

The Rise and Fall of God's House

by Denny Kenaston

The Church is God's holy witness on earth, and it is the place where God's manifold wisdom is made known to the principalities and powers.

Duration: 1:26:50

Scripture: Job 1:12, Matthew 6:33, John 1:17, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 2:8, 1 Timothy 3:14-16, 2 Timothy 3:14-16

Topics: "Declension"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of recognizing and appreciating the presence of God in our lives. He emphasizes that God is always working to raise up something new, even in the midst of sadness and loss. The speaker also highlights the significance of the church as God's holy witness on earth and the responsibility we have to represent Him. He mentions the story of David, who had a vision to build a house for God, and encourages the audience to have their own dreams and visions for serving God.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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It's a joy to be here. It was a blessing to be able to sing together with you all. I appreciated the songs that the Lord led us to sing.

They were perfect for me. I traveled all day today to get here. So, it's just like the Lord sent those songs just for me.

Maybe you felt the same way, but God is that way. He can do that. He can do it just for me and He can do it just for you at the same time.

Hallelujah. That's the way God is. He's a good God and Father to all of us.

So, I greet you in Jesus' name this evening. I'm also looking way beyond myself for what needs to be said this week. Way beyond myself.

For several weeks, God has been giving me an intense burden for the things that He wants me to say here this week. I spent much time praying about it. Pondering what God would have me to say.

And you know, there's a lot of ways that you can go through a week of meetings like this. I have about 500 sermons at home. And I can pick any one of those 500 and just give you one and give you another one and give you another one.

But God didn't lead me that way. God is leading me a different way for this week. And it's a lot more work for me, I'll let you know that.

Because it's a lot easier to pull a sermon that you've already prepared and give it to the people. But God has been burdening me to preach a series of messages this week. Not just scattered subjects, but a series of messages.

I feel like the Lord wants me to preach on this subject, The Church, God's Holy Witness on Earth. The Church, God's Holy Witness on Earth. So unless God really works differently in my heart through the week, we'll be on that subject for 8 sessions.

But I must say, if you studied at all that subject in the New Testament, we could be on that one for about 30 sessions and not get done. So why don't we have a word of prayer and we'll get into the first message here this evening. Our God and our Father, we love you tonight.

We thank you for loving us. We thank you, Father, that we can be here. You have allowed us to be here tonight.

There are others who are not here. Someone may be laying in a bed tonight. Someone may be in a hospital bed.

Somebody may be in a grave. Lord, but you've allowed us to be here tonight and we thank you for that. We do recognize, Father, that this is eternal time that you have given to us.

And we want to use the time rightly, Father. Oh Lord, to see the Church the way that you see it, God. To see it the way that you see it, Lord.

Open our eyes, Father. God, and let us see the glories of the Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth. Father, I pray in Jesus' name, you'll settle down upon us.

That you'll come and strengthen us and enlighten us and direct us, oh God, every one of us. Father, as we're here through the week, Lord, I pray that you would expand our understanding of your heart. And God, I pray that you will change this church in light of that beautiful revelation.

Father in heaven, fill us with the Holy Ghost, God. All of us. We can't go anywhere.

We can't do anything, God. Lest thou fill us and keep on filling us. And keep on filling us with the Holy Ghost.

So God, we commit these sessions into your hands. You direct our steps, God. We trust you for that.

We thank you in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Well, through this week, we want to look at several aspects of the New Testament revelation of the church.

I'm sure you will agree, there are many lofty words in this book called the Bible when we come up with the subject of the church. Some of them are even a bit mysterious. Those recorded in the New Testament, I must say, I've been a Christian for thirty years and some of those verses that you read about the church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, you read it, you look at it, you wonder, what is God really saying in that verse? And I believe the reason why there are verses like that in the New Testament is because there's still yet more to be fulfilled in those verses and we haven't touched it.

I believe there are eternal purposes that God will fulfill in those verses in the ages to come. Yet God gives us a little glimpse into it, even as we read in the New Testament. Many lofty words and mysterious things in the New Testament.

We want to begin our reading in 1 Timothy, if you'll turn with me to 1 Timothy chapter 3, one of my favorite portions of Scripture. And I want you to note the words that precede the verses that we're going to read in 2 Timothy 3, verse 14 through 16. These are familiar verses to us, but I want you to note the verses that come ahead of these words.

Paul wrote a chapter, the whole of chapter 1, on the centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ, focusing the attention of Timothy and the theology of Timothy very clearly on a Christ-centered theology, encouraging Timothy to never forget the fact that grace and truth comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. And we never want to forget that either, do we? That's where it comes from. Grace and truth comes through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then he goes on from there into chapter 2 and mentions many practical things. He talks about authority. He speaks about lost souls and our responsibility to them.

