

In Search Of A Clear World View (Part Two)

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I am going to begin where I left off yesterday and continue this theme for a few minutes into this message before I deviate off from the treasure principle that I was talking about last night, but just a reminder that where our treasure is there our heart will be also. Remember, too, that Jesus said that the heart is the generator. It is the birthplace of our actions, so it is very necessary, right, and good that we make sure that, as we say, the heart is in the right place.

Our treasure is that which we hold to be dear, important to us enough to move us to make sure that we do what we can to increase our treasure, as well as make sure that we protect it. Our treasure is what God has given us in the calling. We were also looking, as that sermon ended, how God looks at us, and that we are a treasure to Him, just as surely as the principle that we were talking about in which we move to increase and protect our treasure. God does the same thing. He is moved to increase us and He is moved to protect us as well, and that is exactly where we ended in Malachi 3 showing that He was looking forward to prophesying that when those times came we would be protected.

Now we are going to go to I Peter 2 and we will begin building here.

I Peter 2:8-10 and “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense,” [a contrast is being made here] they stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you [here is the contrast] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people that you may proclaim the praises [hang on to that phrase] of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy,

As I begin this message, I want to give assurance to us on the way that God perceives us. We are to Him chosen, royal, holy, and special. I have stated that the church is significant and unique, and God's own description of us confirms this opinion. That ought to be very encouraging considering the things that are building out there in the world. I am picking this up where I left off. I believe the part that we are going into needs to be added to our worldview because it is a major element as to why we must be

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determined to cast our lot with God regarding how we will use our life and gifts to make sure of our future.

I am attempting to show that God's calling is extremely valuable, indeed a treasure affecting every aspect of our life. What I am going to go into at this point (if I am correct) is of value far greater than anything that we might imagine; I mean, this calling is leading in that direction. We do not have it yet, but it is there on the horizon and it is beyond value.

Being resurrected into the Kingdom of God is exciting, but this one is absolutely breathtaking.

Revelation 7:2-3 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

Before we go any further, I want you to hold your finger in Revelation 7 and we are going to go to Revelation 1 to put a time element on this. This is something that I am a little unsure of but it appears that I am correct. The time element for the book of Revelation is shown in chapter 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place." In other words, as the book of Revelation opens, the things that are recorded in the book of Revelation have not yet occurred; they are to shortly take place. They are put into a future time setting, and then it goes through the rest of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 7:2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea.

John saw this vision, and what he saw at the time, though it was a vision, it had not yet taken place. Now what happens following verse 4 is we have the twelve thousand from each of the tribes of Israel, adding up to one hundred and forty-four thousand.

Revelation 7:13-15 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in the white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who

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come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple [a heavenly temple, this has not occurred yet, this is envisioned for the future], and He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.”

You know who sits on the throne. It is Jesus Christ who is at the right hand of God. So, in a sense, we have one throne with two people on it, or two thrones, side by side—the Father and the Son.

I do not know whether this is a round number, the one hundred and forty-four thousand, or an exact number. It is unnecessary for us to know since this prophecy is encompassing more than the one hundred and forty-four thousand because there is the one hundred and forty-four thousand plus He states an innumerable multitude who have come out of tribulation. We are talking about a pretty large number of people and one that was uncountable, we will say. How many? Again, I do not know.

Which group would you rather be in? Would you rather be in the one hundred and forty-four thousand or would you settle just to be in that larger group that is there? I will take either one, and I think in a way everybody would have that; like I said, just to be in the Kingdom of God is pretty great, but somehow or another that one hundred and forty-four thousand is a special group of people who are separated from the larger group of people. Am I analyzing this correctly? That seems to be the way it is.

Another question that I do not have a full answer on, and that is this:

Revelation 7:13-14 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” [Apparently they did not come from the one hundred forty-four thousand from Israel; they were a separate group.] And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.”

