

ADORNING THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Part One

By Brent Hunter

What does the concept of adornment mean and what spiritual implications does it have?

The word “adorn” means to “set in an orderly, becoming fashion.” A jeweler works many hours to properly “adorn” his jewels and precious stones. If skilled at his craft, he will set in order his pieces to show off their natural light and beauty. Likewise, a fashion designer designs clothes in such a way that they will be most becoming to the wearer. Paul tells Titus that Christians are to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (Titus 2:10). In other words, we are to let our light shine so that we make the gospel look appealing! We are to live in such a way that others will see the natural beauty of the Christ who is “living in us” (Gal 2:20). In short, we are to “sanctify Christ in our hearts so that others will see the hope within us.” And when they ask us about it, we will be “ready to give an answer” (I Peter 3:15). When individual Christians grow and mature and carry this mission out, as the “called-out” people of God, the church of Jesus Christ fulfills its purposes to glorify Jesus by “adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10). The word “adorn” is similar to the word “cosmos,” which is a reference to the beautifully created order of the universe. As the Psalmist exclaimed so well, “the heaven’s declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps 19:1). Not only is the universe functional, and amazingly precise; but it is *beautiful*. God has adorned the universe with breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, gorgeous mountains and valleys, and awe-inspiring vistas. Indeed, in the creation He reached down into darkness and into that which was without “form and void” (i.e. *chaos*), and by His mighty power, spoke into existence the order and complexity of our universe! Indeed, the opposite of the words “cosmos” and “adorn” is the concept of confusion and chaos. Given our God, it is not surprising that our universe is the way it is because it is a reflection of the character of its Divine Maker. Paul reminds us that “God is not the author of confusion (chaos) but peace” (I Cor 14:33). We are admonished to “Be ye Holy, even as I am Holy” (I Peter 1:15-16). We are as God’s children and disciples of the Lord to live lives that are “set in order,” and in so doing we “adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things” (Titus 2:10). In other words, we are to present the gospel in a way that is “becoming,” as we daily serve as God’s epistles, “known and read by all men” (II Cor 3:2).

How can church members effectively adorn the doctrine of Christ?

The scriptures teach this is done in four ways: First, through *consistent righteous moral living*. The key here is be a good example (I Tim 4:12). Folks would rather “see a sermon than hear one.” When we live the life we are confessing, we complement and adorn the message rather than contradict it. Secondly, we adorn the doctrine by standing for truth and doing so with the right attitude. Thirdly, we adorn the gospel by maintaining a proper understanding, response, and focus on God’s grace. The church must not minor in the grace of God but major in it if Christ’s doctrine is to be properly adorned. Fourthly, it is properly adorned by “doing good, being rich toward good works” (I Tim 6:18) to both saint and sinner alike (Gal 6:10).

Non-believers rarely read their Bibles, but every day they read the lives of believers. Therefore, believers must “wear” the gospel in a way that presents it in the best light possible. One way is by living lives that do not contradict the message. No wonder Paul, right after his admonition to “adorn the doctrine,” says in Titus 2:12 that Christians should “deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.” What happens if believers fail in this? I love the quote from Emerson: “What you are thunders in my ears so loud I can’t hear a word that you are saying!” Indeed, saying one thing and doing another won’t adorn the doctrine of Christ. Instead, it will cause people to repudiate it. Mahatma Gandhi, when he was once asked why he was not a Christian, responded: “Your Christ I like, your Christians, I do not.” What a lame excuse; but also, what a sad commentary! Christ’s teachings in His church will only be properly adorned when Christians are truly transformed (Rm 12:1-2) and live righteous and godly lives that reflect Christ living in them (Gal 2:20).

As we all move forward in our work together at Johnson Ave, let us all be very conscientious to be good examples and wisely let our light shine! It will make a big difference in the success or failure of our evangelistic efforts. I am away in the Dayton, Ohio area this Lord’s day and I will miss you all. I believe this article will fit well in the lesson that our brother Tom Stewart has prepared for you this morning. I look forward to next Lord’s Day when we will “Vision Cast” into the future as God’s family together.