He speaks about modesty, modest apparel among the sisters in the church, and also describes the place of women in the church. After that, he goes into chapter 3. There we have the qualifications for leadership in the church. Many beautiful definitions of godly character that God desires that those who are leaders in the church will have in their lives.

All these things precede the verses that we want to read here this evening. Then Paul goes on to say, These things, what things? These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory. Hallelujah! That's the mystery of godliness.

So let's look at a couple of these verses here. As we just begin this evening, we're laying groundwork, we're laying a foundation for everything that we're going to say all week long. This is introduction this evening.

But look at these words. That thou mightest, oughtest to know how to behave thyself in the house of God. Now I studied that word house, and we're going to focus on that little phrase, the house of God, all the way through the message this evening.

But I studied that word house, and if you will study it all the way through the Bible, you will find out that is not just a regular word that is talking about a house, just like your house, or my house, or Brother John's house. It's not talking about a house like that. It's talking about the sanctuary.

The very fact that it is the house of God sets it apart. It's not like any other house. It is a sanctuary.

That's what that word house means there. It's the sanctuary. It's the Holy of Holies.

It's the place where God dwells. Timothy, I've written these things to you, that you might know how to behave yourself in the sanctuary of the God of heaven. That's what Paul is writing to Timothy.

Now we use the phrase this evening, and I have no problem using the phrase, it's good to be in the house of God, but brothers and sisters, this is not God's house. You are God's house. This is just a building that God's house meets in to get it out of the weather at times.

Amen? But I have no problem using it. I do too. Say, ah, it's good to be in the house of God this morning or this evening.

No problem, brother. The house of God. A sanctuary.

The most holy place. The dwelling place of God. Yes, Timothy.

I want you to know how you should order things in the sanctuary where God dwells. This is not a little thing, Timothy. Then he goes on to say, which is the church of the living God.

Now we should look at that word church a bit, because we're going to be looking at it all week long. That word church, the Greek word is ekklesia. It means a called out assembly.

That's what we are, brothers and sisters. Now we are an assembly here this evening, but we are a called out assembly of believers. Not just any old assembly here tonight.

This is an assembly of called out believers. That's what the word church means. Called out of and called together.

You see, it's called out so that we can assemble together, and that's what makes us an assembly. A called out assembly. Called out and gathered together.

Or let me say it this way. The living God's assembly. That's what the church is.

The church is the living God's assembly. The place where the living God dwells. Then Paul goes on, and all these words are lofty words.

He goes on to give a bit more definition to this house of God, to this church of the living God, and he gives it some definition. He says it is the pillar and ground of the truth. The pillar and ground or foundation of the truth.

What does he mean by that? It is the church, the assembly, the ecclesia, the assembly of God's people, the house where God, the living God dwells. It is the clearest, most comprehensive revelation of truth that there is upon the earth. It is the clearest revelation of Christ's life, and His godly character that you can find upon this earth.

That's what Paul is saying when he says the church is the pillar and ground or foundation of the truth. That's what we're supposed to be, brothers and sisters. The clearest revelation of God's character and God's truth, and the life of God which was Christ that is upon this earth.

That's some lofty responsibility, isn't it, for us this evening? And isn't it interesting to look at verse 16 in light of what we just looked at? Because Paul goes on to say, without controversy, Great is the mystery of godliness. Or, this is a great mystery. How God makes man righteous is a great mystery.

Paul says, without controversy. Nobody can argue that fact. Nobody in this room will argue that fact.

It is a great mystery how God can come and take a man or a woman who's going their own way, living their own life, living a sinful life, living a degraded life, and God can take that man or that woman and set them on another path and make them righteous. This is the mystery of godliness. Hallelujah.

So, it's very fitting, it seems to me, after we've looked at the fact that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, that Paul brings out the truth about the mystery of how God makes man righteous. Because that's what the church is supposed to be made up of. Men and women whom God has made righteous.

Amen? Amen. That's it. Well, let's look at some more lofty words.

I know I might lose you tonight, but I trust, I assure you that we will come down to earth before the week is out. But let's look at Ephesians chapter 3 for a bit. Just laying some groundwork here.

More lofty words in Ephesians chapter 3. Paul is explaining a bit to the church in Ephesus his ministry. The ministry that God has called him to. The ministry that God so graciously gave to him.

And he is describing and explaining that. And we're going to break into the middle of it. And start in verse 8. Paul says, Under me, who am less than the least of all things, is this grace given.

Or this marvelous privilege. Is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Brothers and sisters, this is more than just whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This, when Paul says the unsearchable riches of Christ. He is going far, far beyond the simple call that goes out. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And he is delving deeply into all the realities of what it means to be saved. And Ephesians 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are a revelation of those unsearchable riches that are in Christ Jesus. Paul gets to preach those.

