



The Incarnation of Christ is A Great Mystery in Righteousness (Study Exegesis in Timothy 3:16)

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Abstract

Various perspectives on the doctrine of Christology are not only widespread, but also deeply ingrained in the fabric of theological discourse. These perspectives have influenced the faith of believers. This research explores the truth of Christology based on what the Bible says. The method used is explanation, which will reveal the original meaning of the verses and seek to understand their relevance to contemporary issues. Consequently, it can be understood that Christ is God who became man to carry out His redemptive work.

Article History:

Received: March 28, 2024

Accepted: June 16, 2024

Published: July 30, 2024

Keywords:

Christology

Biblical Christology

Teaching on Christ

Ephanerothe Phrases

INTRODUCTION

Various teachings about Christ have been discussed from the early centuries to the present. Different views of His teachings have been expressed by many theologians. Topics of debate have ranged from the incarnation to Christ's ascension. The doctrine of Christology has become a central issue in various discussions, both face-to-face and through social media. Some scholars argue that Christ is not God, not the Savior, and even that His position is inferior to the Father. In the early centuries after Christ, these views were hotly debated by the Church Fathers. Thus, it can be understood that the current discussions are not new. The resolution of the doctrine was addressed by the Church Fathers at that time.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses the method of exegesis. The purpose of exegesis is to discover the original meaning of a verse through various analyses and then to correlate it with contemporary

understanding by paying attention to the style of language used.¹ This approach ensures that the truth discovered through exegesis can be both understood and applied in the present, without limiting the interpretation to the text in which it is written. The method involves collecting various sources of literature, analyzing them, and grouping them according to their categories. These categorized groups are then focused on the main theme.

The purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive study of biblical Christological doctrine. It will enable believers to distinguish between doctrinal perspectives that are consistent with the Bible and those that are not. Understanding doctrines about Christ in accordance with biblical truth is essential because it will promote the maturity of faith among believers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1 Timothy 3:16 says, "And indeed the mystery of our worship is great: He who was revealed in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed in the world, and caught up in glory. This verse is part of 1 Timothy 3:14-16, which closes the chapter. Paul ends this chapter with specific instructions for Timothy. He anticipates a meeting soon to provide further guidance and support for his work and to strengthen the Christian faith in Ephesus. Therefore, Paul writes briefly to Timothy, advising him not to stay there too long and emphasizing the importance of proper conduct in the house of God as a preacher of the gospel and successor to the apostles.²

In this passage, Paul pauses to conclude some important instructions regarding the maintenance of pure doctrine, the conduct of public worship, and qualifications for ministry. He emphasizes the importance of these matters by outlining specific actions that must be taken. Although he hoped to be reunited with Timothy sooner than expected, he did not want to delay addressing these crucial issues until he returned to Ephesus. One piece of advice he gave concerned the need for good behavior among Christians in the house of God. The house of God is not just a lifeless temple, but a church composed of souls and bodies, which is the temple of the living God

¹ Victorious Wau, "Studi Eksegesis Amanat Agung Dalam Matius 28:19-20," *Teokrasti : Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 2, no. 2 (2022): 167–74.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI - Acts to Revelation* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2013).

(1 Corinthians 3:17).³ As the Church belongs to the living God, it must have a structure to protect it from division and disorder.

A. The piety of the believer's life is a great mystery

The essence of this passage is to affirm the value of a godly life for believers. The piety of believers is of great importance, as the phrase "And indeed, the mystery of our worship" is an indication. The phrase "And indeed," derived from the Greek "Καὶ ὁμολογουμένης" (kai homologoumenēs), signifies an undeniable, certain, and universally accepted truth. This expression can also be understood as "by the consent of all, acknowledged without controversy". It asserts an already established truth, emphasizing its indisputability and purpose of declaring an undeniable reality.

