

G Jones Bible Survey 7 of 7

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[0 : 00] We are coming to the end of our seven weeks just going through the Bible. And today will be our last section.! I'm just going to read just from one verse. 1 Timothy 3.16. You'll find that on page 992.

It's page 992. And this is a letter written to Timothy, who was a pastor of a church. And this verse basically is telling Paul, this is the key thing that you need to teach the people in your church. If what you teach in your church doesn't match what it says here, then there's something wrong with what you're teaching.

And when they go elsewhere and they hear something else, that will equip them to know that this is something that is not what they should be hearing. So this is one verse. 1 Timothy 3.16. Page 992. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

[1 : 29] Let's pray briefly as we come to look at this. Our Father, as we listen to this, your word here, we pray that what we know not, you would teach us.

What we have not, you would give us. And what we are not, you would make us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you're sat in a cafe, you've gone into a shelter from the cold, and you're just minding your own business, maybe you're reading the paper or something like that.

And it's rather crowded, because it's quite a cold day. And a man asks if he could sit in the chair opposite you, and you quietly nod and you just keep reading your paper. But pretty quickly, you regret being quite so polite, because he's one of those chatty types.

You're trying to signal as politely as you possibly can that you would rather just get on with reading your paper. But he's really not taking the hint. So you hear all about his mourning in the office. It turns out he's an assistant to a solicitor. And they're working on a really amazing will that they're having to process. It's a recently deceased lady who had the most extraordinary life.

[2 : 52] And you don't really want to hear about this extraordinary life, but you're going to hear about it anyway. She had travelled the seven seas. She had dined with kings and queens.

And presidents. She'd made a fortune on investments. She had built up the most extraordinary collection of artworks and jewellery. And you just keep nodding politely at this story, but you're still really quite annoyed by now, because you just won't shut up.

And then he keeps going on about her staggering portfolio of properties. And it's all interesting enough, but you really would prefer some peace and quiet. But then he keeps going on.

He starts talking about how, in this amazing will, she left all of this stuff to some distant relative that she hadn't even ever met. And this assistant, who's chatting away at you now, he's been spending days and days trying to find this distant relative, and now he is thrilled to have finally found you. Pardon? Pardon? You are the distant relative. Well, that changes everything, doesn't it? You kind of wish you were paying a bit more attention.

[4 : 02] And the story was quite extraordinary as he was telling it, although you didn't necessarily want to hear it, because you would rather read the paper. But now everything is different. Well, we've been looking at a pretty remarkable story the past few weeks, from the beginning of the Bible through to this final part.

And I'm assuming that if you've been here, you have wanted to hear it, because you're the ones who came here to listen. Although maybe you were just dragged along by a friend, and you would really rather just read your paper. But whatever you've thought of the story so far, we've seen some hints of how it connects to our lives.

But here is where we really see that this story has everything to do with us. This story really impacts and changes our lives. We've gone all the way back to the beginning of Genesis, haven't we, over these past seven weeks.

We've seen that the world and everything in it, and including ourselves, was made by God. God is distinct from his creation, and everything was made by him.

We saw that we were made particularly for friendship with God. And Adam was the first man as our representative before God. He actually chose to reject God.

[5 : 22] Adam plunged us into pain and rebellion and death. And we just have Adam as the representative for all mankind. And yet, even at that moment when Adam rebels, God makes a promise.

He promises to win back our allegiance from the enemy, from the serpent who tempted him, who he has now joined forces with. And he has promised that the woman's offspring will crush his head. And as we've traced the line of the woman's offspring over these few chapters, and we've met plenty of men who are in that line, but they're not it.

And yet, each of those men teach us a lot about who the one who is it will be. So I've used this picture of a seed growing to a tree. So that's what reading the Bible is like.

You start off with the seed, and it just grows and grows. It looks different at each stage, so that the DNA stays the same. And then we end up with this tree where we see just all the glorious riches of it.

[6 : 26] We looked at Noah, didn't we, and seeing how through him there was rescue available from God's anger. And then we saw promises and curses on his sons that are still true to this day.

And we saw through Abraham that God wanted to bless all the nations through him. Even though it was coming through one man, through one family, God wanted to bless all the nations. In Moses, we saw that the one who is the seed of all men would bring rescue from slavery.

Slavery to sin. And he would bring close friendship with God, and he would bring ways of paying for sin through sacrifice. And last week, we looked at David.

We looked at it in a bit of a roundabout way, looking at his great-grandmother, Ruth. But we see that David is the worthy representative that people were longing for.

There was an unworthy one. There was King Saul who was unworthy. And David is the one who comes to replace the unworthy one. And we have an unworthy representative.

