

The Mystery

By

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Introduction

It is of necessity that we first explain the Biblical interpretation of the meaning of the word “mystery.” It is found nowhere in the Old Testament and used but twenty-two times in the New Testament, with our English equivalent being a direct transliteration from the Greek word μυστηριον (moostareon) which has the meaning of a something that had been too profound for human ingenuity and was now being made known.

Jesus Christ used the term in explaining the meanings of the parables unto His disciples, stating, ...*Unto you it is given to know the **mystery** of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables* (Mark 4:11). Hence, a mystery is something that is for a select few to be able to discern.

The term *mystery of godliness*, as we shall see in the context of the Scriptures, is that manifestation of God in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and God the Son. It is that justification of all purity, through Christ’s dependence upon the Holy Spirit for the independent exercise of His Godhead while in the flesh. It is the ministry of the angelic realm unto Him in strengthening Him throughout His earthly ministry for the work to which the Heavenly Father had appointed Him. And perhaps the greatest of the mystery is that the Jewish Messiah should come into the world to be preached unto the “ethnic” populace of Gentiles, those considered by the Jews to be outside the covenant of God according to the Old Testament laws; yet believed on and appropriated as even their Messiah, their Christ, their Savior and believed on in the world.

Yet the greatest of all concerning the manifestation of the Son of God is that which is yet to come. My friend, He will return to receive His own possession, both earthly kingdom and those saints who have been received by Him into eternal glory. Glorious will be that day when those who have received Him as their Lord and Savior will see Him face to face, to forever be in His presence.

One might venture to ask the question, “Why is it necessary for us to understand the *mystery of godliness*? If the Scriptures themselves cannot validate its own claims to being the Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the Word, sent by God, then we have no valid claims to accept His own assertion to Deity. This is the very thing that the cults seek to do; to substantiate their claim that Jesus was no more than a man, howbeit a “good” man. He would have been either the greatest deceiver on the face of the earth, the greatest liar, the greatest fool or a combination of all three. And He was none of these. As we shall see, He is all that He ever claimed to be and that is, God in the flesh, proven righteous and just by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ministered unto by angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world as God, the Savior of the world and received up into glory to be forever in the presence of the Heavenly Father, waiting for the day of the

redemption of the saints of God. And His own affirmation, to be that which the Word claims, is all that we need to declare that He is indeed very God.

After having hearing these claims to Deity, you will either have to call Him a liar and take your rightful place, as stated in the Scriptures, as an antichrist, or you will have to submit yourself unto Him, bowing before Him in your heart and receive Him as your own personal Lord and Savior. There is no middle ground. You have the choice to either believe in Him or reject His claims as God, thereby bringing His condemnation upon yourself for denying the only true God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust through reading this, you shall see your need to submit yourself unto Him as Lord of your heart and life, humbly placing yourself under His total control, to the honor and glory of His precious name. May God open your eyes to the truth of God's Word, the Word Himself, Jesus Christ the Savior.

Jerry W Jones PhD
Psalm 68:11

1

Manifest In The Flesh

*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 (I Timothy 3:16).*

The question we must first ask ourselves is this. “Is Jesus all that He claims to be? Does the Bible prove beyond any shadow of doubt that Jesus is indeed God?” And having asked this very question, we must go to the claims of the Bible to see whether indeed it does prove that Jesus was God in the flesh. And if we can see clearly that God did come into the world as man in the flesh, it becomes necessary for us to then ask the question, “Why?”

There are several verses in the Scriptures that show us that Jesus is indeed God who came in the flesh. We need but turn to the first chapter of the Gospel of John to read the disciple’s declaration of all who Jesus is and was.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

One of the most beautiful verses of the Scriptures that declare the Deity of Christ has unfortunately been used the wrong way in affirming who Jesus was. In the same chapter, verse eighteen, the Latin Vulgate, in speaking of Jesus as being the *only begotten Son* reads it, *only begotten god*. In so doing, it makes him a man who became God, instead of God who became man. If only the cults would read and understand what God says about Himself, they would have no reason to doubt just who Jesus is. But as the Scriptures have declared, those who refuse to believe in the name of the Son of God have brought just condemnation upon themselves, declaring that they are indeed antichrists.

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (II John 2:7).

My friend, to come unto God in faith, you must believe that Jesus is God (Hebrews 11:6) and that it is He who rewards those who diligently seek Him, and that such reward is the gift of eternal life, through the name of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Saul the persecutor, who became Paul the Apostle, thought within himself that he ought to cast judgment on such that would declare that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and through his conversion, he was later to declare the very thing he once condemned. In writing to the saints at Rome, he was to declare the very Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:1-4).

