

The Greatest Mystery of All

1 Timothy 3:16

Our text is one of the greatest verses in the Bible on the deity of Christ—Jesus Christ is God in the flesh! (John 1:1, 14).

This one salient verse of Scripture covers everything from Christ's birth in a manger at Bethlehem, to his ascension to the throne of the universe at the right hand of the Father.

➡ The text may be divided into **three couplets of truth**:

Couplet #1 tells us of the **WHO** of Christ's person:

*"God was manifest in the flesh:
Justified in the Spirit.*

Couplet #2 tells us of the **WITNESS** of Christ's person:

*Seen of angels:
Preached among the Gentiles.*

Couplet #3 tells us of the **WHERE** of Christ's person:

*Believed on in the world:
Received up into glory."*

➡ The incarnation of Christ is a **great mystery**. It is defined by seven verbs:

I. The APPREHENDING of the mystery (*"And without controversy GREAT is the mystery of godliness..."*).

A. *"...without controversy..."*—Not up for debate... indisputable.

B. Beyond human understanding — *"GREAT is the MYSTERY."* It is too big for our puny minds to grasp.

➡ To fully understand the mystery of the incarnation of God in Christ, you would have to be equal to Him.

For example: I have a wristwatch on my arm right now. It is a very complex and precise mechanism designed by a watchmaker. I don't understand how it was constructed, or how its many intricate parts work together to accurately display the time of day. To be honest, I still don't understand all the functions this watch

is capable of doing. It is even difficult for me to adjust its time settings without consulting the user's manual that came with it! If I could understand every intricate detail about my watch and how it was constructed, I would be equal to the one who made it.

Likewise, the ability to absolutely understand God implies an equality with God. God's thoughts are far beyond the reach of our thoughts. However, God has given us a "user's manual" in the Bible. We don't have to know all the intricacies of His deity or His ways. We just need to believe what He said and trust Him for what we don't understand.

I don't understand how a brown cow can eat green grass and produce white milk and yellow butter! But I don't let that stop me for enjoying it!

II. **God's APPEARANCE in the flesh** (*"God was manifest in the flesh"*).

- ➡ John 1:14 states, God was *"made flesh and dwelt among us."*
 - ➡ *"...in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (Col. 2:9)
 - ➡ Christ came to display Deity. *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son... he hath declared Him"* (John 1:18). Phillip asked, *"Lord, shew us the Father."* Jesus answered, *"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:9).
- A. The miracle of it's **undertaking**—Born of a virgin!
- ➡ The Creator of all things humbled Himself to enter His creation as one of its creatures—all the while knowing He would suffer abuse, rejection, mockery, scourging, and crucifixion at the hands of men that He created.
- B. The mystery of it's **union**—The union of Christ's divine nature and His human nature in one personality. He is all God, and all man, altogether, all at once!
1. As God, Jesus was what He could never become. As Man, He became what He never was!
 2. As sinless man, He could justly die for sinners. As God could He pay the eternal penalty/debt for the sins of all mankind.

3. The Son of God became the Son of Man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God.
4. Because He is God, He can take hold of God in one hand. Because He is man, He can take hold of man with the other hand. And, because He is the God-man, He can reconcile both God and men in the person of Himself. GLORY!

III. His **AFFIRMATION by the Spirit** (“...justified in the Spirit...”).

- Justified = vindicated; to prove or show to be just / right.
- Christ proclaimed He was the Son of God. But the majority of people rejected Him... mocked Him... and plotted to kill Him. But the Spirit of God vindicated Him and proved His claims. How?
 - A. **By His sinless life**—No man can live a sinless life (Rom. 3:23). If a perfect life could ever be lived, it would have to be lived by God Himself as a Man.
 1. The Bible assures us Christ “*knew no sin*” (2 Cor. 5:21).
 2. He challenged His enemies, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” and no one answered.
 3. Pilate confessed, “*I find no fault in him.*”
 - The sinless and perfect life of Jesus proves He is God.
 - B. **By His marvelous works**—No man ever performed the works Christ performed by the Spirit of God. Therefore, His works proved that He is who He claimed: The Son of God.
 - C. **By His glorious resurrection**—The Spirit of God vindicated Christ by raising Him from the dead.
 - “...*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*” (Rom. 1:4 cf. 1 Pet. 3:18).
 - If He wasn’t who He said He was, He would still be in the grave today!
 - The world may not approve—they may reject, slander, and slay Christ—but being “*justified of the Spirit*” means heaven approves and that is all that counts!

