

**KNOWING THE TRUTH, BEING ABSOLUTE FOR THE TRUTH,
AND PROCLAIMING THE TRUTH IN THE PRESENT EVIL AGE, Week 5**

**Upholding the Truth and Testifying to the Truth That the Church Is the Pillar and Base of the Truth and
the Corporate Manifestation of God in the Flesh**

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:15; John 18:37

- 1 Timothy 3:15 - But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the **house of God**, which is the **church of the living God**, the **pillar and base of the truth**.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 - And confessedly, **great is the mystery of godliness**:
He who was **manifested in the flesh**, / **Justified in the Spirit**, / **Seen by angels**, / **Preached among the nations**, / **Believed on in the world**, / **Taken up in glory**.
- 1 Timothy 2:4 - Who desires **all men to be saved** and to **come to the full knowledge of the truth**.
- 2 Timothy 2:15 - Be **diligent to present yourself approved to God**, an **unashamed workman**, **cutting straight the word of the truth**.
- John 18:37 - Pilate said therefore to Him, So then You are a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I would **testify to the truth**. **Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice**.

The house of the living God is also the **pillar and base of the truth**. We must properly understand the meaning of this word. The understanding that God has entrusted all the truth to the church for her to spread and to uphold is too objective and does not touch the thought of the Holy Spirit. We need to understand what truth refers to when we say that the **living God lives in the church, the pillar and base of the truth**. Truth and doctrine are different in meaning. John 1:1 says, "*In the beginning was the Word.*" The term used in the Chinese Union Version for Word can be understood as doctrine, but the Word is the expression of God; the Word is God Himself. God expressed is the Word—this is marvelous! The emphasis on doctrine is teaching, not God; the emphasis on the Word is God Himself. The word truth in 1 Timothy 3 is God manifested. John 1:17 says that truth—reality—came through Jesus Christ, and in 14:6 the Lord said that He is the truth, the reality. The Word is the manifestation of God; **truth is the manifested God**, the reality manifested by the Word. **Something concrete is manifested by the Word for us to receive**, and this is God Himself, who is truth.

In 1 Timothy 3:15 truth does not refer to doctrine or theory. Rather, it refers to the reality of the manifestation of God, the manifested God. In the same way that God received by man is grace, God manifested and touched by man is truth, reality. Therefore, the church being the pillar and base of the truth does not mean that the church contains a large number of doctrines but that **the church upholds God Himself as the truth**. **God rests on the church**. (*The Church as the Body of Christ, chapter 4*)

Day 1

- 1 Timothy 3:15** But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- John 14:6** Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

I. The church is the supporting pillar and holding base of the truth—1 Tim. 3:15:

- A. The Lord wants His church to **know** Him as the truth in order to **testify** concerning Him as the truth—John 14:6; 18:37; 1 John 1:6; 5:20.
- B. Truth in 1 Timothy 3:15 refers to the **real things revealed in God's Word**, which are mainly Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the Body of Christ—2:4; Col. 2:9, 19.
- C. The **truth is the Triune God**, having Christ as the embodiment, center, and expression to produce the church as the Body of Christ, the house of God, and the kingdom of God—v. 9; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3, 5.
- D. The **church bears Christ as the reality**; the church **testifies** to the whole universe that Christ, and Christ alone, is the reality—1:14, 17; 14:6.

- E. **As the pillar that bears the truth and the base that upholds the pillar**, the church **testifies** the reality, the truth, of Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.
- F. The kind of church that we build up depends on the **kind of truth that we teach**; thus, there is the desperate need of the **living truth** to produce the church, to help the church to exist, and to build up the church—1 Tim. 3:15.

Day 2 & Day 3

- 1 Timothy 3:9** Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
- 2 John 4** I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.
- 2 Timothy 2:15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.
- 3 John 4** I have no greater joy than these things, that I hear that my children are walking in the truth.

- G. The greatest need that we must meet is to **bring the saints into the truth**; all the saints should be trained in the divine revelation—2:4.

II. All the saints need to **uphold the truth**—3:9, 15; 2 Tim. 2:15:

- A. The supporting pillar and holding base of the truth are the **entire church**, including **all the saints**; **every member** of the church is part of the pillar and base that uphold the truth—1 Tim. 3:15.
- B. The church being the pillar and base of the truth implies that **every member of the church should know the truth**; thus, we should make a decision to learn the truth—2:4:
1. The church, including every believer, **must uphold the truth**—3:9.
 2. In order for the church to be strong, every brother and sister must uphold the truth by **learning** the truth, **experiencing** the truth, and being able to **speak** the truth—2:4.
 3. If we practice the truth in the daily church life, we will be able to **bear some responsibility in upholding the truth**—2 John 4; 3 John 3-4, 8.

