

The Wisdom of Christ in Granting the Means to Achieve God's Great Purpose... ,p.1

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1 Timothy 3, would you turn there with me? I modified my title a little bit. I want to talk about the wisdom of God in granting the means to achieve God's great purpose, his own glory. Of course, that is centered in his church, it's bigger than that but its pinnacle and center is the local church, and by the way, I want to say something about my sweet wife, Pam. Every year we hear a a little rumor or something in the conference, something like, "Who's the lady on the piano? She's always by herself. Is she divorced? Has her husband died?" No, I'm her husband. She belongs to me so take that for what it's worth. She uh, she does do a lot. As a matter of fact, 34 years ago her family came to this church about the time I came on staff, and the music guy at that time hired her to be an instrumentalist so I think she's been on staff as long or longer than I have, and then we got together a little while after that. So amen.

1 Timothy 3:15-16. We'll start here and then I'm gonna go a lot of places and then we'll come back here, Lord willing, in the second session tomorrow morning. 1 Timothy 3:15 and verse 16, writing to Timothy the Apostle Paul says,

15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

Now I'm presently preaching through 1 Timothy and I know some of my brothers I'm very close to have finished that task and reading ahead and studying I came to verses 15 and 16 of chapter 3 and primarily verse 16 and thought, "What's the flow of this?" If you read the commentary writers, they lean pretty heavily toward this is talking about the universal church when you get to 15 and 16. Now they're not dogmatic like that's the only possible interpretation, but that's where they lean, but I struggle because in verse 15 he talks about the household of God and how to conduct one's self and everything he's basically said in 1 Timothy to this point is about how to structure and function in a local church and so it may include the universal church, and I think this happens fairly often in

Scripture, it may include the universal church, it's an admonition for a local church. There's a truth there for the local church.

So again, I'm not gonna unpackage this completely. We'll try to do that at the end, at the next session, but in this context he makes this statement in verse 16, "By common confession," or in other words, you could say, "This is something all of us who know the Lord all agree on. We just know there's no controversy here. We all agree on this. That is, great is the mystery of godliness." Now you know the idea of mystery is something that was hidden but is now unveiled.

Now we, the regenerate ones, have a capacity to see this great mystery now unveiled. The lost can't quite grasp it. They don't understand how it all centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ but he said, "All of us who are saved, we all agree that this is a marvelous thing God's unfolded in these days that Christ has come, the second person of the Godhead put on Incarnate clothing, if you will, lived among us, died for our sins, was buried and was raised for our justification, and furthermore now ever intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father. So we all agree this is just," and that's his point, "we just agree this is just incredible. This is marvelous. This is great beyond all other things."

Then he has a little word in here, godliness, "By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness." The Greek scholars tell us that godliness that the New American Standard uses and I guess most translations, may not be the best term because there was a completely different term that's often translated "godliness" and that's not the term here. The term here should be piety or devout. Great is the mystery of the one who is true of true piety, who is genuinely devout. Now there's a lot of false piety out there, of course, in the context of the Judaizers of the day. There are those who believe by keeping laws, ceremonial and moral, they can achieve a standing before God. That's a false piety. That's not true piety. Great is the mystery, it's now being unveiled how one can be truly pious.

Actually that word there is a word that comes from two root words and one means good and one means worshiper. Great is the mystery of how becomes one becomes a good worshiper. You see, you're not a good worshiper if you're trying to obtain a right standing before the Triune holy God by works. You're not a good worshiper if you're trying to obtain a right standing before the Triune holy God by cleaning up your life morally and ethically. That's not good worship, Brother Dave, that's bad worship. You're not a good worshiper if you think you're gonna obtain a right standing before the Triune holy God by putting on some religion. That's not being a good....great is the mystery that's now unveiled for us that through the person and work of Jesus Christ and our faith in him, we now become a good worshiper, a true devout person of God.

