

The Distinctive Nature of the Church “of Christ”

by Brett W. Hogland

The Distinctive Christ

We tend to recognize things that have distinctive features or are distinct in their nature. Most religious people are aware of how remarkably different Jesus was when compared to the religious people of his day. His life, teaching and ministry were distinct from the current religious trends. *“The people were astonished at his teaching,”* (Matthew 7:28-29) and recognized that it was clearly different than that of the contemporary religious teachers. His life was distinct from most religious teachers in that he did not obtain a degree from the famed seminaries of his day, but rather made his advent from the humble obscurity of the despised city of Nazareth, which caused many to stumble (John 1:45-46; 6:42). Yet, for the most part, *“the common people heard him gladly”* (Mark 12:37). The mission of Christ was distinct in that he came primarily for a spiritual purpose (Luke 12:13-14; Mark 1:38) *“to seek and to save”* those who were lost (Luke 19:9-10) regardless of their past, while his contemporaries were more concerned about the “social” aspects of their religion (Matthew 23:5-7).

The Distinctive Church “Of Christ”

Recognizing that the life “of Christ”, the doctrine “of Christ”, and mission “of Christ” were distinct from all other religious leaders of his day, we should not be surprised to find that the church “of Christ” would also be distinct from other churches that are not truly “of Christ.” Even the casual observer will notice that the church “of Christ” in the first century had a very distinct worship based on sincerity and truth (John 4:24; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15), a distinct message of salvation in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11; Acts 4:12) and a distinct mission to be the *“pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15) which *“is the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16).

Hide It Under A Bushel?

It seems today, that in an effort toward greater tolerance and unity in diversity, many are trying to do away with the distinctive features of Christ’s church in order to create a sort of ecumenical, generic church. Many *“churches of Christ”* (Romans 16:16) are forfeiting their divinely designed distinctive features in order to blend in with denominationalism. The distinct worship, doctrine and mission of the church “of Christ” are being compromised in order to become the Mega-Churches of denominationalism.

Compromise Or Magnify?

Jesus never compromised his distinctive features in order to be less offensive to the religious people of His day (Matthew 15:12-14) or to gain more followers ... should we? As a matter of fact, Jesus recognized that his distinct doctrine caused him to lose great numbers of people (John 6:53-66), yet he realized that His Father would *“draw”* whomever he willed through the very same distinctive features that repelled others (John 6:44-45; Matthew 11:25-26). May we never be ashamed of the distinctive nature of our Lord Jesus (Mark 8:38), nor of His body the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). If we ever hope to truly be the Lord’s *“own special (peculiar / distinctive) people”* (Titus 2:14), we will have to maintain the distinctive features that he has given us that set us apart from all other religious efforts that are not *“of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Are You Willing To Study With Us?

If you are interested in studying and investigating to see what distinguishing features the Lord has given to his church, then please . . . come with your Bible and your questions.