

Great is the Mystery of Godliness.

Sermon by Rev. Christmas Evans, Wales. Preached 90 years ago.

1 Tim. 3: 16.—"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."

Paul sent two Epistles to Timothy, the young pastor, to teach him how to conduct himself in the house of God, the church of God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

The church or congregation of God: those called by him through his Word and Spirit to be a house unto himself, wherein he may abide, wherein he is known and worshipped, wherein he is trusted, reverently feared and waited on.

The church is the foundation or support of the truth, just as the candlestick is the support of the candle, or, as the base-rock that supports the lighthouse, which casts its beams across the waves on a dark night, that the mariner may escape destruction among the breakers.

The church is also a pillar; not to bear weight, but a monumental pillar, like those of Pictou and the Earl of Anglesea in Wales. On these monuments there are inscriptions in a number of languages, declaring the heroic deeds of these great men in the behalf of their country. Every evangelical church is a memorial pillar having inscribed on it in indelible letters, that "God was manifest in the flesh," that he was born in Bethlehem in the land of Judea in the year 4004 of the age of the world; that he lived on the earth for the space of 33 years; that neither devil, sin, nor diseases could withstand him; that he died on the cross of Calvary; satisfied the demands of justice; magnified the law; cast out the prince of this world; redeemed lost man; reconciled two angry parties by his own precious blood; that he was buried; that he rose again the third day; and that, finally, he was received up into glory.

I. The important topic affirmed in the text. "God was manifest in the flesh." Paul here was exceedingly bold. It is as if he had said: "Let men say what they may about the mysteries of paganism in the idol temples of the world, great without controversy, great, exalted and true is the wonderful and incomparable mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." This doctrine brings God very near to man and man into the peace and enjoyment of God; and it fashions man again in the image of God.

1. The word "mystery" is sometimes employed in the Bible to signify the substance of the shadow, i. e., the type's antitype. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand," i. e., the substance of them, "are the angels of the seven churches." "I hold them, John," says the voice, "in my right hand, and they shall shine beautifully from the filament of my hand's palm, though the sharp nail pierced it on Calvary; but the print of the nail is fit place to hold the star of heaven."

2. The word mystery sometimes signifies things that are insignificant in appearance. Instance the eggs of the crocodile from which such a great monster is hatched. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." What mystery Paul doth work in thy generation? "It is the mystery of antichrist. The eggs have already been laid in the nest and the scarlet beast will soon come forth from them; yea, and the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, the martyrs of Jesus."

3. The word "mystery" sometimes signifies a great chain of a thousand links. Instance the great chains that support the Menai suspension bridge. At one time the materials in them did not seem as if it would ever be worked into these great chains. The iron was extracted from the ore, afterwards fashioned into links, then the links were joined together to form the chains, and by mighty mechanical power they were fastened to the rocks at each end. Now all sorts of conveyances from the king's coaches to the farmers' cart, pass over the bridge.

The blessed God formed the great scheme of redemption from the curse, from sin and from death; and some of the links of this exalted dispensation, forged in Eden, where it was manifested that the plan to bruise the head of the serpent had been conceived, have been since seen. However, they were simply in joined links, one here and one yonder in a disconnected state; but at the sounding of the trumpet of the seventh angel the mystery of God shall be fulfilled. At the coming in of the millenium, God will have joined all the chains formed from the scattered links of the ages to their places on the top of the highest rocks, with the great derrick of Christ's authority; for the prophet has declared: "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it."

4. But in the text I understand the word "mystery" to mean something strange, high and wonderful: "God was manifest in the flesh." The incarnation is the wonder-theme of angels, the life of man, and the terror of hell. God is the word made flesh. Everything characterizing Deity is also applied to Christ. The following

things have been set as a line of demarkation between the created and the uncreated. (1) Divine names belong to Deity. (2) Divine attributes are the prerogatives of Deity, such as, immortality, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience. (3) Divine deeds are wrought by Deity, such as, creating, supporting and redeeming the world. These things, says Paul, prove the Divinity of the Father; and why not the Divinity of the Son when they are attributed to him? He is Jehovah the Omnipotent. He is Alpha and Omega. Such was never spoken of the creature. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" and as if he had said: "I am as good a worker as my Father, for we are one."