So that's where he's going here but I want you to note something also in verse 16. He centers everything in Jesus Christ. "He," Jesus, "who was revealed in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, and believed on in the world." That's an unveiling, is it not? He was not here, he came, lived before us, died for us, seen, and has completed his work of securing the children and this is one of two great unveilings that are that's going to happen concerning Christ. But now here's what I

want you to get. The great unveiling of Christ this time and the great future unveiling of Christ at the end of the age, both of them, how shall I say it? I'll just say it this way: involved the church. When Christ is unveiled, the church is revealed. When Christ is unveiled in glory, the church will be unveiled in her glory. You see, our glorification does not happen when we die. Now it's glorious beyond all compare to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord, but glorification is at the end time when he resurrects the body of the elect. He purifies that old body and every speck and every molecule that was once the son of Adam is gonna be reunited together again and formed back into a body purified and glorified with the glory of Jesus Christ. That's our future day of glorification. When he comes to be glorified, his church will be glorified.

That's all being unveiled. It's starting now. He came already, but we didn't see the full thing yet and here's what I want you to think about: it all includes the church. Through Jesus Christ, through his person and his his work, we become positionally good worshipers, true devout worshipers and through Jesus Christ's power and wisdom, we learn how to live out being a good worshiper in the local church. Now don't forget that thought. By his person and work, he he he enables us to be justified and have a standing as a good worshiper, a true devout worshiper, and through the wisdom he's given us and Timothy's one of the chief tools he's used, the book of Timothy, 1 and 2 Timothy, and then, of course, the pastoral epistle of Titus and the rest of the New Testament for that matter, is the wisdom of God to enable us as pastors and church men and women to function as true good worshipers and God's glory – are you listening to me – God's glory depends on it. I wouldn't suggest that we can somehow rob God of his glory but it is a humbling and even a trembling thought that he's called me to shepherd a part of the body that he will one day glorify with himself, and that's what I want to get across.

But now before we go into that any further, there's more to say there, I want to back up and get the big picture. Can I challenge you guys with a thought? There's a balance to everything. Let me give you this thought. There as far as I know there'll be no expositional preaching in heaven. I don't know but there will be a church in heaven. Expositional preaching is not the end. Expositional preaching is the primary means to building the church that will last forever. So sometimes, brothers and sisters, and I'm in my 38th year here and the mainstay of this pulpit is verse by verse, chapter by chapter exposition, it always will be but I do not hesitate to stop and address something if there's an issue. I mean, we've had times in our church when an issue popped up, there are dissensions, there's strife, there's ugliness, and I had to go to the Scriptures and find where the Scriptures spoke to that and exegete those various texts to get a systematic understanding of what we as a church ought to do about this, and now that can't be your mainstay, you want to stay off your hobbyhorses, but you've got to be willing to do that from time to time, and I found that for my people and even for my own heart, I need to step back and see the big picture of what God's about and I want to do a little of that now.

So, I., I want to talk about the preliminaries, God's great glory, Israel and her foes. That is, that God's purpose in the old age, or I use the word dispensation, the old dispensation was that he would bring himself glory through Israel and even through Israel's foes. Now there are many other ways God brings himself glory but from the Old Testament that

seems to be a repeating theme, "I chose you, Israel, for My own name's sake, for My own glory, and even I'm glorified in the way I deal with the pagan nations who oppose you and are your enemies."

Now when I use the word "glory," my goodness, you do an etymological study of the word "glory," there's a lot of fades and facets to this gem. It's a multifaceted gem, the idea of glory or the glory of God, but it helps me to think of it this way: to glorify God means that I deem him worthy of honor and praise and I think that in view in comparison to any and everything else. Compared to any and everything else, he alone do I in my heart treasure and hold as worthy of honor and praise, and God has through the ages been about the business and his providence, his perfections, doing things in the old dispensation with Israel and her foes, so that he might prove that he is the one worthy of honor and he's the one worthy of praise. He is worthy of all glory.

You see, there is one fully logical, fully appropriate, fully perfect, fully righteous desire in the universe for all time and eternity and that is God's desire to glorify himself. That's the big picture. That's the one true righteous desire is God's desire to glorify himself. I mean, it's axiomatic. It's self-evident. He is the one true God, thrice holy, Creator of everything, immutable, invisible, invincible. He is the only one and the one of inestimable wisdom, beauty and power. He must be glorified, he is being glorified, and he will be glorified and that's gonna last for time and all eternity and what we need to find out is, "Now how are You wanting to do this, God, because You're God and I just plan on getting in on it with You." That's our task.