[7 : 32] We have Adam. We were looking, therefore, for the worthy replacement, the worthy representative to take Adam's place, one who pays for our sins as a sacrifice, the one who saves us from slavery to sin, the one who takes on the curse of our sin onto himself, as God did in that picture to Abraham, the one who brings us to friendship with God, and provides that people, provides that salvation to people from every nation in the world.

That's what we're looking for. That is ultimately what we're looking for. And now at last, we come to a man named Jesus. And most of you, I'm guessing, are familiar with his story of his life and death and resurrection and ascension to heaven.

If that isn't familiar to you, we do have copies of the Gospels that record that. Do take one and read one. But that is the basic story of a man who lived and died on a cross and was risen from the dead and ascended to heaven.

And what we have here in this verse is the verse that explains what that is all about. And also explains how that connects to you and me. How we eventually find ourselves as a key part of the story of the Bible.

But let's look at it. He's got a list of six things that he says about Jesus. So let's look at these six things. He says he was manifested in the flesh. Now this is Paul talking about Jesus in his earthly life.

[9 : 11] Jesus seen by people on earth in flesh. And yet, the word manifested is really interesting there. It's not just he lived here in the flesh or he walked about in the flesh, but he was manifested.

Somebody was manifesting him. Somebody was displaying him. There's a sense in which this is God showing people something. It's all familiar with the Gospel of John and the way that begins. This language is quite close to that. In the beginning was the Word. So we're introduced to someone called the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. And later we see the Word became flesh.

The Word, someone who is spoken by God, someone revealed by God, and yet the Word becoming flesh. So we learn of one who was manifested in the flesh.

He was vindicated by the Spirit. Let's say that the Holy Spirit of God vindicated this man. And if you look down at the footnotes, it's footnote number six.

[10:14] It'll say, all justified. At the bottom of the page, in very small writing. And it says all justified because it's exactly the same word. You may have come across the word justified in other places in the Bible.

You might have heard of something called the doctrine of justification. It's a very long Bible word that we use. But it's about this. It's about Jesus being vindicated.

It's talking about Jesus' resurrection here. So we've looked at his life. Now he's focusing here on Jesus' resurrection. In the resurrection, the Holy Spirit of God vindicates Jesus or vindicated or justified Jesus.

He declared to the world, this is the man who has passed the test. There was a man who failed to pass the test. And here at last is the man who has passed the test.

Here is the one who has been justified. He was the one who was made right with God. Not that Jesus was ever not right with God. But he is the one who has especially passed the test and he has shown himself to be just.

[11:23] And because he is a representative of people, it means that everyone he represents automatically gets that same status of being just, of being vindicated.

So even people who have rebelled against God can amazingly somehow be vindicated as though they had done the right thing the whole time. As though they had passed the test.

There is an offer here of people being vindicated by being connected to this one who was vindicated by passing the test. We can be given that same status.

We can be right with God through this. And then seen by angels. So he thought about his life and thought about his resurrection and this book is on his ascension.

He went up to heaven where he is seen by angels. He went to the dwelling of the angels and there he is seen by them now. He has gone on to a different realm as he waits.

[12:28] He went to the presence of God. And there's a sense in which because we now have a man who represents people in heaven, there is a representative of man in heaven.

There is somebody there on man's behalf seen by angels. Proclaimed among the nations. I think this is probably the easiest one to demonstrate that it's true because it is literally happening right now.

This man, Jesus, is being preached, being proclaimed among the nations. People in every country, every nation, every people group are hearing this news about Jesus.

hearing this story. He is being proclaimed among the nations. Believed on in the world.

That is how people should respond to this proclamation. How do you get this man who was manifested in the flesh and vindicated by the Spirit and seen by angels to be your representative?

[13:33] How do you get to take him instead of Adam? By believing on him. By people who are in the world deciding to join forces with him rather than staying in force with the enemy.

Believed on in the world simply to mean believe him and he will be your representative. You can be vindicated even though you have done all the wrong things.

you can yet somehow be vindicated and taken up in glory as the sixth thing. It can be referenced to his ascension again another way of speaking of it.

Taken up in glory but I think it's also talking about the second coming of Christ. He will come again and there is a taking up and he is taken up and he is taken with all of the people he represents to be in glory with God.

This is how the Bible presents the good news of Jesus. A man who was manifested in the flesh so there is something about God revealing him here. He is then vindicated justified by the spirit seen by angels up in heaven where he is now and while he is there he is being proclaimed among the nations.

[14:51] People in every country are hearing about it including people in this room right now. He is being believed on in all the world and he will be taken up in glory when he has gathered his people to himself.

