

OLD UNION MINISTERS SCHOOL
OLD UNION MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
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Lesson Title: *The Mystery of Godliness*

Lesson Text: 1st Timothy 3: 14-16

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, received up into glory.

To begin this lesson I would like to mention some things concerning the terms found in the title. However, before I do, I would like to say I will be bringing before you a **GREAT** subject today. I didn't say I will be great at presenting it, and I won't be, but the subject I will be talking about, Paul said is **GREAT!** The words mystery and godliness are strictly New Testament words, neither of them are found in the Old Testament. Furthermore, they both occur mostly in the writings of Paul. **Mystery** is found 22 times in the New Testament, and of those 22 times, 17 are in the Epistles of Paul. **Godliness** is found 15 times in the New Testament, and 11 of those are found in Paul's epistles, and those being strictly in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. An Old Testament word that I believe we can consider as equivalent to mystery is found several times in the Book of Daniel, and that word is "secret."

In defining this word mystery I would like to use what is written In Vines Expository Dictionary. In The New Testament it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word,) but that which being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed! Hence the terms especially associated with the subject are made known, manifested, revealed, preached, understand, dispensation. The definition given here may be illustrated by the following passage: *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:* (Colossians 1:26) Furthermore, Vine says that in 1st Timothy 3:16 "the mystery of godliness" is godliness as embodied in, and communicated through, the truths of the faith concerning Christ.

In 1st Timothy 3, we find that Paul had written to Timothy concerning the qualifications men must have to hold the office of pastor or deacon. And after writing such, he said, *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. Notice that immediately after describing the church as the pillar and ground of the truth,

he wrote; *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, received up into glory.*

(1.) **God was manifest in the flesh.** With the exception of one Old Testament verse, Ecclesiastes 3:18, manifest is another word we find predominantly used in New Testament writings, and again, mostly throughout Paul's epistles. God made manifest in the flesh, means made visible, made clear, or made known.

In The Gospel According To John, (Chapter 1:1), John wrote, In the beginning. The same three words we find recorded in Genesis 1:1, In the beginning. Moses said, In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. John said, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

How could the Word be with God, and at the same time be God? John went on to say, (vs. 14) *And the Word was made flesh, now Paul wrote, God was manifest in the flesh, John said, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

In John 14: 1-2, Jesus told the eleven; *Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you.* Now in verse's 6-7, Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

Verses 8-9, *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

John 10: 27-30, Jesus said: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

I and my Father are one. What did Jesus mean; I and my Father are one, one what? They are one God!

Jesus is God, his Father is God, but they are not two God's, there isn't two God's.

Ephesians 4: 4-6 says, *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

One of Isaiah's prophecies concerning Jesus was this: *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.*

Let's consider some other things Paul wrote concerning this. Colossians 1: 14-19, says the following things about Jesus: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

Paul spoke of Jesus as the image of the invisible God, and, that it pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fulness dwell.

In Colossians 2:9 he wrote: *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

When Paul wrote to Timothy and said: Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, do I need to offer any more scriptural evidence that such was accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ?

God was manifest in the flesh. In 1st John, there are 3 statements made as to why.

1st John 3:5- *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

1st John 3:8- *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

1st John 4:9- *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

(2.) - **Justified in the Spirit.** Vindicated.

Luke 2: 25-33. These verses speak of a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, to whom the Holy Spirit revealed that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came, being led of the Spirit, into the temple, at the time Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus there to do for him after the custom of the law, to present him to the Lord,

Simeon took the child in his arms, blessed God, and said, Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation. And Joseph and Mary marvelled at the things spoken about him.

In Luke 3: 21-22, it says, Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came down from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

In John 1: 32-33, we're told this: And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

His wisdom and understanding, with which, at the young age of 12, he sat in the temple and amazed those Jewish doctors with his questions and answers. (Luke 2:46)

Being able to overcome the strong temptations of the devil. (Matthew 4)

The voice once again that spoke out from heaven when he was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. (Matthew 17:1-5)

The power of the Holy Spirit that was poured out upon his church the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2)

3. Seen of Angels.

He was literally seen of angels. The angels saw God in the flesh.

Luke 2: 8-12: And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

In Matthew 4: 11, we're told that after Jesus had withstood the devil's temptations, *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

Luke 22: 39-43, And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into

temptation.

And he was withdrawn from them about a stones cast, and kneeled down and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

John 20: 11-12, But Mary stood without the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Acts 1: 9-11, And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

4. Preached unto the Gentiles.

Well, this sure is a good thing!! Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles. In Acts 26, as Paul relates his conversion before Agrippa, he said that the Lord spoke this to him:

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee:

Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Galatians 2:8- (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.

In Acts 13:46-47, when Paul was preaching in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia, the Jews spoke against the things Paul preached, contradicting him and blaspheming.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth.

Matthew 27: 50-51, Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.

5. Believed on in the world.

What Jesus did was certainly not in vain. He was believed on!

John 1: 11-12: He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

It was proclaimed that God Almighty came to earth in human form, walked among us as a man, and died for our sins. A great mystery indeed, yet people believed!

Philippians 2: 2-8: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Hebrews 2: 9-10: But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Acts 2: 41: Three thousand the day of Pentecost, and people continued to be saved daily.

Acts 4:4- Many heard the word and believed, about five thousand men.

Acts 5:14- Multitudes of men and women believed, and were added to the Lord.

6. Received up into glory.

*Not just that as the eleven watched, the clouds received him out of their sight, and he ascended back to heaven, but also that he is there now, seated at the right hand of God, being that one mediator between men and God, making intercession for us.

John 17: 4-5, his prayer was; I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Hebrews 1: 1-3: God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

Hebrews 10: 11-13: And every high priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.