Later in the same epistle, when writing concerning the position of the nation of Israel, Paul stated the privilege that had been given to Israel, concerning their adoption, glory, covenants, law, services and promises, then to declare yet again the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Romans 9:5).

There can be no doubt but that Jesus is God, and that as God, He came into the world in the likeness of a mortal man, yet the immortal, eternal Son of God, and God the Son. Again in Romans, Paul was to affirm the reason for God condescending to earth, to take upon Himself the form of man. All through the Old Testament, we had seen what the law could not do, and that is to bring about a peace with God through the thousands of sacrifices and peace offerings presented in the tabernacle and later the temple. All the law could do was show man just how sinful he was (Romans 3:20; 7:7). Because of the weakness of the law, there had to be another way for man to approach a holy God, without having to stand in His presence as a sinner. And that was provided in God coming into the world, in the form of flesh, thereby being perfect, able to condemn sin in the flesh.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4).

Why then was it necessary for God to come into the world in the flesh? It was because we were unable to approach unto the throne of grace in our sinful state. All the animals that were slaughtered, from that which God took and slew to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, until the final Passover, where Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant through His blood, none of those that preceded were able to take away our sins. They could but “atone,” or offer a temporary covering of our wickedness. But when

Jesus, the Son of God came into the world, because He was sinless, He could fulfill all the righteousness demanded of the law, to the very jot and tittle of each letter, to *take away* our sins, once for all.

This was recognized by John the Baptist, when seeing Jesus approaching at the Jordan River. John declared to those around him:

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The Old Testament “kaphar,” or atonement, could only bring about a temporary annulment of the punishment for the sins of the nation of Israel and those proselytes to the Jewish faith. But in Jesus, we have no temporary “covering,” but a complete satisfaction of the wrath of God, as seen in the use of the word ἵλασμος or propitiation, which means an expiation or amendment for wrong doing. It was as though God Himself seeing the suffering and agony that was placed upon His own Son, turned His back on Jesus in disgust over our sins, allowing all the weight and blame for the sins of mankind to be carried to the cross of Calvary, hence Jesus being made sin.

That is why our Savior, hanging in naked shame to the disgust of the world, could cry out, *It is finished* (John 19:30), thereby decreeing, “All has been perfected.” There was no more that needed to be done to bridge the gap between a holy and righteous God and sinful man. Jesus was the satisfaction, that propitiation needed to give us the boldness to come into the very presence of God (Hebrews 10:19), knowing that He and He alone had become the mediator between God and man, which Paul so stated unto young preacher Timothy when speaking again of the one pure sacrifice.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2:5).

Therefore, seeing all that God has done in bringing His only begotten Son into the world, what should be the approach that we should take unto such a holy and righteous Savior? The Apostle Peter gives us a vivid description of our responsibility concerning all that has been accomplished for you and me.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God (I Peter 4:1-2).

It is unfortunate that Pope John Paul II, after the attempted assassination on his life, chose to use these verses to place upon himself “infallibility,” because these verses do not speak of man being made to cease from sin, but that which God accomplished in Jesus Christ, ceasing to be in the presence of sin. Christ no longer lives in mortal flesh in the presence of the world and the lusts of men, but is now, in the body of immortal flesh, in the very presence of the Heavenly Father. He has given us an example by which to live.

In writing to the Christians, Paul was also to give us the example of the mind that we are to have in respect to that which God has provided in Jesus Christ.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

My friend, one day, every creature that has ever existed will bow before the Lord Jesus Christ and proclaim He is Lord of all. Think of that, even Satan and his evil cohorts will have to bow and acknowledge that they were created beings and that the God of the universe is indeed Lord. Do you think that mere man will do any less? You and I will either bow in the presence of the Lord, either at the Judgment Seat of Christ as born again Christians, or at the Great White Throne Judgment, as rebellious and lost sinners. That choice is up to you.

Justified In The Spirit

*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 (I Timothy 3:16).*

We can read throughout the New Testament concerning how we, as sinful man, have been made justified by the blood of Christ, through faith in His name, and by the grace extended to us through Jesus' resurrection. No doubt you have heard, as I also have, how someone would say that the meaning of "justify" is "Just as if I had never sinned." In a certain way that is true, for in the presence of God, when He looks upon you or me, He sees not our sin, but the righteousness of Christ, through the blood that was sacrificed on Calvary for our sins.

