

The House of God

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Received up into glory, that's all I'm going to read just now, doubtless we'll refer to other scriptures as we proceed. The thought I have this evening is really a double subject, one is the house of God and the other is the truth that forms and fills it. Of course the verse 16 the speaks of the Son of God, the Son of Man, of course it speaks of the one who we had before us [00:01:01] this afternoon in his various glories. But we're perhaps looking at these things from a different perspective tonight. This afternoon our brother Michael started us by giving, started by giving us a panorama of I think it was Tokyo. Over there was the palace, over there was the town and over there was the harbour. Now if you'd looked at any of those things from another point, you would have seen the same things but they would not have looked the same. You've probably had the experience, those of you who've flown, you come into an airport and you look out and you expect things to be familiar but of course from up there they look nothing like they do when you're on the ground. Well what we're looking at here is the one we had before us this afternoon but we're looking [00:02:09] in a slightly different direction and I want to start by a thinking of the circumstance in which these three verses were written but then a brief look at the house of God and then a look at verse 16 and the things that it tells us about the one who was manifested in flesh and was received up into glory. I'm always glad and I think it's worth emphasising that what we have laid out in the Scriptures so often is written from a personal perspective. Paul did not write to Timothy, look Timothy I'm going to draw you a diagram of the house of God or this is what it [00:03:04] consists of and you must learn these things and commit them to memory in a cold impersonal way. No he didn't write in that style at all. He wrote to his son in the faith. He wrote hoping that he would see him before long. Whether he did or not I am grateful for that little detail because fearful they would not meet in the near future he wrote these things down and we have them today. These things write I unto thee hoping to come unto thee shortly but if I tarry long that thou mayest know or possibly that one may, yes that thou mayest know how one ought to behave oneself in the house [00:04:05] of God. It was a desire in the heart of the Apostle that Timothy should be informed of these things and they're written down so that we can be in the good of them too. How to behave oneself in the house of God. What a lot is comprehended in that isn't it. Do you know as I sat and thought about this verse the other day I my mind went back, perhaps that's a sign of anodomy I don't know, but it went back to the first time I ever came to Catford 1958. Mr. John Weston senior was on the platform and he was speaking about worship and he said you know when we come together we come together in the name of the Lord Jesus and the Lord is here he's in the [00:05:04] midst and then he said this and this is the point he said if we could only see him how very reverent we should be. He said that and he said and I quote his actual words 45 years ago he said there'd be no stamping up and down or flinging about of hassocks or I know not what. He was a cultural speaker and he was not afraid to use expressions like that. But how to behave oneself in the

house of God what does it actually mean? Well we've had certain features brought before us already. What is the house of God? It's a house of prayer chapter 2 verse 1. This is the first exhortation. I'm not going to go through them all or we shall never finish but this is the kind of [00:06:01] that the Apostle was bringing before Timothy. I exhort therefore that first of all supplications prayers intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men. Yes God's house is a house of prayer. Verse 8 of that chapter he gives the part that men pray the men pray every men take men pray everywhere. Lower down verse 11 he gives the woman's part. Chapter 3 he goes on to speak about bishops and deacons and if you read these verses carefully you'll see that what he is writing about is not so much what it what the duties of a bishop are or indeed the duties of a deacon but how they should conduct themselves personally and morally. How to behave oneself [00:07:10] in the house of God. What is that house? God has a house on earth. The psalmist wrote holiness becometh thy house O God. Perhaps as a reflection on the way that Judah had gone away and polluted the house of God as Jeremiah tells us holiness becometh thy house O Lord forever. It is a house where there should be worship. It is a house where there should be prayer. It is a place where [00:08:06] God dwells. That thought that the house of God is a place where God dwells runs throughout the scripture. It's given in shadow form perhaps in Genesis. God's word to Jacob arise go up to Bethel and dwell there. In reality there was no house of God at that time but we get it foreshadowed more definitely in the tabernacle. Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. The sanctuary the tabernacle and now of course in the New Testament Peter Paul they all write about the house of God. Peter writes about it as being a place of living stones. He also as living stones [00:09:15] are built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. There's a similar thought isn't there at the end of the second chapter of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 2 just read the last verse or so. In whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. This idea that here in this world there is a place where God can dwell. There is a place where those who are Christ's can come together [00:10:04] to worship him. There is a place where prayer can be offered. I wonder if we often think of the house of God as a house of prayer. Just remember when the Church of Christ was set up at the day of Pentecost it says they continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and prayers. I wonder if we're making that our business today. To continue in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayers. The house of God is a house. It is the house of God which is the assembly of the living God. The pillar and [00:11:08] ground or support of the truth. He was writing to Timothy. Timothy at this time was in Ephesus.