Now the reason why he must be glorified and he is being glorified and he will be glorified is because he's decreed it so. He's chosen for that to happen. Boy, it it it, the Bible has anthropomorphic expressions to help us understand God but they all fall short and but I think about ah ah, well, it's too silly. I'm not gonna say that. But God God is the only being that can look in the mirror and say, "Absolute perfection." And anything less than God feeling that way about God would be sin by God. Do you get that? You know, when when when Brother Conrad preached to us about the excellency of Christ in his person as the God-man, that should stir in you that he's like no other. That's why I love him. That's why I treasure him. That's why I adore him. That's why I want to advance his cause, because he's to excellent. When Brother Justin preached to us, sharing with us the great wisdom of Christ and you did such a wonderful job, Justin, in showing us God's wisdom to guard us from false doctrine and false teachers, that's a glorious thing that our our Christ has given us. Brother Jono so powerfully helped us see the great wisdom of God in giving us the roles of men and women in the church. These are gifts from an all-powerful, all-wise God. We marvel over the wisdom of God. These aren't dreadful things. Some of you tightened up when Jono said, "I'm gonna preach about the roles of men and women." You tightened up. You shouldn't tighten, you should have said, "Praise God, I'm about to be set free." We don't need the new progressives in the Southern Baptist Convention telling us how to empower our women, Jesus has already done it through his person, through his work, and through the wisdom of his infallible word. Bunch of idiocy. What are you gonna add to the wisdom of God that's better for people than what God's already given us?

Boy, it's good to be free of denominational shackles. I'm not ever invited to anything. I don't want to be. It just doesn't matter. Some of you right now, you listen to what I'm saying. You're a good brother, you're a good sister, you love God, you're a blessing to me but the monster's got your left leg and you can't be free for God because that denominational monster says, "Hang on." You need to jerk loose and say, "I'm done. As the denomination lines up with Jesus' wisdom, so do I. If he does not, or it does not, I'm out. My loyalty is to the all-wise God."

He he he has decreed to be glorified. Listen to John 12:27 and 28. Jesus is approaching his cross. This is just such an interesting statement, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour?'" Jesus said, "Should I should I say, 'Father, this is a difficult thing.' Should I say, 'Father, save Me?'" He said, "No, no, no, wait a minute, for this purpose I came to this hour. God's got a glorious, My all-wise Father has a glorious purpose for everything that's happening all the way up until this point as I'm facing the cross." So Jesus says, "I'm here to glorify Him." Verse 28, "'Father, glorify Your name.' There came therefore a voice out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'" Woo! Again, anthropomorphically I find kind of see the Father saying, "Well, Father, let's get on with what You want, what You're about bringing glory to Your name." He said, "Son, You don't have to remind Me of that. You don't understand, I'm about glorifying My name. That's what I've been doing and I'm about to do it some more."

It's all about...I don't know what you guys who are pastoring, I don't know why you get up in the morning but I get up in the morning for the glory of God. I couldn't have made it this long if the glory of God God had not apprehended me because to me that's worth it, that's worth the hard nights, that's worth the long years, that's worth the long difficult seasons because God's glory through his church is worth it. Nothing else is. Nothing else is but do you know what I found? Are you listening to me? When you get to where you're shipwrecked on God's glory that, "Well, if it glorifies God, I'll do it. It looks like it's hurting my family, my children, my finances, everything else looks like it's gonna ruin me, but if this glorifies God, this is where I'm gonna be." Do you know what I found? Over time he gives you all of those things in abundance when he knew that was not what you were making idols out of in your ministry, only his glory was your motive for your ministry. When he finds out those idols are not in your way, he blesses those things to become bigger and more of a blessing in your life. That's been my experience.

Well, I want to talk about Pharaoh for just a moment. Pam and I are listening through the Bible chronologically this year and, man, I would recommend that. If you're like me, I I it's hard for me to read through the Bible without stopping and studying something, but when when I'm listening, I can't get the guy to stop so he just goes right on through, and so it's kind of been kind of a blessing because I take my work boots off and have my slippers on and just kinda listen. Going through Exodus, I I was amazed again at what God did in in Exodus and what God did through Pharaoh, and you know, the number of times God says, "I I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Exodus 14:4, "'Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored,'" that's glorified,

"through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.' And they did so." Now so God says very clearly, "I'm gonna harden Pharaoh's heart," and Brother Justin, he didn't need some word of life guy to tell him he could harden Pharaoh's heart, he just went ahead and did it. He just went ahead and did it and so, "I'm gonna harden Pharaoh's heart. He's not gonna let y'all go because through a process of Me sending these plagues and and proving Myself, I'm gonna show that I am the one true God worthy of honor and praise. So I'm gonna be glorified among the Egyptians." So you know what happened, plague would come, Pharaoh would promise to let them go, then he'd say, "No, you're not gonna get to go." And then over and over the text tells us God would harden Pharaoh's heart. Now to be honest and in balance, the Bible does say Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Which one was it? Both.