That is why we can approach a holy God and boldly approach the Throne of Grace, because we have been made a kingdom of priests unto God, having forever had our sins washed away by the sinless, spotless blood of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But just how is our Savior *justified in the Spirit*? If He was sinless, why should it be necessary for Him to be justified? He was never a sinner. And when He took our sins upon Himself, He did not **become** a sinner. He **became sin**, taking upon Himself the guilt of the world.

Was it necessary for our Savior to prove Himself sinless? In a sense, that is what He did in His earthly ministry. Where man could only "observe" the law, He and He alone was able to perfect it, living the example that declared to the world that He was able to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:21).

Jesus Christ laid claim to His sinless perfection time and again. When the religious rulers of His day had brought accusations against Him, He would refute their claims that He was possessed with the devil or that He was a drunkard or a liar.

On one specific occasion, they derided Him as being an illegitimate son of a woman, being born out of wedlock (John 8:41). He in turn called them murderers and liars, and the children of the father of all lies, Satan himself. When they accused Him of being a Samaritan, someone born half Jew and half Gentile, He said:

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a

devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me (John 8:46-48).

Then to show His eternal position of Deity, He spoke to them concerning the joy that Abraham had in being declared the plan of salvation, through the revelation of God in the stars of the heavens. Now the Jews really thought they had Him. Here was Abraham, born thousands of years before their present time, and here was a man who claimed to have seen the father of the Jews. *Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you. Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:57-58).*

Did the Jews understand what Jesus was claiming? About three thousand years in the past, another had laid the same claim, in speaking to Moses out of the burning bush. The Jehovah God of Israel, in answer to the question of Moses as to His name, stated, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you (Exodus 3:14). There was no doubt in the minds of the Jews who confronting Jesus, as to what He was claiming. So boldly He stated *I AM*, the eternal, everlasting God, declared by Micah of the Old Testament.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

No one else could ever have made so bold a statement, except for He who laid claim to being God, sent into the world to take upon Himself the sin of the world, being Himself without sin.

It is the Holy Spirit who witnesses to us of the sinless perfection of the Lamb of God, who was sent into the world to be the eternal, final sacrifice so needed to satisfy the wrath of a just and holy God.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called

might receive the promise of eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:11-15).

Jesus paid the price, once for all, for all sinners and for all time. There needs to be nothing more that is required to bring us into the presence of the Heavenly Father. There remains no more necessity for the daily, monthly and yearly sacrifices of the Old Testament.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:24-28).

Jesus paid it all.
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow.

Hallelujah! We have been justified by His death, blood, grace and resurrection, through repentance and faith in His name.

When the Passover lamb of the Old Testament was being prepared for the yearly sacrifice, it was required that it be spotless and was to be set aside unto the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month Abib (now the month of Nisan, which is comparable to our present day calendar month of April). The lamb was to be set aside to prove its worthiness to be used for the sacrifice. Any spot or blemish would have rendered the lamb unfit for sacrifice.

And the perfect Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was declared to be spotless by the Heavenly Father and the Spirit of God, before His forty days of temptation in the wilderness.

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were

opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:13-17).

God Himself proclaimed the sinless perfection of His Son, in declaring Him to be pleasing in His sight. And since there is nothing pleasant by the presence of sin, we see that Jesus fulfilled the requirements of God, in order to fulfill all righteousness.

The Spirit of God, descending upon Him in the form of a dove, equally attested to the perfection of our Savior in fulfilling the demands of the law. It was also the Spirit of God, which declared Jesus as God through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Paul, again writing to the Romans, stated:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:1-7).

The Spirit of God was that power of God that brought about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Again in Romans, we read:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4).

Again, in speaking concerning the Holy Spirit which resurrected our Savior from the dead, the Apostle Paul writes:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:9-11).

We fail to realize just how intimate was the relationship between the trinity of God and how the three are indeed one. So often we have heard that God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet also hear that the Son is not the Father nor the Spirit, neither is the Father or Spirit the Son, etc. Yet just how close was this intimate relationship? Jesus Himself had stated time and again, *I and my Father are one* (John 10:30), and in His great intercessory prayer of John chapter seventeen, He stated:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:21-23).