The word "mystery" is derived from the Greek "μυστήριον" (mystērion), which means "mystery" or "secret". The term has several connotations: (1) in the religious context of the Greco-Roman world, it refers to esoteric knowledge and rituals revealed only to the initiated, which is not used in the New Testament; (2) in the New Testament, it can mean (a) knowledge given through previously unknown divine revelation (Matthew 13: 11), (b) the deep understanding of God's salvation through the gospel of Christ (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:9), or (c) the hidden meaning behind a symbol or metaphor. According to Friberg, the use of this word suggests the existence of a mystery underlying the worship of believers. Here, "mystery" refers to something concealed or hidden.⁴ It is important to note that this meaning does not imply that the concept is inherently incomprehensible.

The word "worship" is derived from the Greek "εὐσεβείας" (eusebeias). Its meaning includes: (1) in general, a way of life characterized by respect for God and appreciation of religious beliefs and practices, such as godliness and devotion (1 Tim. 3:16); (2) behaviours that are faithfully directed toward God, such as godliness, sincerity, and devotion (1 Tim. 6:11); and (3) the plural form of righteous deeds and godly living (2 Pet. 3:11). Literally, "worship" means piety, reverence, or religion. In this context, however, the word refers to the overarching message of the gospel. It refers to the mysteries that have been hidden through the ages and are now being

³ Jay Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries, Blackwell Bible Commentaries* (Utopia Press, 2009).

⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

revealed (Col. 1:26), which are the essence of Christian doctrine.⁵ This term emphasizes the godly behaviour of believers and does not refer to the practice of religious rituals.

The phrase "Great is the mystery of God" refers specifically to the incarnation of Christ, His birth from a virgin, and the union of His divine and human natures. This mystery has been revealed and is believed even though it cannot be seen, fully comprehended, or understood by human reason. It is as profound as the doctrine of the Trinity, which describes three persons in one divine essence as the foundation of true piety.⁶ This truth can only be understood by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, not by human senses, imagination, or intellect. In the Old Testament, the Jews had only dim pictures and vague prophecies of future blessings. God's wisdom revealed in this mystery is hidden wisdom. Paul's purpose in proclaiming this mystery of godliness is to reveal the divine and human aspects of the Christian faith. On the divine side, the gospel is a revealed secret truth that was once hidden from human understanding and cannot be discovered by human reason or ability. On the human side, the gospel serves as a means of communication from God to human beings about truths they cannot discover for themselves. Although the term "mystery" was borrowed from paganism, it was sanctified and redefined by Christianity. In pagan belief, a mystery was something permanently hidden from most of humanity, known only to a few with exclusive privileges. In contrast, the Christian mystery, though once hidden, has now been revealed not only to the few, but to all (Romans 16:25).⁷

The Christian faith has been described as the "mystery of God." It illustrates not only God's gift of revealing His eternal plan to mankind, but also the human obligations that flow from that revelation (2 Timothy 2:7). The gospel teaches the principles of conduct within the household of God. It is a mystery of reverence and religious life. The gospel itself is holy, coming from the holy God, and demands that its recipients live in holiness as He is holy. The mystery of justice is centered in the life of the divine person, with the incarnation of that divine person as the key moment. With this statement, the apostle is addressing the Gnostics, who hold a different doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3), in which the manifestation of Christ in the flesh is a central theme, as John also emphasizes. This reflects a point of agreement between the two apostles, not only in their doctrine, but also in their use of language. The apostle's use of the word "mystery" underscores the

⁵ Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

⁶ John F Walvoord and Zuck Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament* (David C. Cook, 2010).

⁷ Walvoord and Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*.

significance of Christ's revelation. The phrase "He who was manifested in the flesh," refers to the historical appearance of the Divine Person, who existed before but was previously unknown to the world.

The mystery of righteousness is profound and momentous. It pertains to the Eternal Son and demands holiness from those who receive it. Christ's sinlessness is exemplary and far surpasses any standard of righteousness on earth or in eternity. Although human beings cannot achieve perfection, this does not justify accepting imperfection. The effects of sin cannot be completely undone.⁸ This understanding is consistent with Christian teaching in three ways: it has been hidden since ancient times, it remains hidden from much of the world, and it is still partially hidden even from God's own people. According to these principles, the Gospel can be said to be hidden from the Jews. Because of its profound meaning, it is called a mystery and can only be known through divine revelation. A mystery is something that is beyond the scope of human reason. The things of God are known only by the Spirit of God. Through the mysteries of the gospel, believers are led to fully appreciate the salvation that God has granted them. Salvation is a revelation of infinite wisdom.