Here is something that I have been told by people I trust who have looked into this fairly extensively about this sentence here, “These are the ones who came out of *the* great tribulation.” The word “the” before “great tribulation” is not in the Greek. They say it states, “These are ones who came out of great tribulation.” “The” puts a time element right into that verse, and “the” great tribulation is the one that lies before us. If you

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remove “the” from the sentence then it blurs the time element, and it just becomes general, and the word “tribulation” is not pointing to any particular one, but it simply means trouble, pressure, and trials, which could happen at any time in a person’s converted life, and it is not necessarily pointing to one particular trial or trouble. In that sense, looking at that we are going through tribulation, and it is happening fairly often as we fight the troubles and trials of the flesh, and coming from the world, and whatever.

Since the time element can very possibly be removed, and these people have died in faith at any time from Adam and Eve on, is this the special group within the First Resurrection? It appears to be because there is no indication of a different time element between the listing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand and verse 14 where it puts the tribulation.

Let us just assume here that we are correct, that the church is the one hundred and forty-four thousand. Remember I have been telling you all along that the church is pointed out in the Bible as a special group. It did not even exist until Jesus Christ died and was resurrected and became our Savior. In addition to that, He may have been adding parts as time went on and holding them in reserve, but there is something else that seems to point to a little bit more preciseness regarding this group.

Revelation 14:1-5 Then I looked, and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand [Imagine that—exactly the same number appears in Revelation 7. We already know the one hundred and forty-four thousand in Revelation 7 is a special group that have come out of the twelve tribes], having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of loud waters, and the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders: and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. [Another interesting peculiarity about the one hundred and forty-four thousand—they sing a special song.] 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 first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

In verse 4, I read something very interesting. “These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” The one hundred and forty-four thousand we know for sure are

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going to be Jesus Christ's own retinue that goes with Him as He goes about to complete the assignments that the Father gives to Him. David had his thirty mighty men and they answered to David. The Romans had the Praetorian Guards and they answered to nobody but the highest authority wherever they happened to be.

We are looking at a similarity here where a group of one hundred and forty-four thousand might very possibly be the church that God has been building silently (let us put it that way) since the time of maybe Abel, Enoch, Noah, and whomever He added during the time, building up to the four thousand years later whenever Jesus Christ formally began it. And so there is a complete package of one hundred and forty-four thousand which may include the end time people, the people who are being called and prepared right now to be Jesus Christ's private retinue that accompanies Him wherever He goes.

How would you like to be in that group? I think that is a distinct possibility. One of the things that convince me is this—these are the ones that follow the Lamb. We are already practicing doing it; that is part of our preparation. It applies more to those who are being made part of the church than it does at any other time in God's plan, because in the same sequence of events in the forming of what might possibly be the church, Abel, in a sense, never literally followed the Lamb, and neither did Enoch, and neither did Noah, and you get the drift of what I am saying.

From what I see, that is a very distinct possibility that the final touches are being put on the church just before the tribulation. It is at the time of the Great War between Satan and God. How valuable is our calling? It is beyond estimate. Nothing has ever been given to a man that can even begin to compare to that. Is it worth it? Awesome!

It is a biblical truth that the church stands alone as a unique institution formed of God. It is not of men in any way, shape, or form. It consists only of those that He personally calls, and the honor is almost beyond significant. It is stunning in its possibilities and we must not waste this opportunity, but treasure it.

We have been given a spiritual gift to literally die for. It is that valuable. Christ died to become our Savior. The apostles died for Christ and also for us, and many thousands have died through the centuries. They died for what they believed because they valued highly what they had been given. I do not want us to have to die for it; I am only pointing out that it is certainly worth the price. If God deems it, it is worth the price. Rather, I want us to live for it, to give our lives in sacrifice for it, in humble and faithful belief, for as long as God permits. The time is always present for us to give of ourselves of this very valuable knowledge. And we heard from Clyde in his sermonette that we can give our

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life in sacrifice in doing God's will by being compassionate, kind, and merciful.

In a somewhat different track, it is becoming ever more evident that during this period of time in which we are living the universality concept is taking over the entire Western region of this world. You will hear this confirmed in one of the brief movies that we are going to show on Friday evening. This universalism movement is becoming increasingly important to us, so we have to be prepared mentally, understanding what is going on,

On Monday, September 29, a front page article appeared in the online *Charlotte Observer* featuring information about a spiritual group meeting in Charlotte, led by atheists and agnostics, who want nothing to do with organized religion, but nonetheless wanted to discuss spiritual items. So they organized it and wouldn't you know that they got together to worship in their own way on Sunday. Why did they pick Sunday? The article did not say.