IV. The AMAZEMENT of the angels (“...*seen of angels*...”).

- A. Colossians 1:15 says Christ is “*the image of the invisible God*.” Therefore, prior to His incarnation, none of the angels ever “saw” Him! We can only imagine their amazement as Christ was “*seen of angels*” for the first time!
1. When those angels looked upon Him as a babe in the manger, they were gazing into the face of the One who created them.
 2. No wonder we read the “*multitude of the heavenly host*” praised God at Christ’s birth (Lk. 2:13). Hebrews 1:6, “*When he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.*”
 3. The angels were interested in the ministry of Christ on earth. Peter writes that the angels “*desire to look into*” Christ’s provision of salvation (1 Pet. 1:12). May we all be as interested in Christ as the angels are.
- B. The angels must have been mystified when they saw Christ was, beaten, spat upon, and crucified. They must have wondered why He hadn’t called them to come to His rescue!

V. The ADVOCATING of the Gentiles (“...*preached unto the Gentiles*...”).

- A. It was a mystery to the Jews that one claiming to be the Jewish Messiah would be preached to Gentiles “dog’s.”
- B. The Jews were once children—we were dogs. Theirs was the bread—ours were the crumbs. But now we are made fellow heirs with the Jews in the household of God (Eph. 2:19).
- C. Christ commissioned us to preach the Gospel around the world! He has been “*preached unto the Gentiles*” for the past 2,000 years! That is what we are here to do!

VI. His ACCEPTANCE by the world (“...*believed on in the world*...”).

- A. It was a mystery to the Jews that the Gentile world would actually believe on the One they rejected as their Messiah.

- B. The “*mystery of godliness*” is a person is saved by believing on Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10).
- “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*” (John 5:24).
- C. Have you believed on Him for salvation (not simply *about* Him)?

VII. His ASCENSION back to glory (“...received up into glory.”).

- ➡ In His incarnation, He brought God down to man—In His ascension He bares man up to God. If Jesus had not ascended, we would not ascend to heaven either.
- As miraculous as His incarnation is...
 - As certain as Him being justified by the Spirit...
 - As amazing as the angels seeing Him for the first time...
 - As vital as preaching Him to the Gentiles...
 - As essential as it is to believe on Him...
 - This is the climax of the mystery—His ascension exceeds them all in majesty, power, and glory. He has ascended “*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things UNDER HIS FEET*” (Eph. 1:20).
 - Christ is now seated at the Father’s right hand, ever interceding on my behalf!

SUMMATION: Two mysterious questions:

1. How could the crucifixion of a Jewish carpenter, named Jesus of Nazareth, put away the sins of the whole world?
2. How can His shed blood have anything to do with God forgiving a sinner like me, 2,000 years later?

➡ The answer to both is JESUS CHRIST IS GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

- Jesus Christ was God in eternity...
- He was God in creation...
- He was God wrestling with Jacob throughout the night...
- He was God in the fiery furnace...
- He was God in the womb of the virgin Mary...
- He was God lying in a manger...

- He was God in Nazareth working in a carpenter's shop...
- He was God at Jacob's well asking for a drink of water...
- He was God asleep on a pillow in a boat during a raging storm...
- He was God praying and sweating great drops of blood in the Garden
- He was God being beaten and spat upon...
- He was God tied to a whipping post and scourged.
- He was God nailed to a cross made from a tree He created...
- He was God in the resurrection...
- ...and He is God in heaven today and coming again soon!

Don't ask me to explain it! It's a great mystery. But, God said it, therefore, I believe it, and I'm saved because of it!

Your comments are welcomed. Please [CLICK HERE](#).