

THE GREAT MYSTERY

“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 Tim 3:16 KJV)

These inspired words were written to Timothy to teach people how they ought to conduct themselves in the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). The crux of our behavior involves the identity of Jesus. What do you think of Jesus? Paul identifies Him as “God manifest in the flesh”.

Yes! This is indeed a great mystery. The very idea that the Sovereign of the universe, Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, would condescend to become a man literally staggers our imagination. Yet from the very beginning His identity was clear. Jesus is “Immanuel”, because He is “God with us”! (Matt. 1:23).

John explains that Jesus was the “Word” of God (Jn. 1:1). A “word”, of course, is a vehicle of communication. Words are meaningless if we do not understand them. Consequently for thousands of years people heard the word “God” without really understanding Who God was. Now, however, Jesus “explains” God (Jn. 1:18). Our invisible God chose to be “seen” in Christ.

One day a man came to Jesus and called Him “Good teacher” (Mk. 10:17). Jesus asked him why? He reminded him that “No one is good except God alone”. The answer to this question is foundational to the Christian faith. Yes! It is a great mystery. God was manifest in the flesh!

The Jews, in particular, had trouble with the Deity of Christ. When Pilate could find no fault in Him, they could. Based on their understanding of the Law His claim to Deity demanded that He die (Jn. 19:7). How sad! Remember! The Law was only a shadow (Heb. 10:1), but Jesus is the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12). Unfortunately many men love darkness more than light.

For those who believe the Bible there is no doubt that Jesus is God. Everything that the Bible attributes to God it also attributes to Jesus. Both are Creators, both are “I Am”, both are the “First and the Last”, both are “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords”, both never change, both are Judges, and both are worthy of worship. Yes! It is a great mystery, but God was manifest in the flesh!

To the Colossians Paul described Jesus as the “Image of the Invisible God” (Col. 1:15). The Greek word translated as “image” is “eikon” from which we get our English word “Icon”. This word has special meaning for those who use computers. Icons are little images on the screen that represent programs hidden inside of the computer. Clicking on a small icon can open up vast programs. In a similar way, clicking on Jesus can open up God.

Yes! This is indeed a great mystery. Paul was concerned that the Colossians might be led away from believing that Jesus is God by “hollow and deceptive philosophy”. Such doubt depended upon human tradition and the basic principles of the world. Paul assured them, however, that **“In Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col. 2:9)**. Obviously the finite mind cannot completely comprehend the Infinite. Everything the finite mind is capable of comprehending, however, is fully contained in Christ. Even though our present knowledge is partial, we have the wonderful promise that someday we will see God face to face and know Him fully even as we are fully known (1 Cor. 13:12).

Yes! There was a time when this great mystery “was not made known to men in other generations” (Eph. 3:5). “Now”, however, this “mystery which for ages past was kept hidden” has been made known by the church to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10). This “mystery” was not an “afterthought”, but was revealed to man according to God’s “eternal purpose” in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thomas saw the resurrected Christ and said: **“My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20:28)**. What do you say?