In the same general time frame, I read in another online article saying that increasing numbers of Americans are describing themselves as spiritual, but not religious. Universalism means, in actual day-to-day practice, that they believe that there are many ways to God, but not one specific way. In that concept, what one believes doctrinally or what one practices does not matter to them. Everybody is already in. I am not talking about the atheists and agnostics here. It is just that these people consider themselves spiritually apt, but they do not want to be part of a church. They just want to be free to be spiritual.

We have reached a place where this is hitting the front page of a major city in America's newspaper, that all they want to do is get together to discuss spiritual things, but they do not want to be part of anything that is organized in the way of a religion. Thus, we are beginning to hit pretty clearly on what it says in the last verse in the book of Judges, where it says everybody did what was right in his own eyes. Universalism encompasses that thought. To these people, God really has no specific plan that He is working out, and no wonder Satan has deceived the entire world. They have no idea what God is doing.

We are going to see as we move along today that universalism is diametrically opposed to what the Bible says, and thus it is opposed to the God-assigned work responsibilities of the church.

II Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting

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kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the foundation that I laid last night, I hope it will begin to factually shape our worldview and where the church and, thus, we fit into it. If one follows the universality creed where all that matters is spirituality, what is one to do to fulfill what Peter says in these two verses? Diligently doing what? It is essential for us to know who we are when one considers the billions upon billions of people who have lived and died since Adam and Eve. What is given us is among the greatest spiritual gifts given to anybody at any time in the history of mankind.

I do not want anybody to lose out due to negligence; negligence is the trademark of a Laodicean. Often it exists and grows in some because they fail to appreciate the enormity of the value of the gift given them, and with this introduction I am bridging to the next item necessary for a clearer worldview. This step is intended first to help us clearly see our responsibility to God and that is, what are we to be faithfully doing as a church? Of course, since we are all part of it, it is part of our job too. We must clearly, and I believe forcefully, know what the church is and is not.

The next step following that is where do we fit? That is sometimes a little bit difficult for us to discern, so we are not going to attack that. I am going to attack what the church as a body is to do. We will find out where each one of us fits as time goes on.

As one searches for the answers to these questions by observing what the churches are doing in the world, I believe that one is going to receive a distorted picture as compared to what the Bible shows. What are they doing? I will give you a one-sentence answer. It is broad, but it is a one-sentence answer and you can fill in the details from your own experience, and that is they are, almost all of them, totally involved in the world. Like I said, that is a broad answer but it is also a correct broad answer.

The church is a separate group within God's purpose. The church is absolutely forbidden to be involved in the world, and there are spiritual reasons for that. But the churches of this world (filled in many cases with fine, moral people, sincere people) are involved in the world, because that is what their denomination is doing—they are involved in this world's politics, wars, fund raising for the benefits of this world's charity systems, and they operate hospitals to heal the sick. I am not suggesting that these things are evil in and of themselves; I am saying that this is not what the Bible shows that we are responsible for performing in behalf of God's purpose.

Our purpose is different from that, so this world's church scene provides a distorted

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picture, and this is because they see themselves as part of this world's system, not sanctified from it. One way that we can say this is they do not see themselves clearly, believingly, as citizens of Heaven. It is not taken seriously by them; to them it is merely a spiritual item that they believe, but no action is taken in fulfilling those citizenship responsibilities that God requires of those who are part of the Kingdom of God.

A good many of you were here last year when I gave a two-part sermon on the subject of loyalty. If you would go through your notes on that you would find out that the things I kept emphasizing is that as members who are citizens of Heaven we have separated ourselves from the world and all of its systems. We are responsible first to God and secondarily to anything that is in this world. So we do not enter their wars. We do not enter their political systems. We do not do those things, even though we are good citizens, and we do not participate in those things as a citizen of Heaven.