5. In the incarnation of Christ, the foundation for the practical deliverance of the church from sin, from the bondage of Satan, and from the prison of the grave is laid. "For as much then as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." The divine plan of destroying Satan, and undoing his authority, was, to employ the same means that had raised him to his dominion. The power of his reign consisted in throwing over man the power of death. God's sentence upon Satan is this: "O thou enemy of man! thou shalt be destroyed; I will bruise thy head; but not with the great hammer of my eternal power. I will take the hammer that is in thine own hand. Yes, the iron hammer of the whole earth, with which thou didst bruise the heads of all the nations of the earth, until they were hurled from life's stage into the dark abyss! O devil, I will come against thee! O strong one, we will meet in the vicinity of Gethsemane and Calvary! Thou shalt know that my nail-pierced and mortal feet, shall be like burnished brass bruising thy head; that my mortal arm, though nailed to the tree, shall rule over thee; then, thou and all hell shall know the weight of that immortal arm of the God manifest in the flesh, and with the same arm will I open wide the door of hope to the sons of men."

II. The atonement paid him by two worlds. The heavenly world did three things in his behalf: "He was justified in the Spirit; seen of angels; received up into glory." And the Spirit descended to our earth, to preach him unto the gentiles, and to make him believed on in the world.

Christ was justified in the two following senses: I. He was justified the morning of the third day, and the Holy Spirit was the administrator of the justification. Christ was held for the people's debt: He stood in their place at the bar of justice and said: "Let these all go awry." He shed his blood in accord with the everlasting covenant; and with it the covenant was ratified, and made the salvation of the people a matter of immutable law. The morning of the third day the Father sent down the Spirit that our surety might be released, for the sake of all his seed, for whom he had been delivered up, and now was raised for justification through faith.

2. In his resurrection Christ was justified in view of all the accusations men charged him with by saying that he blasphemed when he forgave sin, and by saying that he claimed equality with the Father, when he declared that he and the Father were one. It was arranged (in heaven) for the third day to be the day of appeal to decide the question in dispute, i. e., whether he was the Son of God with power, or some vain deceiver. He often referred to the third day as the time when the question would be finally decided. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

It is also clear that his enemies had agreed to the test, so that they might be innocent of the blood of the just, and that they had only crucified a blasphemer; else why did they ask Pilate for soldiers to guard the sepulchre, if they had not in mind that the deceiver had said that he would rise again the third day? Without peradventure, if they had found his body in the tomb that day, they would have taken it up, and would have borne it through the streets of Jerusalem, where only few days previously he had been alive and was scourged, and they would have cried aloud with hellish triumph: "This is the watch. What is this terror in their faces?" To the Christ had forsaken the tomb that morning long before they had stirred from their couches. The soldiers, it would seem, had come into the city about 9 o'clock in the morning and went immediately to the leaders who had set them on their watch. The leaders, no doubt, knew them, when they saw them, and said: "This is the watch. What is this terror in their faces?" To the soldiers they probably said: "Come into the chamber. We adjure you to tell the truth." "There is no need of you adjuring us, for there is fear yet in our hearts." The leaders again said unto them: "Tell us, how was it at the tomb? Tell the truth. Did his disciples come and steal him away?" "They! no indeed! And if they had they would soon have been thrust through with our spears." "Well then, how was it?" "Behold, we were on our watch, and with the break of day, there was an earthquake, just as when he died on Calvary last Friday afternoon, and we fell on our faces a helpless mass. We lifted our eyes to see the tomb; and behold an angel clothed in white, with eyes like lightning, which in their