And he goes on in verse 9 to say, And it is his ministry to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Christ Jesus. And what Paul is saying is, There's some mysterious things that mankind has not known. God has not let man know them.

God has kept them hidden in himself and has not let man know them. But now it is time in these last days for man to know what some of these glorious hidden mysteries are. And one of those glorious hidden mysteries is the church of Jesus Christ.

That is a glorious hidden mystery that is now unveiled before God's people. The church of Jesus Christ. Now let's look at verse 10.

Now first let me say a word about this word fellowship. Paul says, To make all men see what is the fellowship of this mystery. And that word fellowship, that's the word that we think it is.

It is the word koinonia. It's talking about close, deep, intimate, joyous, glorious fellowship. Koinonia.

There is a koinonia among the people of God. Why? Because of the glorious things that God has done for us. Because the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ are being made known unto your heart and mine as the days go by.

Is it not so? Oh praise God, someday we are going to explore the glorious mysteries of the unsearchable riches of Christ for all of eternity. But brothers and sisters, that unveiling, that revealing is already taking place in the hearts and lives of God's people. Whosoever will open up this book and dig deep into the pages of the New Testament, will begin to gaze upon the glories that are hidden therein.

That's what Paul is talking about. There is a fellowship that comes with that glorious revelation. Then Paul goes on in verse 10 with a verse that's kind of twisted around backwards.

When you go from Greek to English, sometimes the words get twisted around backwards a bit. This is one of those verses. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

What is Paul saying? Here is one of God's intents, His purposes, His desires. That the principalities and powers might see in full display the manifold, many-folded wisdom of God. And guess where they're going to see that many-folded wisdom of God? They're going to see it in the church.

The church, God's witness upon this earth. That's what the church is supposed to be. Principalities and powers? What does that mean? What are those words? Principalities and powers? Well, the word principality means exactly what it says.

It is princes over palaties. Just like a municipality. Princes over palaties.

Here is God's heart. That He, through the church, would make known to the principalities and powers, and I believe both evil ones and righteous ones, the manifold wisdom of God. God wants to reveal His many-folded wisdom to the principalities and powers, and guess who He wants to use to do it? You and I. Now, these are lofty words.

I can't fathom what that means. But it's true. They will see it as it is lived out in the church.

The church of Jesus Christ. And that wisdom flows out of God's eternal purpose. The last verse we're going to read.

According to the eternal purpose which He, God, purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. God's eternal purpose. What God purposed for His beloved Son, we get to have a part in it.

An earthly body of Christ living out a heavenly life before principalities and powers. Rulers. Good ones and bad ones.

Now, to give you an example of this, I would like us just to turn for just a moment over to the book of Job. Just to give you an example, so that you don't think I'm totally crazy here. Let's just take an example of this very thing taking place all the way back in the Old Testament.

Job chapter 1. Reading from verse 6. Now, there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. And Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, And from walking up and down in it.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? Satan, while you've been going up and down and to and fro, Did you pass by Job's house, Satan? That there is none like him in the earth. A perfect and an upright man. One that feareth God and askeweth evil.

What is God doing? God is pointing to Job. And He's saying to the principalities and powers, Look what kind of life that man is living because of me. That's what God is doing.

To the intent that the manifold wisdom of almighty God might be made known to the principalities and powers through us. Awesome thoughts. Awesome.

Yeah, maybe they go right over your head tonight. They can easily go there. Well, I assure you, we'll be coming down to earth before we're done here.

But I want us to get up here a bit to see it from God's perspective. Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast not thou made an hedge about him and about his house and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath and he will curse thee to thy face.

Sounds just like the accuser of the brethren, doesn't it? And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power only upon himself. Put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

There's a good example of what we're talking about. The title of the series again, The Church, God's Holy Witness on Earth. It sheds some deep light on Acts chapter 1 and verse 8 this evening as we begin to look at it in light of Job and in light of the things that we read there in the book of Ephesians.

It sheds some deep and heavenly light upon Acts 1.8 as Jesus said to his disciples, And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me. See? Some people think that just means you're going to go tell all the people about Christ. No, it means that.

But it's way more than that. God has way more in mind than that. Witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and under the uttermost parts of the earth.

Witnesses. See the progression of this witness, brothers and sisters, this evening. You drop back into the Old Testament.

You have an Enoch. Ah, Enoch. He was a witness, wasn't he? Old brother Enoch.

Then you have a Noah. He was also one of those witnesses. You see, he wasn't just a witness to the people of this earth who were about to receive judgment.

He was a witness for more than that. Then you have an Abraham. And you have a Job.