There is a legal reason for that. That is, since we are citizens of Heaven we are not legally given the permission by God to participate in this world's systems. We are separate from it. That can cause a Christian a great deal of persecution, but that is our responsibility. We are separated, so those people do not comprehend that one truth's importance. They do not comprehend the importance of the Sabbath days or the holy days. We can go on and on. They just do not get it because God has not given them the spiritual discernment to be able to make practical use of the truth that is in His Book. But to the real Christian, He has given that ability to discern, and so they separate themselves from it and do not participate in those ways.

What is it that by means of our calling and the receipt of God's Holy Spirit we have become part of? The answer from the Bible is as clear as the ringing of a bell. We are going to go into that first by observing our Lord and Master Jesus Christ as He shows by His example.

Can you find anybody better than following Jesus Christ who most certainly was not part of this world? Was He accepted by the world? No, He was not. And if we do follow Jesus Christ step-for-step like we are commanded to do in I Peter, where He steps, we step, when He stops stepping, we stop stepping, and so forth. So they are not really following Christ. They say they believe, but they do not follow Him when it really counts.

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

That is pretty clear. There are only seven or eight words, but God means exactly what He says. That is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian—a Christian

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does not argue, even though it is seven words—I want you to imitate Me. How many elections do you know that Jesus participated in? How many wars did He participate in? I say these things because it is so obvious that He did not participate in the world. He served the world. He died for those who follow Him, and ultimately He died for all who will come to Him in the future. He did it for them, but He did it for us first, and God has given us the ability to understand this and make use of it.

Remember this: Paul said we are members of His body. If we really are members of His body we are going to go where He went, we are going to do what He did, and we will imitate Him step-for-step all along the way. We do as He did. So following Christ is how each Christian should live his life individually. He kept the Sabbath; we keep the Sabbath. He kept the holy days; we keep the holy days. He was baptized by immersion; we are baptized by immersion. You get the principle that is involved here? It is so simple.

All we have to do to see that the church is really separate is to look at the world and look at what they are doing. They are not following the commandments of God. That is what separates us. I will give you proof of that in the book of Revelation before this sermon is over. (If it is not in this one, it is in the next one.) It is so clear. Jesus never broke a law of God, He taught us to keep the commandments, and if we keep the commandments we are walking in His steps.

God is in heaven. Christ is in heaven directing the church to walk in His steps regarding a responsibility that He pursued as a man, and we as a church body must imitate the pattern Christ showed in His teaching as a human. So I am going to state the church's purpose very clearly, but first turn to John 1:38.

John 1:38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, teacher), "Where are You staying?"

Right in that verse we see what Jesus did whenever He was walking on this earth. So among His responsibilities when He came to the earth He came as a teacher, and already these men were beginning to recognize that and that is why they called Him "Rabbi." He had not been ordained by any Jewish group at all, but they recognized immediately that this man can teach. How many times was He called Rabbi by somebody? I do not know how many times but it is just a thought. The church's primary purpose as the body of Jesus Christ is as a teaching institution. That is what we are.

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Christ raised up a teaching institution. How do we do this? First, by fulfilling this responsibility it makes known to the world, at least at large, the overall purpose God is working out. Second, and no less important, maybe even more important, it further educates those invited to participate in its responsibilities more directly in God's way of life. That is why we are here. The church is teaching you so that you can be prepared for the Kingdom of God.

We had a sermon this morning where Richard went into things, and when it was over I said to John Reid, "John, Richard and I prepared our sermons separately, individually." I had no idea, until I think last Sabbath that he said he was going to be speaking on the Psalms, what he was even speaking on. I said to John, "What he just gave fits right into my sermon." God did that. I did not know what he was preparing. I only knew what I was preparing, and so Richard gave you a demonstration of what the church's responsibility is. One of those responsibilities is to break things apart, refine them over and over again, and magnify the Word of God as it applies to you and me in our preparation for the Kingdom of God. He is not doing that for the world. He is doing the job assigned by God for the church to do.