B. The Majesty, Revealed to Man in 6 Major Elements

It is the manifestation of the Creator, the Sustainer, and the God of all things, to whom all worship should be directed. All power and glory is God's. God is one, but exists in three persons. This manifestation is not of the first person of the triune God or the Holy Spirit, but of God the Son. The only reason God the Son became human was for the salvation of mankind. A new nature-human rather than angelic-was necessary to accomplish the work of redemption. Human nature was needed to serve as a mediator and to fulfilled the covenant that mankind had broken. He took human form to become the second Adam. The first Adam fell into sin and lost the glory of God. The second Adam came to restore the relationship broken by sin and to defeat the serpent.⁹

The phrase "exalt this mystery" can be understood through six main truths. These six elements represent undeniable truths and can be categorized in several ways. First, they can be divided into two groups of three, either as separate series or by combining the first two series of each group and then connecting them with the third series. Second, each group can be viewed as

⁸ Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

⁹ Dibelius Martin and Conzelmann Hans, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1972), <https://ixtheo.de/Record/1603227911>.

beginning with earthly matters and ending with heavenly matters. Third, the six truths can be organized into three stanzas: the first stanza contrasts and combines flesh and spirit, the second contrasts angels and humans, and the third contrasts earth and heaven.¹⁰ This paper will not follow that particular categorization, but will explore each of the truths individually. These six truths highlight the beauty of the godly life of the believer and reveal the profound mystery of God's godliness.

Expressed in the form of a human

The phrase "He who was manifested in the flesh" involves variations in translation. The KJV and YLT translations use "He," while the NIV and NASB also use "He. In Greek, the BGT (Byzantine Greek Text) uses "ὅς" (hos), which is a singular masculine relative nominative pronoun meaning "who" or "what". This word functions as a relative pronoun rather than a nominative subject. The BZY (Byzantine New Testament) and STE (Stephanus) variants use "θεός" (Theos), which is the masculine singular nominative form of "θεός" (Theos), meaning "God. This indicates that in these translations "God" is the subject of the sentence.

The word "He," when translated "God," has generated considerable discussion among critics. The primary controversy revolves around whether the original Greek word was "Θεός" (Theos), meaning "God," or "ὅς" (hos), meaning "who," or "ὁ" (ho), meaning "what." This debate has generated considerable scholarly discussion. In the "Codex Alexandrinus" and in various commentaries on the methodology of New Testament manuscript transmission, the nature of this controversy is further illuminated. Greek manuscripts were originally written entirely in capital letters, without spaces or punctuation between words, and without accents. The lowercase letters used in later Greek manuscripts did not become common until the 9th or 10th century. Manuscripts often used abbreviations; for example, "πρ" might be used for "πατήρ" (pater, meaning "father") and "κς" for "κύριος" (kurios, meaning "lord"). The word "Θς" may be an abbreviation for "Θεός" (Theos, meaning "God"). Contrasting words were sometimes marked with faint or dotted lines. Therefore, if the original uncial (capital) letter "Θ" (short for "Θεός" - Theos) had its distinguishing line removed or obscured, it could be confused with "ὅς" (hos), meaning "who".¹¹

¹⁰ Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries.