There was nothing concerning sin that could condemn our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He was able to perform all that the Father demanded to fulfill the righteousness demanded of the law. In that we were unable to approach to a holy God, Jesus Christ, being justified in the Spirit, bridged the gap that separated sinful man from a righteous God. As Paul stated in his epistle to young Timothy, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus is that *daysman* that Bildad of the book of Job desired to lay his hand upon us both (Job 9:33). Jesus has become the Judge to stand in the presence of the Father and be our Heavenly paraklete, our advocate or lawyer, to plead our innocence through His blood. Whenever the accuser of the brethren, Satan, approaches God, to attempt and bring us into condemnation, our only advocate, Jesus Christ, pleads our case before the Father, pointing to the blood of sprinkling, *that speaketh better things than that of Abel* (Hebrews 12:24). “Yes Father, I know that Jerry has sinned again, but if you will look upon him, you will see that he has been washed clean by my own blood that I shed on Calvary for his sins.” And God turns and declares, “Not guilty.” Because there was no guilt in our Savior, He was able to present His precious sinless blood to wash away, forever, our guilt. No other could do that. No Allah, no Pope, no Mary, no angels, nothing could plead my innocence in the presence of God but He who was eternally God Himself, manifest in the flesh and *justified in the Spirit*.

Knowing that Jesus Christ was sinless perfection in the form of a man, then the question will arrive as to how He could be without sin. We know from reading Romans 5:12, *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*. Then if death passed upon all men, through Adam, how could Jesus come into the world in the form of man, yet be without sin? It is because He did not take upon Himself the likeness of Adam (Genesis 5:3), but after the image of the Heavenly Father. In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul stated:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things

are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:17-19).

To be born sinless, it then became necessary for Jesus Christ to “bypass” the sin tainted blood of man, since it is the blood of man that is passed on to his progenitors. Then of necessity, He had to have blood that was without sin. To perform this, Jesus was not born of man, but of God.

When the Heavenly Father was preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah, He saw it was necessary for the Son to be without sin, therefore provided Himself as Savior through the miracle of the sinless birth.

When the angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce that she would be the vessel to bring the Messiah into the world, this even astounded her, since she had never had any intimate relationship with any man. She would even question the angel about this. *Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* (Luke 1:34).

What was a young Jewish virgin to do? It was a crime punished by stoning to commit fornication, and she questioned the truth of the announcement given to her, that through her the Messiah would be born; however without the interjection of any human being.

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

It was God Himself, through the energizing power of the Holy Spirit, who impregnated this young miss, bringing about the conception and eventual birth of the child Jesus, who would be the Messiah or Christ.

A further distinction into all that God had done can be seen in the book of Hebrews:

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God (Hebrews 10:5-7).

So then it was not man’s blood that flowed through the veins of our Immanuel, but the blood of God Himself, thereby making our salvation secure, in that Jesus Christ was able to fulfill the stringent demands of the law of God, fulfilling it all to the letter, becoming sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of Christ.

How marvelous to think of that which God provided, so that thorough His sinless blood of the perfect Lamb of God, we might attain unto the *mystery of Godliness*.

3

Seen Of Angels

*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 (I Timothy 3:16).*

Not much is known, nor read about in the Scriptures concerning the ministry of the angels when Christ was in the world. There are a few references as to how the angels are ministers unto the saints, which we shall see, and even fewer concerning their ministry unto the Savior.

A brief glimpse of their servitude unto Jesus can be seen, after His temptation in the wilderness by Satan. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read:

Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him (Matthew 4:11).

In the Gospel of Mark, a more brief account of the wilderness temptation is covered. However, there is still the mention of the ministry of angels. There we can read:

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him (Mark 1:12-13).

Perhaps the most touching of Scripture passages concerning the ministry of angels could be found in the account given by the Gospel of Luke. It was on the night of Jesus' betrayal by Judas, when Jesus had just previously instituted the New Covenant or Lord's Supper, taking the remaining eleven disciples with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane. There, while earnestly praying, we read:

And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them

about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him (Luke 22:39-43).

So we can see that the angels were concerned with whatever was transpiring during the ministry of God in the form of the Son of God on earth. They stood guard over the empty tomb after Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-7; John 20:17). They heralded the promise of the return of Christ to the disciples as they stood, watching as Christ ascended into Heaven in a cloud of glory (Acts 1:10-11).

Perhaps more can be known of the ministry of angels if we could have a deeper discernment of all that the disciples may have witnessed during the three and one-half years of Christ's tenure while declaring the Gospel to the world. John's Gospel gives us a glimpse of what was manifest during Christ's teaching unto the disciples. Jesus had just begun calling unto Him those whom he would choose as His disciples, and later ordained as apostles. Beginning in John, we read:

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (John 1:43-51).

Some scholars have surmised that before Philip came to meet Nathanael, Nathanael had been sitting under a fig tree, perhaps reading the episode concerning the flight of Jacob from the presence of his brother, and about the vision of the angels ascending and descending the ladder that came down from Heaven (Genesis 28:11-16).