keenness could turn Caesar's most numerous war-clad hosts to flight; and those eyes compelled us to cease beholding. We again lifted up our eyes to have a second view of the tomb and behold him coming forth, passing the angel sitting on the stone, robed in such triumphant majesty, the likes of which the world never saw before. Yes, his fashion was like unto the Son of God." "And what became of the angel?" "O, there were immediately many of them, also arrayed in white; and among them there was one in the form of an exceeding pleasant young man. He entered the tomb and sat at the place where the head of Jesus lay; and in a moment there was another young man like him; and he sat at the place where the feet of Jesus were, as if (sitting) on the two ends of the mercy-seat." "Did not the angels tell you anything?" "No, they did not. But they made their eyes flashes of lightning." "Did you see any women?" "Yes they came to the tomb; but he had risen, and the tomb was wide open." "Did the angels converse with the women?" "Yes, as familiarly as if they belonged to the one family and had always known one another." "Do you remember some of the conversation?" "Yes, we do, such as: 'Fear not ye; but let the Pharisees and hell fear to-day. Ye seek Jesus. He rose some time ago to be forever free from pain, and has gone before you into Galilee.' One angel said also where we could hear him: 'Come, see the place where the Lord lay. He is not here, for he hath risen.' Another angel addressed woman called Mary, and said: 'Woman, why weepest thou, while thy Lord has indeed risen, and is so near to thee? Let his enemies weep to-day.' " "What! how say you—close that door! You tall soldier, approach. Was it not you that pierced his side?" "Yes, it was I; and this report is all true. I pray I may never again witness such a scene. Alas! it is all true. He must have been the Son of God."

Thus the Pharisees lost their case on the day of appeal. All hell was shamed. They gave the soldiers money to say that the disciples had stolen the body, while they slept. If they were asleep, how could they know in what manner he had left the tomb? They, however, suffered themselves to be suborned; and for money they lied; and to this hour, Satan's kingdom hangs upon that lie. May the infernal strand soon snap.

He was seen of angels, citizens of the world above. They acknowledged him as their Lord, although he was upon earth in the form of a servant. It was the angels that heralded his birth to the shepherds, and sang the song of his nativity above the fields of Bethlehem. They ministered to him in his conflict with the devil in the wilderness; and an angel supported his head in Gethsemane. At the beginning of the storm and the rains, and when a winter blast was approaching Calvary, the angels were called home for the reason that they could not remain at the cross in such a storm. "Of the people there was none with me." "His own arm brought him salvation." The storm lasted three days. The morning of the third day the rain ceased, the winter passed away. The tree of life bloomed forth from Joseph's new tomb; the birds warbled; the voice of the gospel truth was heard in the vicinity of the tomb; all ushering in an eternal summer; This was balmy enough weather in which angels in white raiment might descend to visit the tomb. These angels in white are symbols of the victory of Christ and that he had discarded the shroud in the tomb.

4. He was "received up into glory." He was received at the right hand of the Father. He was received up gloriously with a retinue of myriads of angelic chariots. He is there in the enjoyment of eternal glory.

5. He was "preached unto the gentiles," as well as unto the Jews. This was done in accordance with the command of the eternal God, who is highest authority. He was proclaimed as the Immanuel; God and man; perfect in his priestly offering; infallible in his prophetic teaching; and just and wise in his regal position. He was preached as a complete and only Saviour. "There is none other name given under heaven."

6. He was "believed on in the world." Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit many believed in the truth of the testimony concerning him. They trusted in his merits and in his faithfulness to save them from eternal death. They placed the care of their souls in his mighty hand. This kind of faith purifies the heart and overcomes the world. Amen.

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The Keynote of Victory.

BY P. S. HENSON, D. D.

In celebrating the victory over "that old serpent called the devil and Satan," John tells us that the "saints overcame him through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and because they loved not their lives unto the death." The blood, the word, the life: these three are a mighty trinity of forces by which all the Christian victories of the past have been won, and all future victories must be.

We hear a good deal in our times of altered conditions, and of the need of readjustment of means and methods in order to meet them. There are some things that have