Individuals that God used to be His witness upon the earth. Then, as you go a little bit further in the Old Testament, it turns into a people, a nation, a city with a holy temple. And we'll say more about that a little later on in the message as we move out of the introduction and into the first message this evening.

But it's no longer an Enoch or a Noah. Now it's a people. And a place.

A nation. A piece of land. A city.

A temple. That's God's witness on earth. But you keep on moving down through the Bible.

And you come to the New Testament. God progresses on to the church. And Jesus called it, My church.

That's what Jesus called the church. My church. This revelation of this glorious church, for the most part in the New Testament, it comes to us through the Apostle Paul.

You study it out. You'll find it that way. God revealed to Paul the glorious mysteries of the church of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

So, we come down in the New Testament to the church. My church, Jesus said, which becomes churches scattered over the face of the whole earth. In the Old Testament, it was just one place.

And the people came to that place to see what God was like. But in the New Testament, it's not that way anymore. You see, it was that way when Jesus walked upon the earth.

You remember there, where was it? In John. Yes, John chapter 12. They came.

It was toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. He was very busy. He was always very busy.

And some of His disciples came to Him and said, They want to see You, Jesus. Remember, it was the Greeks who came and said, We would see Jesus. And they came and told those words to Jesus.

And Jesus said, If a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And He was speaking about what was going to take place when He went to the cross, fell into the ground, and was resurrected three days later. He was speaking about that.

But after His resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God was poured out. And now you don't have one Jesus on the earth. You have little Christ everywhere.

And those little Christ are going to go everywhere. And guess what's going to spring up everywhere they go? Churches. What are they going to do? They are going to be God's witness.

God's holy witness upon the earth. No longer is it in one place. No longer do the people have to travel for hundreds and hundreds and thousands of miles to see it.

But it's going to go everywhere where the people are. The church. But God progresses onward with His witness into the eternal ages.

He displays His Son before the principalities and powers in holy glory, with a holy bride standing right next to Him, which is His body, the church, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. You see, brothers and sisters, it doesn't end here. There's more of a glorious witness yet to come.

And I don't understand what all that means. We don't need to figure it all out tonight. All we need to do is be that witness in this day and age that we live in, fulfilling our responsibility, and wait to see the glorious things which shall come.

And it will all be to the praise of His glory. Amen? When it's all said and done. Alright.

We're going to come down to earth now and be there most of the week. But I felt it is important for us to get a glimpse of the heavenly vision. Because how can you fulfill the purpose of God upon the earth for your life and for the life of this church if you do not see it from God's perspective? Then it's just another religion.

And we don't need any more of that. God wants more out of His people than that. So we're going to spend the week looking at the eternal implications of God's purposes for our church and for church life.

The rise and fall of God's house. That's the message for this evening. The rise and fall of God's house.

Let's read in 2 Chronicles 9. I think that we all agree that all of the Old Testament illustrations, the tabernacle in the wilderness, Solomon's temple, the temple that was built again after Solomon's temple was brought to the ground, all of those houses of God are types and shadows of us. We are the temple of the living God. Personally, I am a place where God can dwell.

But not only am I individually a place where God can dwell, but the church and local churches are a place where God can dwell. So all of the illustrations that we'll use concerning the house of God this evening, they are all moving forward to make applications to the church of the living God, which church we are as we sit here this evening. The rise and fall of God's house.

2 Chronicles 9. And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company and camels that bear spices and gold in abundance and precious stones. And when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. Now, I believe this lady had hard questions because she was a ruler over a great people.

And if you are a ruler over a great people, you have many, many problems that you do not know how to solve. And she came with all of her problems to prove Solomon. She heard, there is a king north of here.

Many, many miles north of here. Maybe 500 miles. Maybe it's many days journey from here.

This king is the wisest man there ever was. Nobody has wisdom like him. And she came saying, thinking in her heart, we'll see if he's got answers for some of these complicated problems that I have.

Well, because we've read the Bible already, once we know he had answers to every one of her questions. And Solomon told her all her questions. And there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not.

And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon and the house that he had built and the meat of his table and the sitting of his servants and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, his cupbearers also, and their apparel, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. It took her breath away. It sounds to me like God's people made an impression

upon this lady.

What do you think? They made an impression upon her. And she said to the king, it was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Albeit, I believed not their words until I came and mine eyes have seen it.

And behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me, for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men and happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne to be king for the Lord thy God because thy God loved Israel to establish them forever.

Therefore made he thee king over them to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold and of spices, great abundance and precious stones. Neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon.

That's far enough for us to read, for us to get a grasp of the glorious height that God's people had risen to in the early days of Solomon. We read that account right there. God put that account there to help us to see.