Many of those in Ephesus were once idolaters but they'd found the living God. They were builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The house of God is the church of the living God and it's the pillar and it's the support of the truth. This of course is based upon Peter's confession. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And it is those who have in [00:12:03] their hearts uttered those same words who are built together today into the house of God. They are part of the body of Christ. They are part of the house of God. The house of God in this verse that we have in front of us now is not the same as the body of Christ. We can speak of the body of Christ as all those who are on earth at this present time. We can also speak of it as every believer from Pentecost until the rapture. I believe that what we have in this verse is every true believer on earth today. That is what constitutes the house of God in this verse that we have before us. It's not the local assembly. It's not that there is a house of God in Wildfell Hall and there's another one in Dugdale Hall Potters Bar and another one in Plum Lane Meeting [00:13:02] Room Plumstead and so on. No, no. But what is done in each of those places should be representative of the house as a whole. If you ask, well where can we conduct ourselves in a right way for the house of God? Well then it may be in the local assembly. I'll give you that. But the house of God is every true believer. Whether gathering according to a scriptural

pattern or not, every true believer on this earth today. Now what significance has it? Well it's the pillar and the support of the truth. The pillar. When we think of pillars, perhaps the first person we think of is Jacob. Jacob built four pillars. If you remember, one of them marked the house of God.

[00:14:03] The second one marked a heap of witness. The third one again marked the house of God. And the fourth one marked fruitfulness. Jacob of course has a pilgrim character and maybe this marks a pilgrim character of the house of God here below. What we've got in this verse and the next is not so much heavenly glory. It's not that place that we're going to occupy in eternity. It's what we should be here and now in this world. Jacob. Four pillars. They marked his pathway. We might think of Deuteronomy where it says, it talks in chapter six about writing the sayings of God upon the [00:15:09] pillars and upon the doors. Yes there was to be a witness to those inside and to those who are outside. And surely there is that character about the house of God even now. Surely we're here to show what it is to live for Christ. And perhaps we're here even more to show what Christ is. To show it within the house yes and to show it outside. What is the witness of the assembly to those around? Well where can those around see a pattern of what is according to the mind of [00:16:03] Christ? Surely it's in the assembly. Surely it's in those who are gathered to his name. Those who are part of the house of God. It's the pillar on which these things are written. It ought to be a pillar on which Christ can be seen by those around. Our neighbours, our friends, those in the vicinity of the meeting rooms where we meet together. It's not that the assembly teaches, rather that the assembly is taught. But surely there is a personal responsibility upon each one to exhibit some of these features. It is the support of the truth as well as the pillar. In other words there is an importance to be put upon sound doctrine, upon holding fast. In the following chapter the Apostle [00:17:10] goes on to speak about some departing from the faith. And in verse 13 he says of chapter 4, till I come give attendance to reading. That's public reading of course, reading out loud. To reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. There is to be the maintenance of these things. And to Timothy 3.16 says, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Yes, the house of God is to hold these things up before those who are within and before those who are without. There should be that representation [00:18:08] of Christ which there will be if each one, each member, is a living epistle as Paul wrote to the Corinthians. There's an idea that some of you may be familiar with. If you work for a fairly up-to-date organization, you will know what I mean when I say a 360 degree appraisal. The old idea was that once a year there's an appraisal between the worker and his immediate boss. That's gone. Instead you have a 360 degree appraisal where all those around, colleagues, both from a higher level and a lower level, have their opportunity to observe and to comment upon [00:19:04] the individual. Well, that's a very banal sort of illustration. But just think of the house of God. Yes, it's seen by angels, it's seen by those in heavenly places, it's seen by those within it, and it's seen by those outside, those around. Don't you think they don't know? Don't you think that they have a very good idea of what goes on, the kind of lives we lead, and the way we conduct ourselves. We must move, move onwards. The pillar and support of the truth, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. What is this mystery? Why does it say a mystery? Well, we all know, expect that a mystery is something once hidden, now revealed. Who is it speaking of? [00:20:07] It's speaking of the one we had before us this afternoon, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the one who was manifested in flesh and was received up into glory. Last month we had Psalm 1 brought before us, didn't we? And it was presented to us as the pattern of the kind of man who is pleasing to God. The various features were brought out, the streams of water, the rejoicing at the Word of God, and of course it was pointed out that Christ is the one who fulfills this exactly, although there is a pattern there for us. And of course it is Christ entirely that verse 16 is occupied with. But nevertheless, as we go through it, maybe there are things in it [00:21:06] which speak to our hearts and

