church is. They are actually a worldly organization and church.

Please turn to John 4. This is important especially for the church as a whole. It has to do with our worship of God. What is going on in this chapter is that Jesus took an excursion into Samaria and while He was there He began a conversation with this woman by asking her for a drink of water.

John 4:21-24 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Some of the Protestant organizations kind of get this, but this is again another part of the formation of the uniqueness of the church. The Bible directly mentions five things that God is: God is light, God is love, God is a consuming fire, God is faithful, God is Spirit. Added to that is that those worshipping Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.

Jesus’ declaration in this response to what the Samaritan woman said just a little bit earlier regarding worship. He wanted to make it clear that the worship of God cannot be boxed into things common to man’s ordinary worship. God is different from what the world normally thinks.

We can go to an extreme. God is not stone, God is not wood, God is not a man, God is not an animal—God is Spirit. None of those common materials from man's world fits a description of God. No one has ever seen Him, but God is Spirit. This does not mean God has no form or shape, as some believe, that is grossly untrue.

Are we worshipping Him in truth, using beliefs that He does not teach? That is part of the problem. Israel always tried to worship God using something that the Gentiles did to worship. God cannot be boxed in like that! God is the God of all creation. God is omnipotent in power, in every way, He is in a sense everywhere at all times. We are shaped like Him, but that is as far as it goes. We are coming to be like Him, as They create us in Their image.

What that means is, in their idea of God, He was approachable only on that mountain. It became zeroed in on the Israelites' mind that they had to worship God at the Temple. A new era has been opened to mankind. God is not confined in a temple, He is not confined in one person, one place. God can be worshipped anywhere at any time. If you have access to His office, den, kitchen, or whatever. Jonah accessed God from the belly of a fish! That was an appropriate place and time for him to do that. That is the way God is. He can be accessed anywhere, at any time. We do not need a Temple.

What that means in practical application is, no matter where we are we are under God's purview, do you think we will get away with anything? That is not the way His mind works. He is not looking to trap us at all, but it is something that we have got to understand. That is the reality of the greatness of our God! He can watch over us like nobody can and He always has our best interests at heart all of the time.

Things were such at that time that there was only one Person who could really represent God and do it adequately, and that was His Son, the one who had been with Him. When He taught, we can understand that He gave us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It was not all skimmed off and everything. We can believe what He said exactly.

That unique One is the one who knows exactly where He is headed because He and the Father are one. They have been working together for who knows how long, They know one another's mind. They are trying to begin to pack

that into us, and what we have to do is yield. We already have the tool to work with. That tool, God's Holy Spirit, gives us the power to understand those spiritual terms, it gives us power to understand the spiritual goals, spiritual hopes, spiritual dreams. And we cannot box God into some little niche that we think He might fit into. He is our God; He is our Creator.

II Corinthians 5:1-7 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed [our physical body], we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [It is set aside for us.] For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.

God called us purposefully, having thought it through. “I want that person to be in My Family. I want to prepare that person to be somewhat like Me, but maybe for a specific responsibility.” God cannot be contained, even in our finite minds. He is beyond us, but He is preparing us for an awesome future.

Do we trust that He is giving us the equipment to work with and that He has the confidence that His Son, Jesus Christ, can prepare us for that future? Because that is where we are headed.