Paul spoke of the church not only as the pillar of the truth but also as the base of the truth. The top portion of a building is upheld by pillars, and underneath a building is a foundation as its base. A building needs to be upheld by pillars, and it also needs to be **firmly placed and built upon a base**. The church is not merely the pillar that upholds God; she is also a **base upon which God places and builds Himself**. The church is the foundation, the groundwork, the base, on which God can fully place Himself. In a building the base upholds the pillars, and the pillars uphold the entire structure; this is what the church is to God. May we all see that **the church is the pillar on which God rests and the base on which God is placed**. This is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh. (*The Church as the Body of Christ, chapter 4*)

Day 4

- 1 Timothy 3:16** And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness:
He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

III. We need to **uphold the truth and testify to the truth that the church is the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh**—1 Tim. 3:15-16:

- A. God's manifestation was **first in Christ** as an individual expression in the flesh—v. 16; Col. 2:9; John 1:1, 14:
1. The New Testament does not say that the Son of God was incarnated; it reveals that **God was manifested in the flesh**—1 Tim. 3:15-16:
 - a. God was manifested in the flesh not only as the Son but as the **entire God**—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.
 - b. The entire God and not only God the Son was incarnated; hence, Christ in His incarnation was the entire God manifested in the flesh:
 - (1) In His ministry in the stage of incarnation, Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man; in Christ the infinite God and the finite man **became one**—John 8:58; 7:6; 12:24.
 - (2) Through incarnation the **divine incorporation**—God in His Divine Trinity coinhering mutually and working together as one—was brought into humanity; Christ is therefore the incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man—14:10-11.
 2. In Christ dwells all the **fullness** of the Godhead bodily—Col. 2:9:
 - a. All the fullness of the Godhead refers to the **entire Godhead**, to the **complete God**.
 - b. Since the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the **fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit**.
 - c. That all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the **Triune God is embodied in Him**—John 14:10.
 - d. As the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, Christ is not only the Son of God but also the **entire God**.

Day 5 & Day 6

Ephesians 2:19	So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
Ephesians 1:22-23	And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
1 Corinthians 14:25	The secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you.
Ephesians 4:24	And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

- B. First Timothy 3:15-16 indicates that not only Christ Himself as the Head is the manifestation of God in the flesh **but also that the church** as the Body of Christ and the house of God is the manifestation of God in the flesh—the mystery of godliness:
1. Godliness in verse 16 refers not only to piety but to the **living of God in the church**, that is, God as life lived out in the church to be expressed:
 - a. Both Christ and the church are the **mystery of godliness, expressing God in the flesh**.
 - b. The church life is the expression of God; therefore, the mystery of godliness is the **living of a proper church**—1 Cor. 1:6; 14:24-25.
 2. **God is manifested in the church**—the house of God and the Body of Christ— as the enlarged corporate expression in the flesh—Eph. 2:19; 1:22-23:
 - a. The manifestation of God in the flesh **began with Christ when He was on earth**—John 14:9.
 - b. The manifestation of God in the flesh **continues with the church**, which is the increase, enlargement, and multiplication of the manifestation of God in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:15-16.
 - c. Such a church becomes the continuation of Christ's manifestation of God in the flesh—**Christ lived out of the church as the manifestation of God**.
 3. The **great mystery of godliness** is that **God has become man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce a corporate God-man for the manifestation of God in the flesh**—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; Eph. 4:24.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS— GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH

Although 1 Timothy 3:16 speaks concerning the Lord Jesus, it is connected to verse 15 concerning the church as the pillar and base that upholds God. This shows that the mystery of godliness, **God manifested in the flesh**, does not refer only to the Lord Jesus but also to the church, which is His enlargement. Verse 15 speaks of the church, and verse 16 speaks of incarnation, because incarnation was enlarged when the church came into being. Whenever the church is manifested, incarnation is enlarged. In Bethlehem God was manifested in the flesh on a small scale in one man; **in the church God is manifested in millions of people**. Although the scope is wide, the intrinsic principle is absolutely the same. The Lord Jesus was God manifested in the flesh, the mystery of godliness; the church, composed of millions of people, is **still God manifested in the flesh**, still the mystery of godliness.

Godliness means **God-likeness**; it is to have God's form and to have the ability to express God. For example, we would say that a person who acts justly is righteous, a person who is undefiled by the world and separated from everything is holy, and a person who is meek and humble is modest and good-natured. Likewise, we would say that a **person who is like God and expresses God's image possesses godliness**. The mystery of godliness in 1 Timothy 3:16 is a group of people who are like God; God is now manifested through them, not just through Himself alone. This is a mystery.

Do we have the mystery of godliness in the church life? If we do, nothing less than God is being manifested in the flesh. The manifestation of God that began on a small scale in Bethlehem will be enlarged and completed in the church. **Truth is upheld by the church as the pillar, and truth is set on the church as the base. The church is God manifested in a group of people in the flesh.** (The Church as the Body of Christ, chapter 4)