call for some response from ourselves. If you love me, says the Lord Jesus, keep my commandments. There are six facets of the truth brought out here.

Our authorised version says God was manifest. Some manuscripts say he who was manifested.

If you want to substitute that, I think it only brings together more closely the fact that all these things refer to the same person. He who was manifested in flesh was received up into glory.

Six facets of the truth of Christ. Manifested in flesh, justified in the Spirit, the scene of [00:22:10] angels preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. We had this afternoon, didn't we, the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested in flesh. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. How much is involved in that expression, that he was manifested in flesh.

Note that his death as such is not actually mentioned in this verse, but it's perhaps [00:23:01] implicit in the fact that he was manifested in flesh and he was received into glory. As the Lord said himself, didn't he, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory. Yes, and how much is involved in his being manifested in flesh. We thought of it a little this afternoon, didn't we. The Son of God, once seen and once heard, here below. We thought of the reaction of some towards him. We thought of some of the things that he did. I want to just cross over on that thought into Luke's Gospel. Do you remember that in chapter 10, the Lord had [00:24:01] sent out 70, hadn't he. And they came back and they were full of the things they'd been able to do. They said, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And what did the Lord reply? He said, let's get the exact words. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Their names were written in heaven. Just after that, the Lord goes on to tell a story, a well-known story, the story of the Good Samaritan. We all know, I expect, if we all said who is the Good Samaritan, we'd say the Lord. Yes, I believe [00:25:01] that he's the heavenly stranger. If we read through this Gospel, our attention has been directed to the fact of things in heaven. The Lord then prays to his Father, Lord of heaven and earth. And then he tells this story of, as we call it, the Good Samaritan. What was the Samaritan, do you think, doing down in Judea? He was out of his place, wasn't he? Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. So what was the Samaritan doing, traveling that lonely road between Jerusalem and Jericho? The heavenly stranger. We read of the wonderful things that the Samaritan did. He found this man who was as good as dead, and he bound him up, he poured in oil and wine, he set him on his beast, [00:26:02] he took him to an inn. And it's a story that everybody loves, isn't it? And I think that very often, you know, we miss the verse at the end. We get so wrapped up in the story, and what do the two pennies stand for, and who's the keeper of the inn, that we miss the end. It says, go and do thou likewise. There is a message here, you know, in this story that I think we so often overlook. Yes, the Lord manifested here in flesh. What did he spend his time doing? He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. I don't think there was a single person came to him, truly seeking, who went away disappointed. [00:27:03] There may have been one or two who came on their own terms, and he would have them come to reality before he would help them, that's another matter. But a case of need, he never turned away. And he told this story, go and do thou likewise. God manifested in flesh, truly God, truly man. Not only so, but he was justified in the Spirit. He was anointed, wasn't he, by the Holy Spirit. God, even thy God, said the psalmist, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. We recall the anointing of the Holy Spirit at his baptism. We recall his words in that synagogue in Nazareth, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me. And he lists [00:28:04] all the things that he had come to do. After he had gone back to the glory, the apostles could speak of the Holy Child Jesus, whom