And Jesus, in declaring His Omnipresence, told Nathanael, “Do you think it a great thing that I was able to see you leaning against a fig tree, reading the story of Jacob? You will see even greater things than this. I am that ladder so described, and you will see the angels of God ascending and descending upon me.” A careful understanding would lead one to believe that at times, Jesus allowed their eyes to be opened, as did Elisha to his servant (II Kings 6:13-17).

Even Satan recognized the responsibilities of the angels. While tempting Jesus in the wilderness, during the forty days of Christ’s fasting and testing, Satan attempted to use the Scripture (although misquoting by leaving out portions of the quote) to convince Jesus to sin, where we read,

And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone (Luke 4:9-11).

Angels continue their ministry for Jesus unto this very day, now more than just ministers to the physical and spiritual needs of Jesus, but as protectors over the children of God. We catch a glimpse of this in Matthew 8:10. During the ministry of Christ, there was a time when He was questioned concerning who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, and Jesus took a little child, sat him in the middle of the disciples and followers, then proceeded to give them a sermon on child-like faith. Then, seeking to help them understand that necessity to lay no hindrance in the path of a child who wished to come to Him, He concluded by saying,

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 18:10).

We read even further that angels not only see Jesus and behold the face of God the Father, but are also ministers to those **who will be saved**. A small glimpse of the angels’ responsibility is seen in Hebrews 1:13-14).

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

So we see the angels, beholding the Lord Jesus Christ, not only during His earthly ministry, but also today in the presence of God. And we see them being sent to behold all that we do; sent as our guides and protectors against the snares Satan would seek to put in our paths.

We see them as forever declaring the holiness of the Trinity (Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4:8). Knowing that they stand in our presence, it should make us fear when we seek to yield to the temptations that come into our life. Perhaps this is also that witness spoken of in Hebrews 12:1-2:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We have a mighty God in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. He was not only manifest in the flesh, and justified in the spirit, and even seen of angels, but *preached unto the Gentiles*, the “outsiders” so despised by the nation of Israel.

4.

Preached Unto The Gentiles

*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 (I Timothy 3:16).*

Perhaps the greatest error of the nation of Israel was their misunderstanding concerning the purpose for the Messiah coming into the world. From the beginning of the law, as declared to the Jews through Moses, they had been the repositories of the Covenant of God and though themselves an elite nation among all others, so much so that they considered all others as “heathens.”

But they had completely overlooked the prophecies of such men as Isaiah, Joel, Micah and Malachi, who proclaimed that it was the Gentiles who would trust in the Savior. To the Jews, Gentiles were outcasts, undeserving of the grace of God. But a perusal of the prophecies will show that God had intended for them to also be included in the covenant of grace that would be manifest in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Beginning in Isaiah, we catch another small foretaste of the kingdom that God was to declare unto the world:

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious (Isaiah 11:10).

And then again, towards the end of his prophecies, when speaking of Christ as the Servant of Jehovah, we read concerning the Gentiles turning to Him for salvation.

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the

people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house (Isaiah 42:1-7).

And then, in the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi declared that which was to be preached among the Gentiles:

For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts (Malachi 1:11).

So hated were the Gentiles that it was considered an abomination for a Jew to go into the home of one. When the Gospel by the mouth of Peter was preached unto the Gentile Cornelius (Acts chapter ten), Peter was compelled to defend himself for going unto this “heathen” and giving him the Gospel. In Acts 11:1-3, we read,

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

Having been “called on the carpet,” Peter *rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them (Acts 11:4)*. This so amazed the Jews that all they could do was stand in awe. *When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life (Acts 11:18).*

It was this mystery that the apostle Paul explained to the Christians at Ephesus. Here was a people who had also been considered estranged from the covenant of God, but according to the revelation given to Paul, had been made to understand that they too would be fellow heirs with God.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as

it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Ephesians 3:1-6).

The mystery concerning the preaching of the Gospel of Christ unto the Gentiles not only involved their knowledge of the Messiah, but even the indwelling of the Son of God in their hearts. Again, Paul expounds further concerning this mystery, when we read in the epistle to the Colossians.

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:24-27).

It was unto the Gentiles that Paul was compelled to preach the Gospel when it was rejected by the Jews. In Acts, Paul quotes Isaiah when speaking of Christ being the light sent unto the Gentiles.

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth (Acts 13:45-47).

And then, when Paul appeared before the council at Jerusalem, they contended with him concerning his proclamation of Jesus as their Messiah.