¹¹ Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

The substitution of "Θεός" (Theos) for "ὄς" (hos), or "ὄς" (hos) for "Θεός" (Theos), can be explained by the fact that in ancient Greek manuscripts all letters were written in capitals. In these early texts, commonly used words were often abbreviated; for example, "πατήρ" (pater) was abbreviated to "πρ", "Θεός" (Theos) to "Θς", "κύριος" (kurios) to "κς", and "Ἰησοῦς" (Iēsous) to "ἰς". Today, such abbreviations cannot be used as evidence for or against the correct reading. However, it is plausible that the person who added the ink line believed with conviction that "ΘΣ" was derived from the original manuscript. They may have thought that the proper understanding of the gospel was the recognition of the mystery of the divine being manifested in the flesh.¹²

The Alexandrian Manuscript has been re-examined to determine the correct reading. It is generally accepted that the faint line above the word was added later, although it is possible that the line was almost erased and a later attempt was made to restore it. Whether the letter "Θ" was originally written with a line, making it "Θεός" (Theos), is now uncertain due to the considerable wear of the manuscript from frequent examination. The Vulgate and Syriac translations render it as "who" or "what". The Vulgate translation reads, "Great is the mystery of righteousness manifested in the flesh. The Syriac translates, "So great is the mystery of righteousness that he was made flesh. The most plausible reading of this verse is "Θεός" (Theos), meaning "God. This interpretation need not independently prove the doctrine it asserts, since the same truth is affirmed elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Matthew 1:23; John 1:14).¹³

The "Indonesian New Translation of the Old Version" uses the phrase "He who was manifested in the form of a man," which implies an active construction, that is, the subject does the action. In contrast, the "New ITB" translates it as "He who was manifested in the form of a man," suggesting a passive construction where the subject is acted upon. The old translation implies that "He-God" takes human form on His own initiative, while the new translation suggests that "He-God" takes human form through the action of another person within the Trinity. The YLT and KJV translate it as "God was manifested in the flesh," the NASB as "He who was revealed in the flesh," and the NIV as "He appeared in the flesh. The Greek variant BGT writes "ὄς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί" (hos efanerōthē en sarki, "who was revealed in the flesh"), while BYZ and STE write "θεός ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί" (theos efanerōthē en sarki, "God was revealed in the flesh"). The difference between BYZ and STE is in the capitalization of the initial letter of "Theos"; BYZ uses

¹² Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Ravenio Book, 2013).

¹³ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

a lowercase "θ" while STE uses a capital "Θ". Although these translations are generally clear and consistent, confusion arises from the different readings of the first clause, "Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί" (Theos efanerōthē en sarki, "God was revealed in the flesh"), where the term "Θεός" (Theos) is sometimes rendered in some versions and writings of the Church Fathers as "ὅς" (hos) or "ὁ" (ho), meaning "who" or "what". The phrase generally refers to the mystery: "Great is the mystery of the divinity that became man."¹⁴

God reveals Himself not essentially as God or in the abstract, but personally in the flesh. He is neither the first nor the third person, but the second person, the Word or Son of God (cf. 1 John 3:8). Before his incarnation, God the Son was distinct from the Father and the Spirit. In His divine nature, He is as invisible as the Father, but He is made tangible by taking on a physical human nature so that He can be seen, heard, and felt. The term "flesh" refers to the whole of human nature, which includes a real body and an intelligent soul. It emphasizes the weakness of the body and indicates that the body itself is not a person. It is a nature that Christ took on.¹⁵ Revealing Himself in the flesh also means appearing in human nature (Romans 1:3). God appears in human form or nature. This is declared to be a "great" truth. It has long been hidden from human view, but is now revealed as a fundamental gospel doctrine. In this verse, the expressions referring to God "as" revealed in the flesh—that is, Christ, Lord, and Savior—point to His appearance on earth. Thus, He is both true God and true man. Christianity is a mystery that cannot be discovered by reason or natural light, because it transcends human understanding without contradicting it. It is a mystery, not a philosophy or a speculation, but a divine truth designed to deepen piety. This mystery has been unfolded rather than closed and sealed, and it does not cease to be a mystery even though it has been partially revealed. It is the mystery of justice, that is, Christ revealed in the flesh.¹⁶ He is God in the flesh, the manifestation of God in the flesh. This shows that He is the eternal Word who became flesh and revealed Himself as such. When God chose to reveal Himself to mankind, He did so through the incarnation of His own Son: "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14).

