

Lesson 6 – “The Marvelous Mystery”**1 Timothy 3:14-16**

*“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.
Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13*

In these last verses of Chapter 3, Paul tells Timothy that he has written the instructions of this letter to him in the event that he should not be able to come to Timothy as soon as he would have liked. He knew how important it was that Timothy have a complete understanding regarding proper conduct in the church. Timothy could then, in turn, properly train the leadership of the church in Ephesus. He also wanted to encourage Timothy; the church was growing and Paul knew the great responsibility that lay on the shoulders of such a young man as Timothy. As we'll see in Chapter 4 later on, Paul tells him, *“Let no one despise your youth ...”* He wanted Timothy to be confident in the instruction and Godly counsel he had received from Paul.

Vs. 14 begins with Paul referring to *“these things”*. The things he's talking about are the very specific Godly attributes that leaders should possess, as well as some traits that should not be present in the lives of leadership. Paul refers to the church here as the *“church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”* God is called the living God. Acts 17:28 says: *“... for in Him we live and move and have our being ...”* He is alive! Therefore, the church is the church of the living God. It is not a temple to a false god or a dead idol – it is the house of the living God! In Matthew's account of what happened on the morning Jesus rose from the dead when the women came to the tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus, they were met by two men in shining garments who said to them, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”* (Matthew 24:5) Unlike other religions, we serve a living God, a God Who did not remain in the tomb, but Who rose on the third day and is alive today – unlike any other god of any other religion. Jesus lives!

Paul further describes the church as *“the pillar and ground of the truth.”* The church is where we go to hear the truth of the word of God. It is founded on the truth of the bible and grounded in the doctrine of Jesus Christ. In the book of John, after the last supper, Jesus prayed to His heavenly father, and in John 17:17, he prays these words about his disciples: *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”* Jesus is making a statement here about the truth of God's word; about its validity. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ...”* As believers, we should stand by the inerrancy of the word of God.

The pillars of the church are the faithful ministers, elders, deacons and leaders who are devoted to upholding and defending the word of God as truth.

And then we come to this wonderful thing that Paul calls *“the mystery of godliness.”*

What is a mystery? The dictionary describes it as: something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain. In life, we are often confronted with mysteries and, as human beings, we are intrigued and fascinated with them. For instance, we may try to guess who the villain in a mystery

novel is, or how the mystery in a movie is going to be solved. However, when it comes to the mystery of godliness, there is no guesswork. For those of us who have had the “born again” experience, we know that the mystery of godliness is Christ. He is the mystery, Christianity is a mystery. There is much in scripture that may be difficult for us to understand or that we cannot explain. And yet, simply knowing that Christ is at the heart of this mystery, gives us insight into the miracle of how giving our lives to Him changes us. For some, they are subtle changes, and for others, the changes are more dramatic. Many who come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior are delivered from the bondage of alcoholism, drugs, fear, etc., whatever it is that has held them captive. The mystery is further explained by Paul in the following truths:

- 1) God was manifested in the flesh – In John 1:14 we read, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory ...”*
- 2) Justified in the Spirit – In Romans 4:25 Paul states of Jesus, *“... who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”* In other words, when Jesus was resurrected on the third day, it justified us before God because Jesus had become our living sacrifice.
- 3) Seen by angels – *“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”* (Hebrews 1:6) The angels worship him, and they minister to Him. In Matthew 4:11, after Jesus had been unsuccessfully tempted by Satan and he flees, it says, *“... and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”*
- 4) Preached unto the Gentiles – Read Acts 10:44-48. Salvation was made available to ALL, not just Jews.
- 5) Believed on in the world – Through the preaching of evangelists like Paul and his followers, and the work of God’s missionaries throughout the world, about a third of the earth’s population are Christians today; in other words, over 2 billion people. Jesus said in the great commission, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...”* (Matthew 28:19)
- 6) He was received up in glory – This is what is written in Acts 1:9-11 about the ascension of Jesus: *“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, 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, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”*
(Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

Godliness is a mystery, from the conception of Jesus, all the way to His ascension. It is a mystery to those who walk in darkness. The darkness will not allow them to see. To them, it might seem complex, but the message of the gospel is also simple: Jesus was born into the world, walked among us, taught and performed miracles, took our sins upon Himself, was crucified, rose on the third day, and is our great intercessor in heaven Who will, one day soon, return for us ... His church!

“To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, all things come in parables ...” Mark 4:11