thou hast anointed. And again they said how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit. It was witnessed when they saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him in the waters of the River Jordan. It was declared when God honored him upon the mountain of transfiguration. All these things speak of the glory of his person. But you know there was only one man upon whom the Holy Spirit could rest. You ever thought, you know, the dove, the dove that Noah sent out of the ark, it went up. We don't read of a dove coming down until we [00:29:11] read Luke chapter 3, when the Holy Spirit came down and abode upon the Lord Jesus. Yes, the Holy Spirit could rest upon that one who is so perfect. We have the Holy Spirit indwelling in us, but he's only there because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He dwells in us through grace. He dwelt and rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ because of who he was and of his perfect humanity. He was seen of angels. We don't often talk about angels, do we? But he was seen of angels. He shall give [00:30:01] his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. The angels are closely interested in matters of redemption and in the sufferings of Christ and in the glory that should follow. So perhaps it's no surprise that we find angels mentioned at various stages of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We find them mentioned at his birth. They proclaimed his birth. The heavenly host exulted at the fact that he was born here in this world. Matthew mentions them as being present at his trial in the wilderness when he was tempted forty days in the wilderness. It says angels came and ministered unto him. I don't think Mark and Luke mention that, but Matthew does. Gethsemane. There appeared an angel unto him, strengthening him. What a witness, [00:31:20] what a testimony, because he was in the full current of God's thoughts. That angel was sent, I believe, as a messenger from heaven to give him comfort as a man and sucker at that particular time. A little later, the Lord said, not much later on that same occasion, the Lord said to Peter, don't you think that I have only to pray to the Father and he shall presently, that is now, give me more than twelve legions of angels? Have you ever thought of that? He had only to speak [00:32:05] the word and those legions of angels would gladly have conveyed him far from that place. But then, he said, how shall the scripture be fulfilled? That was not the plan. That was not the reason for which he'd come. Oh surely he was seen of angels. And after his resurrection too, angels mark the tomb where he lay. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He's not here, he's risen. The angels tell the glad story, don't they? And on the occasion of his ascension too, he was preached unto the Gentiles. He came and preached peace to those that were far [00:33:02] off and to them that were nigh. He sent his servants, as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. We know that the Apostle Paul was particularly sent to preach to the Gentiles.

He was commissioned. The Apostle Peter was given a vision that he might go and take the Gospel to a man called Cornelius. Even while all this was going on, persons were gossiping the Gospel so that believers came to faith in Antioch. The word to us today is, go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Mark 16 verse 15. Surely he's been preached unto the Gentiles and he's been believed on in the world. We heard this afternoon, didn't we? At least it was hinted at, [00:34:08] if not said in so many words, that he came unto his own and his own received him not, but to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God. Yes, there were those from among the Jews at that time who believed on him. He had around him that little company of 11 and there were others, as we can tell if we read the Gospels carefully, who believed on his name. Well now, as we've been saying, the Gospel has gone out wider and it's gone out into all the world. If we look at the opening of the epistle to the Colossians, we'll see there, yes, end of verse 5, the word of the truth of the Gospel which is come unto you as [00:35:06] it is in all the world and bringeth forth fruit. What a wonderful harvest there's going to be one day to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was believed on in the world. I often like to think, that God's house is going to be filled. We talk about fewness of numbers and we get very depressed, don't we sometimes, but you know God's house is going to be filled. Luke 14, go ye out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in. The

house is going to be filled. It's not, I won't say it's going to be full, it's going to be filled. And one day the Lord is going to see the travail of his soul and he's going to be satisfied. He was received up into glory.