First, it preaches the gospel to the world. That is well known. Second, it preaches the gospel to the church members themselves; the only difference being to the world, all the world gets is a generality. What the church gets is what is contained in the Sermon on the Mount broken down into little pieces so that we are able to learn the details of our responsibilities for glorifying God.

What is the church doing in this second? It is educating itself in preparation for the Kingdom of God, and that is exceedingly important.

Those invited into the church by God to participate are carrying out these responsibilities, that is the teaching and the learning labor and all of the activity, both mental and physical associated with them, and this becomes a major means of their perfecting through actual practice and, thus, preparation for living in the Kingdom of God. We will see in Mark 1 how this unfolds, step-by-step.

Mark 1:14-17 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men,"

The first act that we see is Jesus doing His responsibility as a teacher. That is the job God gave Him to do. What was the Teacher doing? He was raising up a teaching institution of which He would be the Head. According to verse 17, the primary purpose of His preaching was to teach others, who would then become part of an organized operation to prepare others beyond them, who would also preach the same message that He preached—a very simple process.

Matthew 10:1, 5-7 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying; “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and as you go, preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

What we see here is that the progress that began in Mark 1 has taken a bit of time, and now there is a group of people gathering, we will say, at the feet of Jesus. A group of converts began to form as a result of the teaching of Jesus, and He separated some of them from the group and began to teach them and give them practice so that others would be attracted, thus enlarging the process that was begun by Himself.

What we can see of the process here is that after being attracted by the initial teaching of Jesus, we then find the leader of the teaching institution, Christ, further instructing the group forming under Him, and thus the church is involved in two works at the same time. Incidentally, there is something we should keep in the back of our mind in Mark 1 and that is that Jesus began the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. What I am saying is that even though the Kingdom of God was mentioned prior to Jesus Christ, it was not ever designated as a specific message until Jesus Christ began preaching it. God waited until His Son reached the age of approximately thirty years old, and the preaching of the gospel began with Jesus Christ. Again, a special Person is involved and beginning to build a special group of people who are going to carry on the work that He Himself began.

We see the process beginning to work, and it is not only teaching those beyond (that is outside their present group), but is also expanding and refining the initial teaching to those who were already within it. Thus, we see two very clear responsibilities: preaching the gospel to the world and feeding the flock.

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It is helpful to understand that the feeding of the flock is also preaching the gospel, but it is greatly expanded and more specific, a magnified version of it, even as the Sermon on the Mount is a magnified version of Jesus' original preaching. The world is given by and large only an overview compared with what is given the flock. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are devoted to teaching us of those activities at the very foundation of what became the church, following Christ's resurrection and giving of the Holy Spirit.

I want to refresh our minds regarding the qualifications of the Teacher God sent to us, because this sets the stage for why the church must follow Him as exactly as possible in its responsibilities. The key here is one of the reasons that the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God was allowed to be introduced only by the Father through Jesus Christ. He was the only One in the entire universe capable of doing it. There was nobody else.

The apostle Paul says that we are the body of Jesus Christ, and now the church of God is the only one on earth that has the qualifications for preaching the true gospel. That separates the church of God from every other spiritual group that has ever been on earth. What a unique, significant institution that you have been put into. It is awesome!

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

I will read some of this from *The Living Bible* because it tells a story here so clearly as whom it is that we are dealing with, with this Jesus.

John 1:1-3 Before anything else existed there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is Himself God. He created everything there is; nothing exists that He did not make (*The Living Bible*).

Are you beginning to gather why I said God waited until Jesus Christ came to this earth and until He was thirty years old? Jesus Christ was the only One qualified up to that time to preach the message about what God was doing on earth because He had been with God before time began.

He is our Brother, and we are part of His body. That is why I say confidently that the church of God is the only group on earth qualified to preach the true gospel. It is not because of us; it is because of Jesus Christ and us being declared by God as part of His

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body. We have a direct connection right to the top. That is awesome.