Exodus 11:9, "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.'" What is he saying? "I'm gonna show that My wisdom and power is superior to all the so-called false gods of Egypt. I'm gonna show forth that I am the one God worthy of honor and praise." You know, really in reality God played Pharaoh and Egypt like a master conductor leads an orchestra, just played them to his own glory.

And then Israel, captive in Egypt, and then God said, "Now I want you to glorify Me but you're My people. I've got a different way you're gonna glorify Me. I want you to go three days' journey outside of Egypt and I want you to take the men, the little ones, and all the livestock and sacrifice to Me there." The same concept in "sacrifice" or "serve Me" there is the concept of worship. By the way, we worship God by obeying him. There's a lotta ways you worship God but one of the ways you worship God is obeying him. So he tells his people, ah, "You're gonna go outside three days' journey, take the men, the little ones, and all the livestock."

Now some plagues had came and first Pharaoh says, "Okay, you can go but just the men can go. Not the little ones and not the livestock." And I'm giving the Jeff Noblit quick amplified translation. Moses said, "You don't understand, Pharaoh, God said there's a particular way He's to be worshiped. Three days' journey, take the men, the little ones, and all the livestock." "Well, then you're not going."

God sent some more plagues and then Pharaoh says, "Okay, okay, okay. Tell your God to stop the plagues and I'll let the men go and I'll let the little ones go, but the livestock can't go." Pharaoh in effect says again, "No, you don't understand. God's given us a specific way we're to serve Him and worship Him. Three days' journey, the men, the little ones and the livestock must all go."

So God brings the final plague, the death of the firstborn. All the Jews took the blood of a spotless lamb, smeared it on the doorpost and the lintel, and that night the death angel visited Egypt, all the firstborn of the Egyptians died but the death angel passed over the households of the Israelis, and then God says, "Okay, now you can go, the men, the little ones and all the livestock." So they go out there and they serve the Lord and the Lord says, "Now I've got some perpetual ordinances I want you guys to remember so that you

will continually glorify Me because you've seen My wisdom and My strength in ways no other men have seen it. So I want you to regularly consecrate your firstborn to Me. I want you to have a feast of unleavened bread to remind you how you left in haste without leaven in the bread, and I want you to have a Passover celebration so that you can remember regularly and glorify Me."

So whether it was Egypt or Israel, God was glorifying himself and we see this played out with other countries and with other enemies and all throughout Israel's history. We know that as the children of Israel miraculously passed through the Red Sea on dry ground and they get to the other side, and you know by this time Pharaoh has relented again and thought, "Man, I'm letting a lot of free labor and a lot of wealth and livestock get away." So he sends his army after them. God closes up the Red Sea over them. So Moses led the people in a song to praise God and give glory to God, Exodus 15:11 is part of that song. "Who is like thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" Their song is saying, "You, the one true God, have shown us You're worthy of all honor and all praise. You're worthy to be glorified." And that was God's aim. The point is, it was all about the glory of God.

Now I think one of the things I want to pull out just as a side note here is just a real lesson for the church here that, brothers and sisters, we don't get or we don't have the right to glorify God the way we think is best in his church. He said, "Moses, three days' journey, the men, the little ones and all the livestock." I think there's a real lesson there when Pharaoh kept coming back and said, "Alright, you can do this but not that." "Nope. God's told us how to do it." I think there's a real lesson for the local church here.

And then, of course, the law that he gave Israel after they journeyed on Mount Sinai, and the law is an expression of God's holiness and God's character. The law is an expression of God's ethical and upright nature superior to the people of the nations that surrounded Israel so it would show forth as they honored God's law, it would show forth that their God is worthy of honor and praise. One quick contrast was in this day it was common among these nations to take their children and sacrifice their children to Molech. Leviticus 20:2-5, God condemns such. He says, "You're not barbaric. You're not of ethical corruption. That's the way their gods are. That's why they do those things but that doesn't fit My people. So by not participating in that kind of wickedness, you show forth that I'm wise, I'm worthy of honor, and I am worthy of praise."

