



First Timothy

Mystery

A Song about Jesus

I Timothy 3:16

Lesson Thirteen

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum

First Timothy

A Study of the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to His Son in the Faith

Mystery

The first thing we need to understand is that mystery, as Paul uses it, is not about a puzzle to be solved, or that which calls a detective into action. Mystery as Paul uses it is something hidden that only God's Spirit can and will reveal. In the case of our lesson today, Paul discusses the "mystery of godliness." Read I Timothy 3:16.

Back when we were talking about praying in chapter two, verse two, Paul told Timothy that Christians should be "living quiet lives in all godliness." Paul wrote this letter to urge Timothy to argue against the false teaching. The truth about God leads to godliness. In I Timothy 2:5 Paul said that "there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." So, knowing about Jesus can lead us to godliness, according to Paul.

At the end of the third chapter, he says that there is no question. The mystery of God is a great (a mega) mystery, but, God has revealed as much of the mystery as we can understand. In Colossians Paul said, "...the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27) Paul chose to tell Timothy, and the church at Ephesus, what he understood about the mystery using poetry. Most likely, these are the words of a song sung in the churches at that time.

First, he says "He (Jesus) appeared in a body." At the very beginning of the song, the people sang about the humanity of Jesus. Jesus was really human. However, He lived life just like God would live it. If we look at Jesus, we will see what God created humans to be and to do. God showed us exactly how to live in the way we were intended to live. The Gospel of John put it this way, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." (John 1:14)

Second, he said that Jesus "was vindicated by the Spirit." This can be understood in at least two ways: It could mean, and surely does, that when Jesus rose from the dead by the power of God's Holy Spirit, that was testimony enough that He was the Son of God. Also, since Paul was talking about Christians living in godliness, it could mean that Jesus submitted Himself to God's Holy Spirit and was able to live a sinless life. That proved Him superior to all other humans. Based on what Paul said in Romans 8:11, it is likely that he meant at least both of these ideas and more.

Third, Jesus, "was seen by angels." He was worshipped by angels even before He came to earth. We also have indication from the Devil himself that if Jesus had fallen, the angels would have caught Him before He hurt Himself. (Matthew 4:6) Could it be that when Jesus miraculously "passed through the crowd who were going to kill Him" (Luke 4:30) that this was the work of angels? Angels were watching over Him. And, angels were present when Jesus rose from the dead. They were actually at the tomb and rolled away the stone. (Matthew 28:2)

Fourth, He "was preached among the nations." Now, we do know that at this time, the Christian message had not been preached to all nations. Paul had been to many nations with the Gospel by the time he wrote I Timothy. But, there were many nations to which he, nor any other Christian preacher, had gone. Paul was using a sort of summary word here, as he does in

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Colossians 1:23. What he is trying to help us see is that the Gospel is for everyone. Remember that many Jews felt that the Good News of the Messiah was for Jews only. But Paul is said that no one nation or people own the Gospel. It is for all nations and all people. Jesus is not the Messiah that some Jews thought would come only to the Jews and lead them to be world conquerors. Jesus saves anyone anywhere, everyone who comes to Him in faith.

Fifth, Paul says that He “was believed on in the world.” In this six word phrase, Paul described all the success of the Gospel. When the church began, right after Pentecost, there were only a few over one hundred committed believers. (Acts 1:15) From that group the Word went out, and in less than one hundred years, it had spread to almost the whole known world. It was the story of a man who gathered only a few followers while He was on earth, who battled in His entire ministry against the religious leaders, who was arrested and tried as a criminal and suffered capital punishment, dying on a cross between two other criminals. His disciples went out with a story of His resurrection from the grave and His ascension into Heaven. That is the story that was “believed on in the world.” (See I Corinthians 1:18-2:5)

Sixth, He “was taken up into glory.” Ephesians 4:10 says that Jesus ascended into Heaven so that from there He could be over all things. The song recorded here by Paul began with Jesus coming to earth, He “appeared in a body,” and it ends with Jesus going back to Heaven from which He came. After all the things He went through on earth, with the scars of the nails in His hands, He went back to Heaven to be with His Father, God.

What a song! It is really a summary of what we believe about Jesus in just a few lines. It is not nearly all we believe about Jesus, but it is a great way to remember the most important things.

Just think about it. The story may begin with Jesus having to limit Himself to being just like a human. But, think about how the story ends. It has a very happy ending. Paul said, in Philip-
pians 2:10, that because Jesus did what He did; someday, when His name is spoken , every
knee on earth will bow to Him. Jesus did everything God asked Him to do, and He did it perfectly. He deserves all our thanksgiving and praise.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Lesson Goal: To help students understand some tasks of God’s church.

Scripture Memory: “He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up into glory.” I Timothy 3:16



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Student Worksheet—Following Through

Mystery

>What is “mystery” as Paul uses it?

>What six things did Paul tell Timothy that he knew about the mystery - Jesus?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

>What did Paul say in Philippians 2:10?

For Memory: “He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up into glory.”

I Timothy 3:16

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.