Now we can get a glimpse into God's heart because Jerusalem and Israel and the people of Israel and the king of Israel and the king's servants and all the people and the house of God and the order of the house of God and the singers and the players of instruments and all the sacrifices and the worshipping of the people and all those things put together was in God's heart that the peoples of the earth would make journeys to that place and behold that sight and go away have in their culture. You know what they have? Old Testament sacrifices. You'll find them in those heathen African nations.

Old Testament sacrifices. The dowry system in the Old Testament. The raising up of seed if one brother dies and another brother marries his wife to raise up seed.

You'll find all those things in African culture. Where did they get those things? I wonder. God was using the testimony of His people there in the height of Solomon's glorious kingdom to be a witness to a world around them.

We have just read the fulfillment of one man's dream. God's house has risen to its highest point in the Old Testament. That one man was David.

It wasn't Solomon. It was David. David was the man after God's own heart.

And God said of David, I have found Thee a man after My own heart who will do all My will. That's David. David had a dream.

A vision. Do you have any dreams or visions? David had a dream. He had a vision.

It started many years before this scene. Out under the stars at night while he was out there watching over his father's sheep, playing music on his heart, singing and worshipping God. Out there under the stars he received again and again glorious revelations of the greatness of the God of the universe.

He saw the greatness of God. He drew near to this God. God filled his heart with the wonder and praise.

And he wanted his life to be for God, and he wanted others to know this great God. That was the motivation of David's life. When he became king, his vision became clearer.

Remember? He said, I want to build a house for God. That was his vision. That was his passion.

But you know what? David's vision and passion went far beyond a building. Far beyond. Let me show you.

Turn to Psalms with me this evening. We'll just pick out a couple of them. Let's do Psalm 48.

See what David saw in Psalm 48. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness, beautiful for situation. The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great king.

God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Psalm 66. See the heart of David in these psalms.

If I could have some more water, somebody please. I'm sorry, it's Psalm 67. Thank you, brother.

God be merciful unto us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us. Why? Verse 2 That thy way may be known upon earth and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise Thee, O God.

Let all the people praise Thee. O, let the nations be glad and sing for joy. For Thou shalt judge the people righteously and govern the nations upon the earth.

Let the people praise Thee, O God. Let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase.

God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. Do you see David's heart there? David had more vision than simply to put a building in Jerusalem.

His vision went way beyond that. His vision was the reality of what we read there in 2 Chronicles 9. That's what he saw. He saw that house there.

He saw a people. He saw glorious people. He saw a king.

He saw the peoples of the world coming up to Jerusalem and seeing the people of God worshipping. That beautiful story that we read was the vision that God bore in David's heart. But as we all know, he was not allowed to build that building.

God said to him, David, I appreciate what you have in your heart to do for Me, but you cannot build that building. Why, God? Because you're a bloody man, David. Isn't that interesting? Thought.

And a bloody man can't build this building. This building can't have a bloody man building it. So you're not going to get to build it.

You can prepare for it. You can get the vision of it. You can get the details of what it's supposed to be.

And I want you to pass that on to your son Solomon. It will all take place, David, in the days to come. And David slept with his fathers.

And Solomon built it. Solomon built it. And I don't know if you are aware of this, but 2 Chronicles is a very interesting book.

Maybe you've wondered at times, why did God give the stories over twice? You know, they're in the Kings, and all of a sudden here they are in Chronicles again. Let me just give you a little insight into 2 Chronicles. 2 Chronicles is the story of the house of God.

That's what it is. It is the story, it is the historical record of the rise and the fall of the house of God. You read it that way sometime.

Get you a little marking pencil in your hand, and go through, as you read 2 Chronicles 1-36, you go through there. Keep that marking pencil in your hand. When you're done, you will have marked 220 times in there, the house of God, or God's house, or the Lord's house, or the temple of God, 220 times.

It is a historical record of the rise, the glorious rise of God's house, and the tragic fall. This is one of the saddest stories you will ever read, if you read it in light of God's burden. If you can grasp a clear view of what God's heart is for His house, 2 Chronicles is one of the saddest stories you could ever read.

The testimony of God's house rises, falls, rises, falls, rises, falls, and eventually falls totally to nothing. According to the leaders, and the people who followed them, their response to God affected the rise and the fall of the testimony of God's house. It is one of the saddest stories you could read in the Bible.

God's witness on earth. You know, it's exciting when you read, you see and hear the account of what God said about Job. I mean, just think about that for a minute.

Here we are, getting a glimpse into the eternal councils of God. And the sons of God show up, and principalities and powers are there, and Satan is there, and God comes forth and says, Have you considered My servant Job? How do you think God was feeling inside of His heart when He said those words? Hey! Did you go by Job's house? Do you see how that man lives? Do you see how he honors Me? Do you see the way he lives? Do you see how upright he is? Do you see how much he loves Me? Do you see how much he hates evil? Have you been by Job's house yet? I wonder how God was feeling inside when He said those words to Satan. And then Satan throws his accusations back in God's face, and God, knowing Job's life, and knowing Job's heart, God said, You go ahead.

