

## The Gift of Gifts – 1 Tim 3:16

**Introduction** – The celebration of the glory of the Incarnation is Christmas. And this celebration and declaration is the great mystery of godliness. Godliness has nothing to do with you, with looking into yourself. Godliness has to do with Christ and what He bestows. Merry Christmas.

**Our Text** (1 Tim 3:16) – Passages that summarize the message of the Bible are of great value to us. 1 Cor 15:3-8 is an oft-quoted gospel tract from Paul and often preached during the Easter season. Our passage today is wonderful when considering the Incarnation and all it accomplished. We all summarize biblical teaching and so we would do well to let the Scriptures teach us how to do so.

**The Great Mystery of Godliness** – “*Confessedly*,” or “*without controversy*,” Paul writes, “*great is the mystery of godliness*.” So great, it must be confessed in poetry (and the world has never stopped writing poetry about these truths).

**Manifested in the Flesh** – The foundation of godliness is the Incarnation of the Son of God. This is not a contradiction, but the most astounding miracle that can be imagined. Veiled in flesh the Godhead seen, hail the Incarnate Deity. Christ, fully God, fully man, two natures, one Person. These are mysteries and miracles, not contradictions. He is the Son of God and the Son of David. Godliness is the work of God in us – Immanuel.

**Justified in the Spirit** – In the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God (Rom 1:4). Simply put, Jesus was justified and His justification is the basis of ours (Rom 4:23-25). His justification was of the Spirit and for us. We are His body, of His flesh and bones, and so all that is Him in His righteousness is imputed to us (Eph 1:19-20). Godliness is the work of God in us – the power of the same Spirit in us.

**Seen by Angels** – When the angels announced the Incarnation, they sang (Luke 2:13-14). When Jesus ascended to heaven and His throne, the angels sang (Rev 5:11). Godliness is the work of God in us whereby we cannot help but sing with grace in our hearts (Col 3:16).

**Preached Among the Gentiles** – Two things are highlighted here. The spread of the kingdom comes through preaching to the ends of the earth (Rom 10:14-18) which is God’s chosen mouthpiece to the world. Second, the declaration of the Incarnation is to be a public declaration and it is supposed to be declared to those who would rather not hear, to those who think it doesn’t matter, to those who are lost in their sins. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, are never to be private matters of one’s personal religion. This is the great mystery of godliness as well.

**Believed on in the World** – Fundamentally, it is not what we believe (propositions) but upon Whom we believe (a Person). Objectively, these are just words, and the Table is simply a serving of bread and wine. But evangelical faith does not stare at the doctrines or the elements. Faith looks through these and finds the One who has given that faith – and the new life received. This is the great mystery of godliness.

**Received up in Glory** – Here as well is the great mystery of godliness. Jesus Christ, the One born in Bethlehem, was received up in glory and this glory is poured out, bestowed, upon His people (2 Cor 3:18). We see Him when we meet with Him, converse with Him, hear from Him. Here, with the family of God, is the great mystery of godliness.

**Conclusion** – Christ-mas is the Gift of gifts. The world can’t ruin Christmas even if Christmas ruins it; and you can’t ruin Christmas even if Christmas ruins you. These are hard words, but for those who have ears to hear, they produce soft hearts. You are not the center of the world; Jesus Christ is. Christmas is going to be celebrated forever. There is a pursuit of godliness that we are called to (1 Tim 2:2), but that is not fundamentally found by looking into ourselves. Godliness is not found by feeling godly any more than worship is accomplished by feeling worshipful. It is found by looking away to the One who gave us Christmas. It is there, in Him, that salvation and righteousness and godliness are found.

Finally, the pursuit of godliness is to set oneself on the path of victory, the path of our Victorious Savior. He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.