So that's the great glory. God throughout the Old Testament keeps giving himself great glory in and through Israel and even through Israel's foes like he did with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. II. The great glory pointed to the greater glory, Christ and his church. It always has. It always does. Everything is about him. It all leads to him. It all points to him. It all foreshadowed him. But don't forget and I think we do this sometimes far far too often, the Bible, how shall I say this, makes us, tries to make us remember the church is always connected to Jesus. It's his body. It's his bride. It's his building. And best I checked, you can't deal with a head without a body being on it. There there's a reason why we're giving these metaphors so don't leave the church out of God's great purpose to glorify his Son. The church is not the Son, the Son is not the church, but the church has

been given the Son's righteousness – listen – and the church will be given the Son's glory and he's not splitting himself up.

So all that had happened was the preliminaries. All that happened through Israel in the old dispensation was the warm-up band for the main event, the church and the work of Christ in saving and building his church. Mark 9:5-7, the mount of transfiguration is an interesting commentary on this. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here." Peter reminds me of me. "And let us make three tabernacles," let's just just, can I speak up and fix this thing, Peter is saying. "We'll make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." I don't want anybody to be offended. We'll just honor Moses and honor Elijah and honor you, Jesus, "For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified." I would too. "Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!' You don't understand, the great and godly leaders of the Old Testament are one thing and I got great glory through them but there's a greater glory I'm accomplishing through My beloved Son. You need to listen to Him. He's different. He's unique. He's the one their ministries pointed to."

John 1:45, "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. We found the one that the entire Old Testament points to and leads up to, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'"

John 5:46, "if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. It was all about Me. Everything was a type, a foreshadowing of Me."

Hebrews 3:3, "For He," Jesus, "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor," that's the word we get glorification from or tied to, "the builder of the house has more honor than the house." God has ordained that his purposes and his glory for time and eternity would be centered in his Son Jesus Christ and in his church, his ekklesia, his called out ones. Not in a nation, that was the preliminary, that was Israel, that was the warm-up, but now a people called out for God, made up of individuals from all nations, tongues, tribes and peoples. Now he's he's doing a different thing, he's collecting for himself and for his own glory a people from all kinds of places. Not a nation, a people, an assembly, a a local church. The church, you see, is the centerpiece of God's purposes and God's glory for time and for eternity.

Ephesians 3:21. Notice the equality here, the linear plane this is on, "to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus," interesting, "to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

The church is God's theater for the manifestation of God's glory. This was ordained from eternity past. Ephesians 3:10-11, "in order that the manifold wisdom of God," the variegated, the multifaceted wisdom of God, "might now now be made known through the church," and I would submit to you that God's glory through the church, guys, don't

make this some mystical universal invisible idea, your local church, your local church, your local church is to show the multifaceted glorious wisdom of God greater than anything he did with Moses and the children of Israel, delivering them from Egyptian bondage. Strap that on. Lash that to your heart and never get over it. Your local church. Your the ekklesia, the called out ones that you're a part of.

"In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." Now I don't know all that that means other than this, even the angelic beings, the holy angels, not the fallen angels, even the holy angels did not understand much about the Incarnation and the work of Christ becoming the vicarious atonement for the children, the work of redemption to the cross, buried for our sins, raised for our justification, ascended to heaven for our intercession. The angels were learning as it went on and then as Jesus went to the cross and purchased the children and they saw the Gospel starts being preached, this one is regenerate, that one is regenerate, this is regenerate, this is regenerate, they come together to form local ekklesias, local groups of called out ones, and the angels in heaven said, "My, my, my, my, this is greater than anything God's done before." Do you know why God wanted the angels to see it and marvel over it? He loves getting glory. God desires getting glory and I'm telling are you listening to me? When this whole thing's over, Barack Obama will bow on his knees and he'll give glory to Jesus Christ because God's ordained it to be so. Aren't you glad we get to get in on the church way to bring him glory? It's all about his glory.

Verse 11 of Ephesians 3:10-11, "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose." You see, the cross wasn't an ambulance sent to the scene of an accident, from eternity past this was the pinnacle. This was the event, Christ going to the cross, purchasing and securing the called out ones that in time and space history through his means of Gospel preaching he would regenerate them, they would come to repentance and faith and join together in local ekklesias, called out groups of ones. Why? So the manifold wisdom of God could be shown in this pinnacle work of God.