What is God doing? Setting up the principalities and powers for one more glimpse into His glorious holiness and the power and His ability to work in the lives of human beings. That's what God is doing. God is setting a stage for Himself to get glory one more time.

But oh! As exciting as that story is, how sad it is when we begin to think about what the other stories might be like. When it doesn't go like it went with Job. When there was a day when God's house was a glorious testimony of His holiness, of His majesty, of His greatness, and God's people also a glorious testimony of those things, but down it went into obscurity.

I wonder how God felt. A history of the rise and fall of God's house. It begins with the vision of David, which we've already discussed.

From there, it moves into the commissioning of Solomon. Solomon is given a commission. Then there are years of building, thousands of workers, and multiplied millions of dollars were spent to build his house.

Then we come in chapter 5 and 6, I believe, to that glorious day when that temple was dedicated to God. That glorious day when the people of God were all out there and scattered around, surrounding that temple, out into the streets as far as your eye can see in every direction. They were all there and

everything was set in order and the temple was finished and all the furniture was in its place and the musicians were in their place and the priests were in their place and the sacrificial animals were there waiting to be sacrificed.

Everything was in its place! Hallelujah! And Solomon drops down on his knees there on a platform that was made so that all the people could see him and lifted his hands up to God and he began to pray. And he prayed a prayer of dedication to God, giving himself and giving God's people and giving this temple to God, dedicating it for the glory of God, that God would be glorified upon the earth, that His testimony would be known among the nations. And God was pleased that day.

And the Bible says that God answered with fire. There was a sacrifice laid on that altar, but no fire was brought. God answered by fire that prayer.

Fire came down from heaven and lit that sacrifice on fire. And at the same time the Bible says the glory of God filled that temple so much so that all the priests had to move out! Head out of there! And the people saw the fire and they fell on their faces and bowed and worshipped God. Oh, it was a glorious day.

It was the beginning of the great heights of this beautiful house of God, this testimony of God upon the earth. There it was! But then, toward the end of Solomon's day, and we know these stories, things didn't go too well. How can it be but the very man who was the wisest man on all the earth, the very man who built this temple, the very man who prayed that prayer of dedication, took advantage of all of his opportunities and took himself many, many wives and got himself many, many horses and gathered gold as much as he could.

He went from everywhere and he went sour because of it and began to commit idolatry. And the people of God also began to follow their king to do the same things. There was a division in the kingdom.

Two of the tribes stayed, Judah and Benjamin, and the other ten tribes departed in the house of God. The testimony of the house of God went down. Ten tribes won't be going there anymore.

Ten tribes will not make that ascent up to the house of God. Those ten tribes will not sing those ten psalms of ascent that you find in the book of Psalms. What is it? 110 to 120 or 121? Ten tribes will not make that ascent up there anymore.

The house of God goes down. How that division affected God's house. There were times when the house lay waste.

It lay waste. There were times when it was left to fall into disrepair. There were times of revival.

And during those times of revival, you study it out for yourself. You study the house, the history of the house of God. Whenever there was a flame of revival that burst forth in the midst of God's people, immediately, the king, the priests, and the people, they started looking toward that house again.

Oh, the house. We need to repair it. We need to take offerings.

We need to get this thing going again. We need to give the Levites their tithe so that they can be free to serve and preach and get everything in order. Every time there was a revival, the house of God came up again.

Every time the people of God started waning away from God and going their own way, the house of God also went down. So bad one time that they found the book of the law in a pile of rubble in the house of God. And they discovered that book like as if it was a hidden treasure that nobody knew about.

Imagine that. Imagine how far down they had gone for so long that when the book of the law was brought forth, it was like, what's this? You will see as you study the history of the house of God how the kings led the people and how the people lived and how it affected the house of God and God's witness upon the earth. There were times when idols were set up around the house of God and sometimes idols were set up in the house.

But God will have His witness, brothers and sisters. He will always have His witness and don't you forget that. He will always have His witness.

He searches for a man or men who are jealous for His holy name. And He'll start all over again when an Ataliah kills all the royal seed. God saves one little baby boy named Joash, hides him in the temple, puts him under the care of a godly high priest and starts all over again.

He raises up a Josiah or a Hezekiah. God is always jealous and zealous for His testimony, brothers and sisters. However, He is also just.

And when His testimony no longer represents His name, when that testimony falls to such a place that it no longer represents His name because God is just, He wipes it off the face of the earth and start all over again. That is one of the reasons why you are here, brothers and sisters. Be not high-minded nor presumptuous.