That is the climax of the story. We have finally found the replacement representative. We have finally found what Paul elsewhere calls the second Adam and the last Adam.

He is the second representative to come and he is the last one because he is the only one you will ever need. You don't need anyone to try again. He has fully succeeded. And it is worth noting how Paul introduces these six statements.

Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness. Let's just break that down. We confess. We confess.

Paul is part of a big company of people who confesses this. confesses. It's not just great I confess but great we confess. Here are many people gathering together to say this is what we believe.

[16:01] If you go to your church on a Sunday more often than not you will hear them say something like the Apostles Creed which is something very similar to this with maybe a bit more detail put in.

But it's saying this is what we confess. This is what we believe. The whole point is that we confess it together. But here's how Paul describes this good news. First of all, great.

It's amazing. I don't know what kind of thing tends to blow you away. Whether it's seeing an amazing sight, a waterfall or great mountains.

Whether it's an amazing piece of theatre or film, a brilliant musical at the West End. It might be just the most amazing symphony. It might be Mahler's second symphony.

Which I've been listening to recently, which is just magnificent. It could be anything. What blows you away? Well, this is the best thing. This is the greatest thing you'll hear. This news is, quite simply, great.

[17:05] Great is the mystery. Well, if it's such a mystery, why are you telling me what it is? If we're asking that question, it means we need to redefine the word mystery.

I once had a preacher, explaining it like this. You've got a load of kids at a birthday party, and here comes a box that's wrapped. And somebody asks, does anybody know what this is?

And all the children says, it's a mystery, except for one little girl who is Greek. And she doesn't say a thing, she says, I don't know. And then they open it up, and everybody says, it's a bicycle.

But the little Greek girl says, it's a mystery. Reason being, mystery in this sense is something, a secret that has now been revealed. It's not a secret anymore.

This was a secret, but here it has been revealed. You could never guess this. Plenty of people over the years have tried to say that man has invented this.

[18:05] God is a crutch, it's the opiate of the masses. People have just made this up. Paul is saying, you could never guess this in a million years. This is great news that you could never guess because God is telling you this news.

And it's the mystery of godliness. And you might not know what godliness means, it sounds like quite a Bible religious word, doesn't it? And that's understandable, it means to be a bit like God, that is to live in a god-like way.

It can mean piety, it can mean devotion, but it means devoting ourselves to God. This is great news that has been revealed by God, not made up by anyone, that is life-changing.

When you hear it, when you grasp it, it just turns your life upside down. It produces in you a devotion to God that never goes away.

It produces in you a love for him. It produces in you a desire to live for him as you put your hope in Jesus. This is great news that is a mystery.

[19:18] It has been given to you by God himself and it's a mystery of godliness. It is life-changing. Here's another way of saying great is the mystery of godliness. This amazing news is life-changing.

That's very simply what Paul is saying. Here is the news that you need to hear from God and it is amazing and it is life-changing. Whether you've been wanting to hear this news or whether you would rather be reading your newspaper quietly in a cafe, as you hear this story, do you suddenly see how this story is about you?

It's not primarily about you. Of course, it is primarily about Jesus. And yet, do you see yourself in the story? Do you hear that saying proclaimed among the nations?

Do you realise that is you? Not just people in general, but literally you in front of me here and me as well. And so, do you see that here's the opportunity to believe in him?

I don't know if you've ever saw, I think it's from the 80s, the film The NeverEnding Story. It's a story and it is quite never ending. It just goes on and on. It's a boy called Bastion and he is reading this story about this boy called Atreyu and it's all kinds of things happening.

[20 : 38] But little by little, by the end, he realises actually he is in the story. He finds himself to be in that never ending story. Do you see that this is where you are part of the story?

Will you respond to this proclamation among the nations the way it should be responded to? By believing on him in the world, looking forward to being taken to glory with him and being that godly person, having your lives transformed to be devoted to him.

It really is that simple, believing in him. It's not to say that that will make your life very easy. It can be costly. There are places in the world where that very simple step of believing on him leads to great suffering because there are plenty of people who do not like Christians and will make them suffer. Yet there is that hope of being taken up into glory with him. Will you believe in him? If there's something you'd like to explore further, we do have those gospels which I encourage you to read and other books that you could be reading as well.

Let me encourage you to come to our church services as well. There are flyers on the back table. You can come and join us. We'd love to see you on a Sunday. Do you ask yourself this question?

[21 : 57] Do I believe in this? And if I believe in this, will I say not just I confess it, but I want to confess this with other people. We confess it. It's not just about individuals, but I confess it along with others.

Will I be willing to confess it with a company of believers? Which is ultimately what gathering in the church is all about. Let's pray.