

Reflections On The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

1 Timothy 3:16

1. **1TI 3:16** 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, received up into glory.
 - A. Paul is here setting forth the essence of Christian religion which sets it apart from all other religious systems or philosophies: God became man.
 - B. All false systems ultimately teach that man becomes God.
 - (1) Arminianism affirms that fallen man resolves to attain unto divinity.
 - (2) Humanistic evolution affirms a gradual upward perfection of man.
 - (3) Catholicism affirms that sacramental works perfects men upwardly to God-ness.
 - (4) Mormonism has historically affirmed, "As man is, God once was; as God is, so may man become."
 - (5) Affirmations of the creature attaining unto divinity are more in accord with the *mystery of iniquity*. **2TH 2:3-7**.
 - C. The *mystery of godliness* is that God became a man to redeem men and then returned to glory as the exalted God-man. **1TI 2:5-6 c/w HEB 9:11-12, 24; 12:24**.
 - D. This incontrovertible mystery is the great truth that the church is to uphold. **1TI 3:15**.
 - (1) It is not the church of the dead Jesus, a hero-worshipping cult like Islam.
 - (2) It is not the church of dead and dumb idols, as were the pagan "churches." **1CO 12:2 c/w ACT 19:37**.
 - (3) It is the *church of the living God*, Who suffered death as a man but rose again to ascend on high as the living God-man, Christ Jesus.
 - (4) It is a false church that would claim to be a church of the living God while denying the deity of Jesus Christ Who is the Living God.
 - (5) It is a foolish church of the living God that uses a "bible" which casts doubt on the virgin birth, sinless life, or bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (cardinal doctrinal points of the deity of Jesus Christ) or which alters verses that declare the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - E. This *mystery of godliness* contrasts the mysteries of the Gentiles which were devilish (**1CO 10:20**) and were more aptly described as the *mystery of UNgodliness*.
 - (1) The mystery religions of the Gentiles were shrouded in secrecy, darkness and esoteric duplicity, all of which well accorded with their immorality. **EPH 5:11-12**.
 - (2) The mystery of godliness does not need nor want darkness to cover its actual message or practice. **JOH 18:20; ACT 26:26; 2CO 1:13; 4:1-2 c/w MAT 5:14-16**.
 - a. godliness: The quality of being godly; devout observance of the laws of God; piety.
 - b. The mystery of godliness stands in contrast to the *form of godliness* (**2TI 3:5**) in that it is not a hypocritical show but a practical godliness. **TIT 2:11-12**.
2. mystery: A religious truth known only from divine revelation; usually a doctrine of the faith involving difficulties which human reason is incapable of solving.
3. The full revelation of the great plan of God that He Himself should become a man to redeem sinners from among all nations according to His own electing purpose and grace was reserved unto the days of Christ's apostles. **MAT 13:16-17; ROM 16:25; 1CO 2:7**.
 - A. It was especially revealed to Paul. **EPH 3:3-4, 8-9; COL 1:25-27**.
 - B. It is not that the mystery of God in saving men through Christ and His righteousness was in

no way revealed in the O.T., for it was (though obscured).

JOH 5:39; EPH 3:4-5; ROM 16:26; 3:21.

- (1) The problem was that the law eclipsed the light of the gospel so that all that could be seen was a shadow of Christ. **HEB 10:1.**
- (2) Further, the law covenant serves as a veil over men's hearts who cling to its "do and live" righteousness. **2CO 3:12-14 c/w ROM 10:4.**