It is because you had somewhat of a desire in your heart to raise up something that would glorify God. That is why you are here today. Don't forget it.

It isn't because you were full of energy. It isn't because you had lots of good ideas. It isn't because you were zealous people.

It is because you had something in your heart that beat for God and for His glory. That's why you're here tonight. That's why there's a building here.

That's why this house was filled with praise this evening. And God attended to the heart's cry that some of you had. That's why you're here.

Let us not forget why we are here. It's way deeper than us, brothers and sisters. Way deeper.

There's another sad story in the Bible. If you want to read the book of Ezekiel, you'll find it in there. It's a sad story.

You see, Ezekiel was a priest. And, you know, when the priest became 30 years old, that's when they got to serve. And I'm telling you that's the way it was.

It wasn't had to serve. They got to serve. And they waited for the day when they were 30.

Ezekiel was one of those priests. But Ezekiel was carried away in the captivity. No more house.

No more place to serve. No more sacrifices to offer. No more incense to burn.

It's all gone. And Ezekiel's by the river Kibar. In Babylon.

God comes to Ezekiel. And God is going to tell Ezekiel why he had to tear that house to the ground. And we can't take the time to go through all the verses, but you do it.

You get the book of Ezekiel and you read it sometime. And again, read it in light of God's house. You may open your eyes to some things you never saw before.

But God took Ezekiel in the visions of God. He took him back to Jerusalem and showed him why he rashed that thing to the ground. He showed him the image of jealousy there in the temple.

He showed him a hole in the wall. And Ezekiel went in there and saw the priests with their back to the altar and worshipping the sun and all kinds of other things. God showed Ezekiel those things.

While He showed him those things, He also gave him a description of the departure of the Shekinah glory on the temple. Remember the Shekinah glory? It came into the Holy of Holies. It filled the whole temple.

Everybody had to get out of there. Well, you'll find the history of the departure of the Shekinah glory in the book of Ezekiel. First of all, He lighted up off the mercy seat and went out into the holy place.

There He hovered and waited and waited and waited. But the wickedness was more wicked yet. And the wickedness was exceeding wickedness.

So, after a time, the Shekinah glory lighted up again and left the holy place and went out into the outer court of the temple. And there He waited and He waited and He waited. And after He waited a while, the wickedness of the people was exceedingly wicked.

They didn't hear the preaching of the prophets who warned them about God and how God was feeling. Finally, He lighted up again from the courtyard and went to the edge of the city. And there He waited and He waited and He waited.

And after He waited there a while and still nothing was done, He went up into the mountains and He was gone. We don't want that to happen, do we? Brothers and sisters, it happens. You know it happens.

God warns us in the book of Revelation. He warned the church at Ephesus. That glorious Ephesus church.

He warned that church. I'm going to take my candlestick away from you. Do you know what the candlestick is? It's the glory.

It's the glory. Listen, when the glory has departed, then all you have is a building and a bunch of forms. The rise and fall of God's house.

There are lessons in all of that for us. There are warnings also for us to consider. You see, it is in God's heart that He be rightly represented upon this earth.

He's God. He is the only true and living God. He's a holy God.

He's a God who dwells in light that no man can approach. This is our God. This is the God who saved us.

His power, His presence is so awesome that when those cherubims get around Him and the holiness of God emanating out of them, all they can do is say, Holy! Holy! Holy! That's all they can do. That God longs to be represented properly upon the earth. Shouldn't He? He has every right to long to be properly represented upon the earth.

In the Old Testament, He sought out an Enoch. He laid His hand upon a Noah. He used an Abraham and a Job and other men here and there.

Then, it was Jerusalem. It was His people. It was Israel.

Then, He moved into the New Testament. He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world. For what? Oh, so that you could go to heaven when you die.

That's what He sent His Son for. Now, not only that, brothers and sisters. What was God after? A people.

A people. A people who will properly represent Him upon the earth. And He sent His Son into the world to produce a people who would have the power to properly represent God upon the earth.

And we are that people. We are the church. The church of the living God.

The rise and fall of God's house. Turn with me to the book of Lamentations. As we close here.

Lamentations. Jeremiah wrote Lamentations. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet.

Do you know what he was weeping about? This. He was weeping about this. The book of Lamentations was written.

You know, I think it was Gerard who said, or Gerard that quoted out of Lamentations, My eyes have affected my heart. Well, Lamentations was written by Jeremiah as he walked the streets of Jerusalem after it was rashed to the ground. And his eyes affected his heart.

Listen to some of the words of Jeremiah. Chapter 1, verse 1 and 2. Lamentations. How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people? And how is she become as a widow? She that was great among the nations and princes among the provinces.