And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes

have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it (Acts 28:25-28).

It was the law itself that had brought confusion to the Jews, thinking that a man had to be justified or declared righteous through the keeping of the Old Covenant that was given to them on Mount Sinai. And it was this justification, through faith in Christ, not the law, that was declared by the Apostle Paul unto the Gentiles. Again in Romans, we read,

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith (Romans 3:21-30).

Therefore, first through the preaching of the Gospel by Peter, then to other Gentile nations by Paul, the *mystery of godliness* was made known also unto those who were considered outside the penalty imposed because of the law. And through the preaching of Christ unto the Gentiles, He was *believed on in the world*.

Believed On In The World

*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 (I Timothy 3:16).*

Perhaps the most beautiful word that can describe our salvation would be in the simple word *believe*. The word is used in the Gospel of John more than twice as much as in the other three Gospels combined and more than all the epistles and book of Acts combined. And the past tense, *believed*, is used by the apostle John also more than all the other books of the New Testament.

There are various Greek words in the New Testament that have been translated into the English word *believe*, with the majority of all the verses using the Greek word that comes from the root πιστος or the word πιστευω, which have the meaning of something to be relied upon; an open, joyful confidence, total convincing or conviction, entrusting in someone or something for your safety and protection. And of course, the best known verse of the New Testament would be, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*

There has been no one who has been excluded from salvation, which has been offered to a dying world through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. But it is rejection of Jesus Christ, in not believing and receiving his free gift that brings the condemnation and wrath of God upon sinful man. John 3:18 tells us, *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

John the Baptist was the first to declare Jesus to be the promised Messiah who was sent from God. And it is Jesus who was the Light of the World. Reading again from John 1:6-12,

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as

received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

The story is told of a Scottish preacher who went to visit a woman who could not be convinced about the security of her salvation in Jesus Christ. She had continual nagging doubts of whether God was able to keep her saved. After trying to show her from many Scriptures that declared her security in Christ, in frustration the preacher left her home and headed back to his own study. On his way, he had to cross a rickety old wooden bridge that looked as if it might collapse at any moment someone stepped on it. He gingerly was placing his steps one after another, when he heard the voice of a man behind him. Turning, he saw a man boldly approaching him, stating, “Pastor, aren’t you beholding the bridge?” He immediately realized what the fellow was stating, turned around and headed back to the house of the woman. Knocking on the door, when it opened, he asked, “Woman, aren’t you beholding the Savior?” She also realized what he was saying. She had been relying upon herself and not placing her total confidence in the safety that God only could give. And with that, a smile beamed across her face and she no more doubted her salvation. She relied upon God for her protection, “beholding” the salvation of her soul through that which Christ accomplished on the cross of Calvary, in shedding His precious blood to forever take away her sins.

The words believe and *faith* have the same Greek word. Again in the Scriptures, we read, *...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23). It is by faith we are justified before God (Romans 5:1). It is by faith we have access unto the throne of grace, standing secure in the salvation of God and *rejoicing in the glory of God* (Romans 5:2). Anything less than total faith in the Son of God brings displeasure from God. In Hebrews 11:6, we read, *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

No greater chapter in the Bible describes that faith of those who believe in God than that of Hebrews chapter eleven, called the “Hall of Faith.” But we have been given something far greater than all they ever received. Speaking of those from Adam until the time of the prophets, it states, *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect* (Hebrews 11:39-40).

There is a popular Christian chorus that states it better than any words that I could speak. It states, “Faith is just believing what God says He can do.” My friend, what God says, He will do. And through Jesus Christ, in believing in the name of Jesus Christ, we can have eternal life. There can be no greater that God could do for us than to make our salvation so simple as just believing.

But what was it in which the Old Testament saints believed? We get a glimpse of their faith in what Paul wrote to the Christians in Romans 4:1-5.

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God,

and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

The logical conclusion then is to case all our cares upon Him, for it is He who cares for us (I Peter 5:7). It is by our faith that we have been justified, obtaining peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). This believe, or faith, or hope (Greek - ἐλπίδα) gives us confidence to wait upon Him for deliverance from suffering, sin and separation, into everlasting life. Paul continues in Roans 8:24-25, speaking of that hope.