4. Paul highlights six things which are cardinal points of the mystery of godliness.

A. *God was manifest in the flesh.*

- (1) Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word incarnate. **1JO 5:7; JOH 1:1-3, 14.**
- (2) This is a glorious affirmation of the deity of Christ.
- (3) The deity of Messiah was prophesied in the Old Testament. **PSA 110:1; ISA 7:14; 9:6; HOS 13:4, 14; MIC 5:2.**
- (4) ALL the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Christ. **COL 2:9-10.**
- (5) Christ is the EXPRESS (truly depicted, exactly resembling) image of God. **HEB 1:3.**
- (6) Jesus Christ equated Himself with Jehovah. **ISA 41:4; 43:13; 46:4; 48:12 c/w JOH 8:24; 13:19.**
- (7) Christ did not think it robbery to be equal with God. **PHIL 2:5-6.**
- (8) Worship of Jesus Christ is worship of Jehovah. **JOH 12:44-46; ACT 16:30-34; JOH 20:28.**
- (9) The word "God" is deleted from **1TI 3:16** in the RSV, NASB, NIV, ESV and the LB, and replaced with the pronoun "he" that has no clear antecedent.

B. He was *justified in the Spirit.*

- (1) justify: To show (a person or action) to be just or in the right; to prove or maintain the righteousness or innocence of; to vindicate.
- (2) The Spirit attested to Him being the Son of God and therefore God, very God. **MAT 3:16 c/w JOH 5:17-18.**
- (3) The Spirit attested to His sinlessness by raising Him from the dead. **ROM 8:11; 1PE 3:18.**
- (4) The Spirit attested to His assumption to David's throne in heaven, thus confirming Him as Messiah. **ACT 2:30-33.**
- (5) The Spirit continues to vindicate Christ through the Scriptures which declare Him, the events of history which confirm Him, and in the lives of those who love Him.

C. He was *seen of angels.*

- (1) Angels worshipped Him at birth. **HEB 1:6; LUK 2:15.**
- (2) Angels ministered unto Him in His temptation. **MAT 4:11.**
- (3) Angels ministered unto Him in His agony. **LUK 22:42-43.**
- (4) Angels witnessed Him ascending to heaven to appoint them as ministers to the saints. **ACT 1:10-11; HEB 1:13-14.**

D. He was *preached unto the Gentiles.*

- (1) The Galileans brushed against Him. **MAT 4:12-16.**
- (2) The Canaanite woman had heard of Him. **MAT 15:21-28.**
- (3) The Roman centurion had heard of Him. **MAT 8:5-10.**
- (4) Before long the Gentile world heard of Him. **COL 1:23.**
- (5) This is a notable aspect of the mystery of godliness: that the Gentiles should have the salvation of the Jews. **EPH 2:13-14.**

E. He was *believed on in the world.*

- (1) Sometimes in Scripture, the regions of the Gentiles are "the world."

ROM 11:12, 15.

- (2) He was by and large rejected by His own people. **JOH 1:11.**
- (3) The Gentiles, by contrast, were "white unto harvest" and received the gospel much more readily. **ACT 13:45-49; 28:28.**

F. He was *received up into glory*.

- (1) glory: A state of exaltation and splendour. In one's glory: in one's highest state of magnificence or prosperity."
- (2) By virtue of His triumph over death, Christ has been highly exalted. **ACT 2:33; PHIL 2:8-9.**
- (3) Contrary to C.I. Scofield's footnotes, Christ has entered His glory. **HEB 2:9; 1PE 1:21.**

5. Eternal salvation is based upon the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. **ISA 43:11 c/w TIT 1:3-4.**

A. Our redemption was purchased with the blood of God!

EPH 1:7; JOH 19:37 c/w ZEC 12:10; ACT 20:28.

B. The critical importance of **ZEC 12:10** is destroyed in the RSV by changing "look upon me whom they have pierced" to "look upon him whom they have pierced."

6. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Eternal God has a calming effect. **JOH 14:1-3.**

7. Great indeed is the mystery of godliness.

A. It is not without controversy in the sense that there has not been controversy about the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. It is without controversy in the sense that God provides a preponderance of evidence of gospel facts to an unbelieving world so that they are without excuse (**ROM 1:20**) and if ignorant, they are willingly ignorant (**2PE 3:5**).