You know, when we stand or rather when we have a wedding, it it's been a common practice I've learned that ah, in a wedding rehearsal the bride herself will often sit out in the pew and let someone else, a bridesmaid, stand in for her. It's just the rehearsal and she'll sit back there and watch and make sure it looks the way she wants it to look but she don't dare sit out there when the real thing happens. Well, brothers and sisters, everything up until Jesus was the preliminary, it was the rehearsal, now the big, real, true thing is happening. Jesus is building his church and I get to get in on it. That's worth giving your life for.

Hebrews 12:18-24, contrasting the old with the new. Remember the song that they sung by Moses praising God, giving God great glory for delivering them from Egypt? And then the Bible, well, I'll get there in a moment. Hebrews 12:18-24, "For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind," that's Mount Sinai where the law was given, "and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that

no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, 'Even if a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.' And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.'" He said, "That's that's the old order," and God got great glory through that order. But here's the new one, "you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," I think it speaks of the church. I don't know how she can make anything else, "and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn," Jesus is the firstborn, we're his assembly, "who are enrolled in heaven, and to," in other words, our citizenship, our our our birthing is anchored in heaven, we're of the spiritual new birth, that's what made us a part of this assembly, "who are enrolled in heaven, and the God to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel."

Now, again as we think about these things, sometimes it's a universal church but it never leaves out the fact that you and I can't serve in a universal church. We can't love the people in a universal church because we're not yet glorified in an eternal state yet. We only can do this in local churches, in local ekklesias. You know, today we are confined to time and space. We can only function in time and space. We can only serve and glorify Christ in a local church. Now if your idea of the word "ekklesia" which the overwhelming majority of times it's used in the New Testament obviously it's used of a local assembly of believers, but if your view of ekklesia is only that it's the universal and visible church, if this is the only horse you ride, you ride a mythical horse because it it it is a reality but it's not tangible physically in a physical realm. You you you're trying to serve in a vapor as far as any real worship and service and bring glory to God through it.

But we're of something great and new and better and glorious, far more glorious than anything God's done before. That's why Revelation 5:9-10 says, "And they sang a new song." The old one was good but they say, "Do you know what?" We just gotta be honest, what God did through Israel and through Pharaoh and all the other events, it was great and it got brought God true glory but what he's done through his Son and how he build his church and how of all that the Father gave him, he lost not one. So they say, "Do you know what? We're gonna have to write a new song. We just we just gonna have it's too glorious to use the old song, we got to write a new song, Worthy art thou to take the book and to break its seals; for thou wast slain, and has purchased for God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." The new song is different than the old song because the greatness of God is more manifest in the new than in the old. If if if I could say it this way, God is of such holiness, he's of such wonder that it mandated something greater than what he did in the old dispensation to be performed by him so more of who he is could be seen, more of who he is in love, more of who he is in mercy, more of who he is in his justice, more of who he is in grace. All of that's more fully, should we say, is fully seen in Jesus Christ and in his work of securing the children.

You see, the old song was the warm-up band, the new song is the guys you came to hear. In the old song, Moses' song, they sang about a temporal deliverance, in the new song we sing about an eternal deliverance. In the old song they were singing about freedom from

Egypt, in the new song we sing about freedom from sin. In the old song they praise the Lord because he was forming Israel, a physical body, in the new song we praise him because he's forming a spiritual family. In the old song they praised him for forming a nation, in the new song we praise him because he's fashioning a bride. In the old song they thought about a temporal priest and a temporal prophet, Moses, in the new song we sing about the one true eternal priest and prophet Jesus Christ. In the old song they sang about how Egypt was humbled to honor the Lord, but in the new song we sing about how every single individual of the spiritual realm and the physical realm will one day worship God because every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. In the old song they praised God because God dwelt among them, in the new song we praise God because God dwells in us. In the old song they thought about the blood of lambs, in the new song we sing about the blood of the Lamb of God. In the old song they feasted on unleavened bread, in the new song we feast on the bread of heaven. And we could go on and on.