How is she become tributary? She weepeth sore in the night and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her. Verse 4. The ways of Zion do mourn because none come to the solemn feasts.

All her gates are desolate. Her priests sigh. Her virgins are afflicted and she is in bitterness.

Her adversaries are the chief. Her enemies prosper for the Lord hath afflicted her. For the multitude of her transgressions her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed. He's not talking about the young ladies in that verse. He's talking about that city.

He's talking about that testimony. That glorious testimony. God's witness on the earth.

Chapter 2 verse 6. And he, God, hath violently taken away his tabernacle as it were of a garden. He hath destroyed his place of the assembly. The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and Sabbaths to be

forgotten in Zion.

And he, the Lord, hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off his altar. He hath abhorred his sanctuary.

He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces. They have made a noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of a solemn feast. The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion.

He hath stretched out a line. He hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying. Therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament.

They languish together. Her gates are sunk into the ground. He hath destroyed and broken her bars.

Her king and her princes are among the Gentiles. The law is no more. Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.

And we could go on and on and on and read. These are the words of the weeping prophet Jeremiah. The broken heart of a weeping prophet who by the way is only an earthly expression of the broken heart of a weeping God.

Weeping over the loss of his testimony. That's what it is. God is jealous for his name.

That's what we're all about here. That's why we're here. Somehow God arrested each one of us on life's road.

He got our attention. He called us with a holy calling. Come.

Come. Come to me. And I'll give you rest.

Come to me. And I will make you godly. Come to me.

And I will change your whole life. Come. Come represent me on this earth.

That's the only way you can serve your generation. Brothers and sisters, young people. Come and represent me upon the earth.

That's the call that God gives to us. This is a sad story. It's kind of a sad way to end a message, isn't it? But there are other messages coming.

But I do want you to notice this. If you turn to the last chapter of 2 Chronicles. After the sad, sad story of the ultimate fall of God's house.

We find these words in chapter 36 and verse 22. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia. That the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished.

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia. That he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom. And put it also in writing, saying.

Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia. All the kings of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me. And he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord is God, be with him. And let him go up and build it. While it's a sad story, what happened to God's house.

Before you even turn the page. God is already working to raise up something again. That's the way God is.

Tomorrow, we will look at it. We will look and see how God used four men. Who had the same vision for the same glory to be given to God.

And how God used those men to raise that thing back up again. I wonder tonight. If we realize what we have here.

I really wonder. And I don't just mean you. Not just you.

Me too. Ossen up there. You know, sometimes people stand.

And you probably heard it too. They stand at the end of a meeting. And weep.

Joy and sadness, they weep. As they testify and say to us. You people do not know what you have.

You do not know what you have. For all of you to be in this place together like this. You do not know what you have.

But you know, God is no respecter of persons. You know. We can throw the whole thing away.

We can do it. There are many churches who have done it. They presumed upon God.

They thought they knew better. They thought they had a better idea. A new way to carry the ark.

Or whatever it was. Who knows? Do you know? They are not here today. Or their testimony is gone.

I guess my prayer this evening is. That a holy hush. A holy sobriety.

We just settle down over our hearts. To prepare our hearts. For all that God wants to see.

You know, we can come to this meeting. And we can come to these meetings and say. Okay, good.

Yeah, we are going to hear another message. Brother Denny is going to preach to us. Or we can come like this.

God. Have mercy on us. If you don't help us.

We won't make it. And we won't. We won't make it.

Okay, they told me I am supposed to close the meeting. So I think we will get on our knees and close the meeting. Okay? What have I done? What have I done? God.

Forgive us, Father. Forgive me. I want to represent you right, Father.

I see. I see, Lord. I see, Father.

Have mercy on my poor soul, God. Have mercy upon me, God. Open our eyes, Lord.

We pray. We want to see clearly, Lord. We want to see Jesus.

We want to see the Christ. The Son of the Living God. Represented upon this birth, God.

We want to see the Christ. Open our eyes, Lord. Father, I pray that you just go with us this evening as we go home.

Yes, it's a bit sober. We are a bit sober tonight, Lord. I know I am.

I know it, God. Oh, would you use this, Lord, to prepare our hearts. To open our hearts.

And, God, we are imploring you to give us a clear vision from your word, Lord. What you want of us. So we commit each heart into your care.

And pray that you, by your Spirit, would just work in our hearts through the night, through the day. God, prepare this vessel to say what needs to be said tomorrow. And prepare these hearts to hear.

Give us ears to hear, oh Lord. Yes. Thank you, Father.

Thank you for helping us tonight. God dismiss us with your blessing. Go with us.

Keep us safe as we travel home. Bless the fellowship of the brothers and sisters. May it be koinonia, Lord.

In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

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