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

It is to believe within our hearts, not an intellectual assent to that which is historically declared. It is a change within the heart of man, not the “life” of man. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told to ask Jesus to come into our life. But throughout the Word of God, belief is from the heart of man. As has been quoted innumerable times, when a soul winner is witnessing to someone who is not saved, we read again in Romans 10:9-11,

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

My friend, have you believed on Him? Have you come to God, confessing to Him that you are a sinner and rightfully deserve the punishment of eternal damnation? Have you repented of your sins and then acknowledged with more than a head knowledge but with the very depths of your soul, that you realize Jesus Christ, the eternal God, came into this world to take away your sin punishment for you, simply because the Word of God states it? *But God commendeth [or demonstrated] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8).

And then, simply by faith, have you received this love gift of everlasting life? This is the culminating requirement so demanded by a just God for all that He has done was solely to bring you and I unto salvation through faith in the finished work of Calvary. That is the *mystery of godliness*, that because of God coming in the flesh, the world might believe on Him unto everlasting life.

Received Up Into Glory

*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** (I Timothy 3:16).*

My beloved friends, it is not the birth of Jesus Christ that we should celebrate. It is not even the perfect life that He lived while here on earth, nor the “good example” so many claim He left for us. It is not even the fact that He died for us, but the glory of it all is that He was raised from the dead and ascended into Heaven, evermore to be our intercessor before the Father.

The first attestation, in the Gospel of Mark, concerning the ascension of Jesus Christ, states, *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God* (Mark 16:19). Further corroboration to the ascension of Jesus Christ can be seen in the Gospel of Luke. *And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven* (Luke 24:50-51).

Perhaps the most recognized of Scripture concerning the ascension of Jesus Christ into glory can be seen in Luke’s account, in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read that Jesus was being questioned by the apostles concerning when the kingdom of God should be set up. Their knowledge up to that point had still been limited to the knowledge they received from the Old Testament prophets concerning the Messiah. The different aspects of the suffering and the reigning King had been clouded from even their view. And now they sought to find just when the kingdom would begin.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they

beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight (Acts 1:6-9).

The *power* (Gr. ἐξουσία) or authority that had been given to our Savior is also spoken of in the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:17-23).

The mystery of the gifts of ministry is also enclosed in the *mystery of godliness*, as can be seen further in Ephesians.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (Ephesians 4:7-10).

It was this message of the resurrection and ascension of Christ that was proclaimed by the Apostle Paul on the Day of Pentecost, when after being filled with the power of the Spirit of God, he boldly proclaimed the Gospel to the people.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the

Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:22-33)

My friend, Jesus Christ not only was crucified, buried and risen again from the dead, but ascended into the very presence of Almighty God, awaiting the day when *the best is yet to come* in His physical return for His saints, first at the rapture and then at the Second Coming, to culminate the *mystery of godliness*.

The Best Is Yet To Come

It is significant that everything God does, He does *decently and in order* (I Corinthians 14:40). So it is with that which has a numeric significance. In our text, we have listed the six mysteries, of that which God through Christ accomplished to bring about salvation for man. It is so noted that six is the number of man.

Then in speaking of perfection and rest, God has used the number seven. There were six days in God's creation of the heavens and the earth for the benefit of man, and on the seventh day, He rested. Someone has significantly stated that He hasn't rested since, because of the introduction of sin into the world. But seven is significant in meaning that which is complete.

So it is with the perfection of the *mystery of godliness*. The best is yet to come, that is, the culmination of what God has provided for our salvation, and then the imminent return of Jesus Christ to set up His eternal reign of glory.

There is of course two meaningful episodes in the history of mankind yet to unfold; first that of the return of Jesus Christ in the clouds of Heaven to receive up into glory His redeemed, and then His earthly return on the Mount of Olives, after the seven years of tribulation, to set up His millennial reign as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Christians at the time of the Apostle Paul had become confused about the elements of the state of eternal glory, and it was necessary for Paul to explain the order of events that would transpire. Those at Thessalonica had been confused concerning those who had already passed away, whether they too were saved and would enter into God's eternal glory. Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explained the order of events that would transpire.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise

first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

But what about those who would be alive at the time Jesus was to return? Paul was to explain that *mystery of godliness* concerning the truth that not all were to die.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (I Corinthians 15:51-53).

What a shock it must have been to the disciples, as they stood on the Mount of Olives and watched the Savior ascending into Heaven, being received out of their sight by a cloud of glory (Acts 1:9).

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:10-11).

My friend, **He will** return. One day soon, when you and I least expect it, we shall hear that triumphant shout of glory, the voice of the angel proclaiming His return for His saints, and the trump of God blaring in the glories of the Heavens, when Jesus shall shout, "Come forth." And all who have fallen asleep in Christ will come out of their graves, and we who are alive shall meet them as we ascend into the presence of the Bema Seat of Glory to be rewarded for our service to Him on earth. What a promise we have from God's own Word!

