

## The Mystery of Godliness

by Charles E. Wigg

There are many mysteries spoken of in the New Testament of the Bible and one of the greatest of these must be the one in this verse.

In general, the mysteries spoken of in the Bible, are not such as cannot be understood by man, but they can only be understood by those who are born again. This is because at the moment the individual is born again that person receives an anointing from God, as they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This anointing enables the Christian believer to "know all things", however it takes time and spiritual growth to learn how to make use of the wondrous gift that God has given.

### **"GOD HAS BEEN MANIFESTED IN FLESH."**

First we must understand who Jesus Christ is. He is the Mighty, Eternal God. He had no beginning, but ever existed, before there was anything else. He is the self-existent ONE. He is the Creator of all, and John tells us, that "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made". John 1:3. Yet such a One as He became man, creature, He was and ever is, the CREATOR, yet He voluntarily took the form of His own creature. He never ceased to be what He was, because of what He became. He is both God, and man.

We may ask 'Why did He take such a drastic stoop?' The answer is, because He loved you and me. Such love surely surpasses knowledge! The reason that He took that step was because you and I were lost sinners. We could never earn God's forgiveness or salvation. Being a righteous and a holy God, He could never forego the claims of His holy law. That law demanded the death of the sinner. It was man that had sinned, and God's word states the "soul that sinneth it shall die", Ezek. 18:4 & 20. but to obtain salvation for man, the penalty must be paid by man. Only a sinless man could pay the penalty and all men were lost in sin. We are sinners by our very nature, as well as by practice. We have all received a sinful nature from Adam, through our earthly father. The only way for a sinless man to be born, was that he must have a sinless Father. So the virgin birth of Christ was an absolute necessity. If the Lord Jesus had an earthly father, He would have received a sinful nature from that father, and thus could never have been our Saviour.

However He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. There was no sexual activity involved, but He could rightly claim that God was His Father. He became man, so that He may bear the guilt of man's sin. He became man, so that He might die in man's place. Who can comprehend such love? It defies man's understanding! Even an Angel could not become our saviour, because angels are spirits, they do not die. The righteous sentence of the Holy God demanded the death of the sinner. But the One who created the angels, took a place a 'little lower' than them, so that He might die in my place, might become my substitute. Blessed be His holy name!

Who could ever hope to understand what it cost Him, to leave the environment of Deity, to 'empty himself' and take the form of man? This is a mystery beyond man's comprehension. We usually think of Him coming to Bethlehem, but he came months before. He chose to enshrine himself in that tiny developing human fetus growing in the womb of Mary. Oh! the wonder of it all! Thus God was manifested in flesh.

### **SEEN OF ANGELS.**

It would seem that when the angels looked on that tiny baby lying in the manger at Bethlehem, they saw their Creator for the first time. The One Creator, (ever delighting to do so), yet it seems that they beheld no form. He was the immortal invisible, only wise God. 1Tim. 1:17. The sight of that tiny helpless baby lying in the manger caused them to erupt in adoration. They thus fulfilled the prophecy quoted in Heb. 1:6. "Let all the angels of God worship Him". What a sight it was that met their view! A tiny helpless baby lying in a manger, in the stable at Bethlehem. What a cause for wonder and worship, that the Mighty Eternal God should thus voluntarily humble Himself. Their attitude was so different to that of fallen sinful men today. These use the occasion as an opportunity to indulge their selfishness and lust. To plunge deeper into the sin that He at last was to carry to the cross of Calvary.

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### **JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT.**

The word 'Justified' here means: to show, exhibit, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be as rendered by Strong's Concordance. It is quite different when applied to ourselves, because we are sinners, and have had a sinful history from which we needed to be justified. The Lord Jesus was sinless, had no sinful past history from which He needed to be justified. But it means that everything that the Lord Jesus did and said, was in the power of the Holy, and was endorsed by Him.

The Holy Spirit did this publicly at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, by visibly descending in a bodily form (as dove), and resting and abiding upon Him. He thereby showed His divine approval of all that the Lord Jesus had said and done in the preceding 30 years of his hidden life. In coming thus upon Him, he publicly anointed Him for the ministry He was about to commence. This public justifying of the Lord Jesus was the sign that was given to John the Baptist, to mark the Lord Jesus out as God's Son, and Servant.

Following this public identification by the Holy Spirit, and also by the Father speaking from heaven, every word and act of the Lord Jesus thereafter was 'justified' by, or in, the Spirit. It was by that blessed Spirit that Christ offered himself constantly to God, for the accomplishment of His will. Heb. 9:14. This offering of Himself was not only on the cross, but a daily thing, and all was by the Eternal (Holy) Spirit.

### **RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY.**

Here is a reference to the ascension of the Lord Jesus to heaven, as recorded in Luke 24:50-52, and Acts 1:9-12. It would seem that during the 40 days following His resurrection the Lord Jesus was indigenously to heaven. He came amongst His disciples, and went again to His father's presence. This is proved by what He said to Mary Magdalene, Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But on the evening of that day, He invited His disciples to touch and handle Him. Eight days later, He invited Thomas to see His hands and to put his finger into the wound that the nails had left, and to thrust his hand into His side. It is obvious from these statements that following his appearance to Mary Magdalene, He had ascended to His Father. However on that wonderful day of His public, (to His disciples), ascension to heaven, bodily, as MAN, He was received up in Glory. As man He had established His right to enter there, and He entered into the presence of God with glory, as our great forerunner.

Peter said of Him, "Whom the Heaven must receive", Acts 3:21. There was a wonderful welcome awaiting Him there. He was invited by the Father to sit at His right hand until his enemies were made his footstool. Psalm 110:1, Heb. 1:3, Phil. 2:9-11, Acts 2:32-33.

There is divine mystery in this. When He left the environment of Deity, He was not man, but when He returned to that environment, He returned as MAN. It is as man that He sits on the right hand of God. He has entered there as our great forerunner. His presence there as man, assures us of a place there also. He has gone to prepare a place for us, John 14:2-3. Soon He will come and take us to that place that He has gone to prepare. What a glorious hope!

### **PREACHED AMONGST THE GENTILES.**

This did not take place, until the advent of the Apostle Paul. Again there is the element of mystery in this. Previously, since Abraham, God had only communicated with the descendants of Abraham, (the Jews). But through the work of His grace, converting the rebel Saul of Tarsus, to become His most loyal and effective servant, that blessed Gospel, that had never been preached to the Old Testament people, for it had its beginning when it "At first began to be spoken by the Lord." Heb. 2:3.

It was Peter who was first used to preach Christ to the Gentiles, Acts. 10. Except that Phillip when sent to witness to the Ethiopian Eunuch, "Preached unto him Jesus", Acts 8:35. It was Paul however to whom the Lord gave the responsibility of Preaching Christ amongst the Gentiles He calls himself the "Apostle of the Gentiles", and he

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glorified his office. It is Paul who revealed this mystery and further developed it in Ephesians chapter 3. That is that Jews and Gentiles were fused together in the same body. They became joint partakers of the promises.

### **BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD.**

All glory be to God, for the truth of this statement! How I praise Him that we are amongst those who in our generation, though we are in different parts of the world, that have "believed on" Him! Across the world in every Nation, there are those who believe on Him. Together we form the most wonderful family on earth, the Family of God. This transcends every barrier, whether social, cultural, political, or national. We are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal. 3:28. What a glorious Saviour we have? Well may we praise, extol and worship Him!