[00:36:01] This same one who was manifested in flesh was received up into glory. I like the way that it says in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles that he was taken up. The two of the Gospel writers give us his ascension, Mark and Luke. Mark records it as a fact that he went up and he sat down on the right hand of God. Luke brings in a kind of communion on the part of those who saw him rise and he speaks of a company of worshippers. But in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles it says, until the day in which he was taken up. After that he, [00:37:01] through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen. You see, his work was finished. There's a scripture in Ecclesiastes, isn't there, that says that when God works nothing can be taken away from it, nothing add to it. The work of Christ was finished and those words uttered from the cross, it is finished. I think they're fuller and I think that there is more in them than we sometimes credit them with. His work was finished and the day that he was taken up after he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen. Yes, he'd selected men out of this world to represent him, through whom he would bring into being the Church, through, once the Holy Spirit was given up, given. The end of the pathway of godliness. He's received up into glory. I meant and forgot to [00:38:16] say what we mean by godliness. If it's not too late I'll do it now. Godliness or piety. Perhaps the word piety, it has a rather off-putting flavour to us these days, but it really is quite a simple thing. The word conveys two ideas. The root of the Greek word means goodness, so if you speak of the mystery of goodness, you're nearly there. But it has added to it the thought of devotedness. Goodness and devotedness, that is devotedness to God, [00:39:03] and that is what this verse is bringing out. That it was the Lord, the Son of God, yet Son of Man, who was goodness, devotedness to God, once revealed, once beheld and heard below. One of our hymns puts it, doesn't it? Yes, this is the one. He was received back. He was received back in love and acceptance by the Father. He was received back in triumph. He was received in majesty. He was received back as the head of the body and as minister of the true tabernacle. This is the one who walked here, a pathway of dependence. Do you ever think of Psalms 23 and [00:40:03] 24 as illustrating this verse? Psalm 23, we usually apply it to ourselves, don't we? We say, the Lord is my shepherd, meaning Jesus is my shepherd. But think of it like this, Jehovah is my shepherd. Think of the Lord uttering those words in his pathway. He leadeth me besides the still waters. Another verse, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. This was a characteristic of the pathway of the Lord Jesus here below. That's Psalm 23, Jehovah is my shepherd. Psalm 24, he's received up into glory. Lift up ye heads, ye gates, and lift up ye everlasting doors, that the Prince of glory [00:41:06] may come in. Yes, he's been received back into glory. He's been received back gloriously. Now, there are just, I think there are just four things I want to draw out of this to leave with you. As we contemplate the one of whom these verses speak, what impression should these things leave in our hearts? Surely first and foremost, this verse calls for our worship of the one of whom the verse speaks. Secondly, I think that it has a practical message for us. I've been very much taken just lately with the Lord's words to his own in the upper room. It was after he'd given [00:42:01] them the remembrance, I think. I wouldn't be positive of that, but at the end of Luke 23, he says to his own, ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations. They were those who had continued with him in his pathway. I asked myself, and I ask you to ask yourself, are you continuing with the Lord in his pathway? As far as the world is concerned, he's still the rejected one. The world has no time for him. And if you are his, it will reject you too. Are you continuing with him in his pathway? His rejection is as real after his resurrection as it was before it. You know the Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians, doesn't he, about filling up in his body that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ. We haven't [00:43:08] time to go

into what that means, but I believe that that should be the second response to this verse. The third thing is that it should give substance and content to what we preach and what we teach. Oh surely this mystery of godliness is the subject. As I said at the start, it is that which forms and fills the house of God. That thought is, I'm indebted to Mr. Bellet for. Page 103 of the Son of God. The truth that forms and fills the house of God is contained in this verse.

Surely it should be the subject. These things should be the subject of our preaching and our [00:44:02] teaching. Finally, there is a need to keep these things. I've been struck by the way that at the end of this epistle, and indeed in the opening chapter of the following epistle, Paul exhorts Timothy to keep that deposit which is committed to his trust. What was that deposit? It was, of course, the whole revelation of truth. And that's a word for us today. But it includes surely, no less, the truth of the mystery of godliness. The Lord said to his own, you know, everyone that is... No, he said that to Pilate. He said, everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice. May this be our desire and our prayer as we continue in wilderness conditions [00:45:06] as part of the assembly of the living God. Amen.