But the greatest promise of the Word of God concerning the return of Christ would be that given by Jesus Christ Himself. It was after the last Passover, when Jesus had instituted the New Testament's Lord's Supper, as we commonly call Communion, and He had foretold His betrayal at the hands of Judas. The disciples were saddened and did not understand all the implications of Jesus' claims that He would be betrayed, scourged, crucified and rise again from the dead. Then He was to give them these comforting words.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:1-6).

The return of Jesus Christ in the clouds to take those who have believed on Him for their salvation is the beginning of the culmination of what the Scriptures call “the times of the Gentiles,” at which time the tribulation period begins. And it is during the tribulation that the saints, who are in the presence of the Savior at the Judgment Seat of Christ, will receive their rewards as we read in II Corinthians 5:10. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Knowing therefore that we are to be judged according to our works, speaking in reference to those who are born again believers in Christ and not speaking in reference to works in order to be saved, but **because** we are saved, we read again in First Corinthians 3:11-15 concerning the degrees of rewards that will be given us at this Bema Seat.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

It is an awesome responsibility, yet privilege that our Savior has given unto us, until the day He returns to receive us into glory. My friend, if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then for you, **the best is yet to come.** The eternal glories of Heaven await you and will be your reward throughout the endless ages of eternity

But even in all this, there is still that which is a terror to others. After Christ comes to receive His own, it will then be eternally too late for those left behind who have rejected the Gospel of salvation. For them there will be nothing but the endurance of the tribulation and ultimately their condemnation before the Great White Throne of God.

Reflect on this thought, my friend. When someone dies, then there is no more time for them. Eternity has begun. What would this mean to the rich man and Lazarus, in the story Christ told in Luke chapter seventeen? We read that the rich man was concerned for the welfare of his lost brothers who were still living and begged for Abraham to send Lazarus back to tell them of the punishment that was awaiting them. Then Abraham told the rich man that his brothers had the Word of God and the prophets to which they could go and heed what they said.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:29-31).

Eternity, how be it in Hell, had just begun for the rich an. Time had begun to stand still. Do you realize that today, that same rich man could probably still be calling out for someone to go to his brothers to tell them the Gospel, even though he does not realize that they have long since died and gone onto their own eternal destiny? How would you like to die and spend eternity in Hell, begging for someone to go and give the Gospel to your loved ones, not knowing that your eternal cry is falling on deaf ears, because they too had passed into eternity? Oh the miseries that await those who reject the simple Gospel of salvation, that *mystery of godliness* that we have in the person of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

My friend, if you have not received this simple mystery of salvation, for you it is **not** too late. God is still standing at the doorway of your heart, waiting for you to let Him in. He will not force Himself upon you. He calls to you and says, *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20).*

The *mystery of godliness* is Christ being manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory, and is still there for you. The door of your heart has but one key and it must be opened from the inside, only by you. Jesus will not force His way in. And it is your heart you must open, that He might come and live therein, by faith (Ephesians 3:17).

If you have not received Him into your heart as your own personal Lord and Savior, will you do so today? The way is simple:

1. Admit that you are a sinner. Romans 3:23 says, *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* My friend, that includes you. Sin is missing the mark of perfection that is demanded of a just and holy God. Just one sin will send you to Hell, and you will have to admit that you have sinned many more times than just once. Think of this. If you only sinned one time per day in your lifetime, and lived until you were seventy, that is over twenty-five thousand sins, and it only takes one to send you to Hell.

2. Admit that you justly deserve Hell. Romans 6:23 says, *For the wages [penalty] of sin is death...* This does not just mean a physical death, but an eternal death and separation from the presence of God, because He cannot allow sin in His presence in

Heaven. So if you were to die in your sins, where would you go? You would go straight to Hell.

3. Admit that Jesus took your Hell for you. Romans 5:8 says, *But God commendeth [demonstrated] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Think of that, my friend. The God who rules and created the universe loves you, and came in the form of a man, humbling Himself in obedience unto the cross, to die for you (Philippians 2:5-11).

4. Simply repent, believe and receive Him into your heart as Lord and Savior. Romans 10:9-10 and 13 tells us, *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

In this present world, it is never too late. But my friend, it can't be too soon either. He patiently waits for you. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (II Peter 3:9).

He has extended His plan of salvation to all, not just to a choice few. Unfortunately, there will be but a select few who will be willing to take that free gift. I trust that you will see all that He has done for you, and you too will receive Him as your personal Lord and Savior, before it is eternally too late.

End