

HOLD THE TRUTH STEADY

HOLD THE TRUTH HIGH

1 Timothy 3:14-16

The temple of Artemis in Ephesus, stood as arguably the most magnificent building in the Mediterranean world. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and described by Antipater (a greek writer/poet) in his poem about the seven wonders, “*but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy*”. Its foundation was 425ft by 240ft, almost 100ft longer and wider than a football field. The roof was held up by 127 columns reaching 60 ft into the air. At the center of the temple stood the roughly 30ft tall ivory statue of the goddess, Artemis. It would have been magnificent to see, and it was the religious centerpiece of Ephesus.

As we look at our passage today, we will see that Paul directly contrasts the Christian church in Ephesus with the temple of Artemis. He wants his brothers and sisters to know just how important the revealed truths about Jesus are, as well as the important role they play in establishing and sharing that truth with the world. He used the backdrop of the magnificent temple of Artemis as he wrote of the true glory of the family of God and the importance of that family to each other and the world. His main point?

The living God resides in the gathering of the believers, and believers are to behave accordingly, hold the truth of Jesus steady, and hold the truth of Jesus high!

RULES OF GOD’S HOUSE (3:14-15)

Paul began this section by telling Timothy his purpose for writing. His desire was that he would be able to come and instruct the church in person, but until then, he needed Timothy to instruct the believers “how to behave” specifically in relationship with one another “in the household of God”. They needed to adjust their behavior. As we might say to an unruly son, “my house, my rules”, in this case, it was “God’s house, God’s rules”. The idea of the house of God immediately would invoke the image of the temple. It would be helpful for us to be reminded of the prominence of the cult of Artemis, which we saw so clearly in our study of Acts (19:21-41).

COMPOSITION OF GOD’S HOUSE (3:15)

Paul made it clear that Christianity was not simply one of many cults in the area. The Christian house of God was not made by human hands, it was made up of all the believers, the “called out ones”. It did not house a hand carved, dead, ivory statue. It was home to the one true living God. The house of the living God did not rely upon the stability of a piece of land, nor the handiwork of craftsman to attract new worshippers. *God’s house would grow as believers held the truth steady against the idolatry from without and false teachers within, and held the truth high for the world to see.*

THE GREAT REVEALED TRUTH OF JESUS (3:16)

In Acts 19 we hear the crowds screaming for hours “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” and I do not think it any coincidence that Paul writes “Great is the mystery of Godliness”. You want to talk about greatness? Look at what the living God has revealed in Jesus! In this poem/hymn/prayer, Paul lays out three couplets with a clear balance/counterbalance in the sets: Flesh/Spirit, Angels/Nations, World/Glory . This beautiful section flows chronologically through the life of Jesus. First, God became flesh and this was proved by the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ baptism, by his miracles, and ultimately at the resurrection. This was seen by the angels and proclaimed by humanity. These truths are believed throughout the world, while Jesus himself was received back into heaven in glory.

These six lines take us from the birth of Jesus to his glorification, and are at the heart of the establishment of the house of God, and are a major part of the truth that we are called to hold steady and hold high. All glory and praise to God for His grace in revealing these truths to us. May we prove faithful to hold them steady and hold them high. To resist false teaching from within, endure hostility from without, and to elevate the name and story of Jesus in a world that desperately needs to hear how God revealed his greatness to us, through Jesus His Son.

GRACE NEWS AND NEEDS

- ***Easter services are family services. Only Nursery and Toddler care available.***
- ***Elder Candidate Evaluations on behalf of Eric Benson and Nick Lowther.***
Evaluation forms are available in the foyer and online. Please return by Sunday, April 2nd.
- ***VOM Needs for March: 1) Bath Towels 2) Floss 3) Combs***
- ***Walk for Life sign-ups on the patio.***
- ***Family Desert Trip to Ocotillo, 3/31-4/2***
- ***Missions Team Meeting Today after 2nd service.***
- ***General Giving Update for 2023 as of 3/19: \$160,561 (-849.00 below the need of \$161,410)***