The great glory of the old realm was pointing us to the greater glory that would be manifested in the church age through Christ and his work of the church. No wonder when it all unfolds in Revelation and God's bringing it all to an end, what's the Bible say? He created a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem. He didn't just spruce up the old one, he did something new, something worthy of greater glory and honor and praise. No wonder Revelation 21:5 says, "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

So today, brothers and sisters, we experience, we are involved in this pinnacle work of God, the forming of his ekklesias, his called out ones, his church. It is both fascinating and it is so humbling that God would desire to use us in the building of this pinnacle work. God's work through his Son of saving, sanctifying and one day glorifying his church is the apex, it's the pinnacle of both God's work and God's glory.

One final text, John 17:1-5, as Jesus gives this high priestly prayer as such, but I want you to notice how everything in here is about the glory of God. "These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son.'" I think that has the idea of, "Father, honor the work I'm about to do because it's Your will that I do this. I'm going to the cross to pay for the children's sins and, Lord, would You, Father, would You honor that work? Would You receive that work?"

Then he says, "that the Son may glorify thee." It's for it's a prophetic voice. He said, "Father, if You'll receive what I'm about to do, I'm gonna get something done that's gonna bring Us unbelievable glory when it all is said and done." That's what motivated the Son was that he might go to the cross and glorify his Father, and that should motivate us in the local church, that we can lead the church, fashion the church, structure it, function in the church according to his wisdom recorded in Scripture that we might be instruments to help deliver up and deliver over church. Christ gets all the credit and glory but we're instruments under him, we're under-shepherds, so that he might get all the glory he deserves. Not only just in the final days when all the glorification happens, but even now Christ should be getting this glory through his churches.

Is your church a testimony of your cleverness, of your creativity, or of God's wisdom and power? You ought to get before God on your face and say, "God, burn it to the ground before this place is a testimony to man in any way. May it be a testimony of You and bring You glory."

Brother Steve, he says this often. He was talking about how 30+ years ago we prayed and pleaded with God that he would bless us here at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, that the ends of the earth might fear him; that we might be sound enough, never perfect but sound enough that we could be a mentor and encouragement to others to follow the Scriptures. And Brother Steve says God answered that prayer but here's my statement to you, do you know what it's taken to get Jeff Noblit and us usable? It's taken a lot but I'm telling you the rewards on the backside are wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful.

So Jesus says here, "Father, honor what I'm about to do in Your will that I might glorify You." Verse 2, "even as thou hast given Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life." Boy, is that not sovereign grace? Verse 3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." Now he views his whole work in a past tense, a completed sense. "Father, I've gone to the cross, I have completed securing the children. It's done. It's finished." So what's the result of that? Glory. Verse 5, "And now glorify thou Me together with thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." I think that includes, "Father, I look forward to after I finish this work of My condescension, of My Incarnation by going to the cross and dying, when I ascend back up into heaven, Father, can We enjoy the glory We used to know together in the Godhead before I came down here?" The Godhead just loves glory because you've got to understand God God didn't have an image issue. He's not on a ego trip. He's God. That's the way he outta think and that's the way Jesus outta think.

I want just a thought of hopefully fairly sound speculation. Don't do this in your church. When he says, "I'm gonna do this work on the cross and when I get it finished, can We just bask in the glory that We knew in the Godhead before I left?" I believe that that is an image or or or a thought that will one day in the final glorification be unveiled. I believe when Jesus returns in all of his glory and the new Jerusalem and the bride are unveiled in all of their glory because they have the glory of Jesus, then the great glory of God through Christ and the church will be manifest, unveiled, and shown forth before all the universe and the finally finally finally everyone will see the glory only the Godhead knew before and all through the work of Jesus securing the church. Now here's the thing, guys, he's called you to oversee it until glorification. Under him, yes, by his power, yes, according to his wisdom, yes, but it's our job to oversee this awesome pinnacle work of God, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's worth our everything.

Now, Lord willing, tomorrow morning we're gonna get in some real practical stuff about how we're to take care of this bride, his church for his glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, I submit to You who is able to such a thing? And Lord, in one sense it leaves us so radically bankrupt and deficient that we can have confidence that You've gotta do it or we're sunk. So Lord, that's what we say, help us men, help us church leaders to be radically yielded to You, to be thoroughly committed to Your wisdom to function in Your work Your way by Your power, that Your church might manifest Your glory both now in time and then eventually in eternity in full glorification. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.