John 1:16-18 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

These three verses are pretty important for us to understand. In verse 16, the apostle John is speaking of Jesus and his [John's] experience with Him. He exalts that through that experience he and the other apostles received far more than he can possibly list. He describes those blessings as “grace upon grace, and of His fullness which we have received grace for grace.” This means in translation it could have been translated “favor upon favor” or “gift upon gift.” Maybe it is easier to understand if I put it this way: blessings piled one on top of another in a never-ending manner. That is really what it means, that grace for grace—blessings piled one on top of another heaped up one after the other.

Now in verses 17 and 18, they present a brief comparison of Jesus and Moses. Moses suffers by comparison, but this is not intended in any way to be a put-down of Moses. Moses is a man highly respected of God, and used very often by Him. God liberally worked through him, revealing many things by means of Moses.

The exaltation of Jesus Christ here is that He actually, literally, came from the Father, had constantly communicated with Him, and literally saw Him for an eternity of time. So who is the better teacher? Jesus, or the best one the Jews knew up till that time—Moses? Jesus Christ was so far beyond Moses there was no comparison because He had been with Him for an eternity of time and there was nobody else who ever lived up to them or continued on from them who ever had so much experience with the Father.

Who could better teach what the Father wanted, what the Father was desiring to accomplish?

The exaltation of Jesus Christ here is that He actually, literally, came from the Father, had constantly communicated with Him, and literally saw Him for an eternity of time. He knew the mind of God.

John 1:17-18 He is the companion of the Father, and has told us all about Him (*The Living Bible*).

Nobody else could do that. The beginning of the preaching of the gospel had to wait until One came who knew all about the Father. He was the only One who could possibly do the job. He had to be on earth, He had to be a man, but He also had to be God.

I will remind you that we are now part of His body, so who on earth is qualified to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God?—only that group that is a part of the body of Jesus Christ. That gives Jesus a tremendous advantage over Moses in terms of depth and quality teaching material, the One from whom the most can be received, and there is no argument as to whom that was. Which is more valuable to know and to be taught by? The answer is self-evident. Which one is the head of the church? It is not Moses.

Let us add to these few verses from John 17, which is Jesus's prayer. Jesus is telling us here what He accomplished and what He hopes to continue; both are in this chapter.

John 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

This was Jesus prayer. What He did here is define the nature of eternal life; eternal life in this verse is not defined by chronological terms but rather by the quality of life within a relationship. Think of it this way: life exists as active involvement with the environment we live within. You are all here in this environment, you are living here, but our environment is not just here. The human environment is much bigger than this, but we are equipped by God, by creation, to operate within the environment that He has created for us. So when we die, that is the cessation of that active involvement.

The very highest quality of life is active involvement within the highest environment. I will illustrate this. A worm is content to live in the soil, but we humans not only need the soil environment, we also need the other things that God created, like the sea, the sky, other animals, and other humans in order to live a higher quality life than a worm. But for complete fulfillment of the beings that God created us to be, and now because God has revealed Himself to us and given us His Spirit, we must even now begin to grow to live in the same kind of environment that God lives in.

That is what eternal life is. It is being capable of living within the same environment that God Himself lives in. It is not just long life. It is having a long life, but also capable of living the same level as God lives. It is a quality of life. Length is a side issue, and I say it is a side issue because what Jesus Christ is doing with us is preparing us to live the way God lives. We could not do that just being snatched out of our human life and put

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into heaven, as it were. We would not be prepared to live there. We would be no more prepared to live there than a worm is prepared to live in a human environment. What kind of communication can a worm have with us?

You begin to get the difference here. This is what Jesus Christ is doing for the church. He is preparing the church to live in the same kind of environment that His Father and He now live in. That is the way this prayer begins, but it goes on from there.

John 17:4 "I have glorified You, I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."

What was that work? He preached. He educated those who were following Him with what they

needed to carry on when He was no longer going to be there. In other words, He prepared them to live the same kind of life that He had brought them to live when He was a human being. They were not perfect at it, but they were moving in the right direction.

John 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

He was lifting them, as it were, theologically, spiritually toward His level. He said here, "I have manifested Your name." This directly connects to John 1:16 and 18. We have already gone through that, where John the apostle said what he did about blessing upon blessing. That is what he is referring to there.

The word "manifest" means "to reveal; to make known something that they did not know before," or at least could not grasp before. How did He do this? He did it through words. Did He not say, 'The words that I have given to you, they are spirit and they are power.' The words that were going into their minds coming from this greatest of all teachers was lifting their thoughts way over and above what a normal human being would think about life and its possibilities and what can be accomplished and where they were headed, and it was beginning to drive these men's lives because they were making use of it.

Words are power. "The words that I speak to you they are spirit and they are power." Where is the power in a word? A power in a word is what they enable us to do. They

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motivate us, they stop us, they start us, they excite us, they sadden us, they discourage us, they turn the buttons, they turn them off and on, and so forth. They are there for the development of the mind, to put into our minds a great hope that we will drive ourselves in our activities, and that our heart will be affected by them, and we will begin to act in accordance with what those words mean and the power that is in their meaning.

They also received a certain amount from observing Jesus as well. It was not just words; it was also watching the activities that He did as He lived. These two qualifications are bound together, words and example, and both of these played a part in His manifestation of the Father.

Please make sure you do not go much further in your life without understanding John 17. It is one of the most powerful, meaningful chapters in the entire Bible; it is a prayer of our Savior. What He says is what He accomplished. He made known to us the Father. Nobody had ever done that before. There was not one God, in a sense, there were two, and the second One was greater than the first One.

In making known the Father's name, Jesus made known to them the Father's character, His law, His will, His plan of merciful redemption, and His manner or way that He details in His word. It is a specific way of conducting one's life. John 17:6 is Jesus' prayer to the Father. This is the way *The Amplified Bible* states it:

John 17:6 I have revealed Your very Self (*The Amplified Bible*).

The real Self—not just stories about the Father, but His very Self. Again, He was the only One who ever lived who could do that.

John 17:6 I have told these men all about You (*The Living Bible*).

That is a pretty broad statement, but it is as plain as you can get, and it is about as clear as you can get.

Doing what Jesus did becomes the responsibility of the church as it follows behind Jesus Christ. Please understand the church does not do it as well, but it does do what it can. Let us keep going through John 17.

John 17:8 “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came forth from

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You; and they have believed that You sent Me.”

John 17:14 “I have given them Your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth.”

John 8:32 “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

These men were being set free of human nature. Truthful words are power for good because of the understanding that they give and what they motivate one to do or to not do. So what Jesus is doing here is preparing them for receiving the torch that He is passing on to them. It is a review mostly to them as to what He had accomplished during three-and-a-half years that He was with them. So they heard the prayer, and they had a very powerful review of what they learned in that past three-and-a-half years. This makes it very clear what the church’s responsibility is.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

What is it that separates the church from the world? The church keeps the commandments of God—all of them. The church keeps those commandments in the Old Testament that people say are done away. They are not done away. They are still there for our use so that our minds are elevated above plain, ordinary human nature. We need those commandments that people say are done away. We learn from those things that are supposedly done away.

Eventually, I hope to carry this series to show you, to prove to you, that absolutely not a single one of those commandments are done away in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ stated that very thing in Matthew 5:17-19.

Matthew 5:17-19 “Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass

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from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Not one comma has been done away in His commandments. God does not do away with things that are useful and helpful and energizing and to doing what is good and right, and the entire Bible is dedicated to our education. There is no way that we can have the mind of Jesus Christ unless we have the Old Testament in our mind. We are without the mind of Christ if the Old Testament is not there because He experienced those things with human beings and recorded what He felt was important that we need in order to conduct our lives in glorifying God and carrying out our responsibilities.

Paul says in I Corinthians 2 that we have the mind of Christ. That is the only way you can get it. You need the whole Bible because that is the mind of Christ. That does not mean that everything in the Old Testament pertains directly to salvation, but whatever is there is good for life.

That is what the church does. Our responsibility is to teach one another, and we are all part of this institution that God has put together to carry on the work of Jesus Christ. And we alone in all of the world are the only institution (I do not mean the Church of the Great God, I mean the whole church of God) that is qualified to preach what Jesus preached, because we are part of His body, and He is in intimate connection with those who are part of His body, and they will carry on the work that He began.