¹⁴ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

¹⁵ Walvoord and Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*.

¹⁶ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI - Acts to Revelation*.

Justified in the Spirit

The phrase "justified in the Spirit" has led to various interpretations. Some scholars argue that "the Spirit" does not refer to the Holy Spirit, while others believe that it does. This debate is based on several arguments:

First, some argue that "the Spirit" here is not the Holy Spirit. They claim that the term "Spirit" is different from "flesh" in the previous verse. If "flesh" refers to the material aspect of Christ's nature, then "spirit" would refer to the immaterial aspect of His nature. In this view, His flesh represents His manifestation, while His Spirit is associated with His justification.¹⁷ The terms "flesh" and "spirit" are seen as opposites. The Spirit is not meant to represent the human soul, which is already included in the term "flesh," which includes all elements of humanity. Nor does the Spirit refer to the third person of the Trinity, since the contrast should be within the same person. In this interpretation, God reveals Himself in His flesh and is justified in His Spirit.¹⁸ According to this view, the human nature of Christ consists of three elements: body, soul, and spirit. The body is called "flesh" in the previous verse. The soul (ψυχή) is distinguished from the spirit (πνεῦμα) and is considered the center of affections and natural desires. It is the soul of Christ that was troubled by the anticipation of suffering, as seen in His words, "My soul is deeply grieved, even unto death" (Mt 26:38; Mk 14:34). The spirit, on the other hand, is considered the highest and deepest center of emotion and religious devotion in human nature. In His spirit, Christ was distressed by human wickedness and angered by hypocrisy. He was justified in His speech and judgments (Rom. 3:4; Ps. 51:4). Although He was a perfect man with a weak and suffering body, He was still "justified in the Spirit."¹⁹

Second, the "Spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit. Christ is vindicated in the Spirit, as evidenced by the miracles performed by the apostles. These miracles were performed in and through the name of Jesus, demonstrating that Christ is the mighty Son of God, despite the accusations and slander of those who crucified Him as a deceiver. Miracles performed by the power of God serve as proof of His holiness. If Christ had not lived according to His confession, God would not have provided such a powerful testimony of His Messiahship.²⁰ "Justified in the Spirit" refers to the Person who

¹⁷ Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries, Blackwell Bible Commentaries*.

¹⁸ Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

¹⁹ Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries, Blackwell Bible Commentaries*.

²⁰ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

became flesh - the Savior who is both God and man. In this context, the term "Spirit" clearly refers to the Holy Spirit. This is supported by various translations: "justified in the Spirit" (ITB), "justified in the Spirit" (KJV), "was justified in the Spirit" (NAS), "was justified by the Spirit" (NIV), "declared righteous in the Spirit" (YLT), and "ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι" (BGT, STE, BYZ). The Spirit of God purifies and sanctifies His human nature, cleanses Him from original sin and defilement, and testifies that He is the Son of God. The miracles performed by His power confirm that Jesus is the Messiah. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost and His role in their ministry vindicated Jesus against all accusations. It is not plausible to associate this idea with the phrase "justified by His own Spirit or soul." Given the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in the work of Christ, it is natural that this reference alludes to Him. The term "justified" is not used here in the same sense as it is commonly used by Christians, but in a broader sense. It means "to declare righteous" and refers to being validated as the Son of God through the work of the Holy Spirit, thus being vindicated from all accusations against Him.²¹

The Holy Spirit provides evidence of His divine Sonship and "vindicates" Him against accusations. For example, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism (Matt. 3:16), was sent to convict the world of sin for not believing in Him (John 16:8-9), and enabled Him to cast out evil spirits (Matt. 12:28). The Holy Spirit was given to Him without measure (John 3:34) and was promised to change the hearts of men (Acts 2:33). All of God's manifestations-such as the power to perform miracles, the influence of Christ Jesus, and the unparalleled wisdom He displayed-confirm the Holy Spirit's endorsement of His divine mission. The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and His role in the conversion of sinners further confirms that Jesus was sent by God. This is part of the great truth of the Christian faith, now revealed as the "mystery of God," and is an integral part of the wonderful record of faith.²² He was justified in the Spirit when He was accused as a sinner and condemned to death as a criminal. He was resurrected by the Spirit and justified from all the slanderous accusations against Him. He was made to bear sin on behalf of mankind and was delivered for man's transgressions, but after His resurrection, He was justified in the Spirit. This means that His sacrifice was accepted; "just as He was delivered for our trespasses" (Romans 4:25), so He was killed in the flesh but raised in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).²³

²¹ Walvoord and Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*.

²² Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

²³ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI - Acts to Revelation*.

Although He appears in human flesh, He is "justified in the Spirit," being the true Messiah and both God and man. The phrase "justified in the Spirit" refers to His divine nature. This is evident in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. It can be understood in two ways: 1. In relation to God, He is justified and cleansed from the sins of mankind that He bore. He bore the sin on the cross, ensuring that it would never again be held against humanity. The Holy Spirit who raised Him from the dead demonstrated that the debt was fully paid. 2. He is justified by the Spirit from all human misconceptions and the world's misunderstanding of Him. People thought He was just an ordinary man, but He was much more than that. He was the God-man, Jesus Christ.

He is justified in the Spirit in relation to the place of justification. The place where justification is realized is in the human soul. While His revelation in the flesh can be seen with the eyes, His justification takes place in the spirit. It is in the mind, conscience, and inner being that this justification is accepted. This is the deep work of the Holy Spirit. Being justified in the Spirit also refers to the nature of justification, which is spiritual. Since it is imparted to the mind and conscience, it corresponds to the human spirit. His manifestation in the flesh—through signs and miracles to demonstrate His power, through meekness, humility, and patience to show His holiness, and through suffering, shame, and death to highlight His merits—represents external facts that emphasize His character. These external manifestations reveal aspects of His divine nature. However, the things that come from the Spirit of God are spiritually understood (1 Cor.2:14).²⁴

The source of this justification is the Holy Spirit. To say that Christ Jesus is justified means that He has divine approval, both in His character and in His actions. He is the anointed Messiah, and everything He does is right and good (John 8:29). He is also praised and admired, which is another aspect of His justification (Romans 3:4). Christ is justified in His mission, which confirms that He was sent by God. This includes His personal glory, His suitability for the task, and the correctness of the methods He used. Christ is justified in the Spirit concerning His claims, His power, and His sovereignty over the universe. This justification is also related to the prophecies and various typologies in the Old Testament, all of which are confirmed by the Holy Spirit. This is evident in His death, suffering, and resurrection, as well as on the day of Pentecost, in the judgment of sinners, and in the consolation of believers. It is a profound mystery that He who was manifested in the flesh is justified in the Spirit. Christ's death on the cross is a mystery (1 Cor.

²⁴ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

1:25), as is His cry of abandonment, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Another mystery is the death of God, which may seem to undermine faith, but actually strengthens it. It is even more mysterious that although at the time of His death He seemed to be completely in the hands of His enemies, He manifested His power through His resurrection. The manner in which the Holy Spirit justifies Christ in the face of a prejudiced world is truly mysterious.

The Holy Spirit justifies the Savior by demonstrating His divinity. The Spirit testifies of Him through His prophets, prophecies, sufferings, and glory. Despite His humble appearance and reproach, the prophets perceived the full and infinite majesty of His Godhead. His divinity is expressed without wavering or hesitation. The Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead and confirmed His divine nature. The Spirit justifies by confirming His claims, which include His role as the Messiah and all the privileges and perfections of the Most High God. He claims to be the light and life of the world, the teacher authorized by the will of God, the head and ruler of the church, and the creator, ruler, and judge of all mankind. All these are proved and justified by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit justifies by purifying Him from all the slander cast against His person and character by His enemies.²⁵

The Spirit vindicates by fulfilling the revelation He initiated. By new or more complete revelations He has perfected the system of divine truth largely established by the personal teaching and history of Christ. The Spirit justifies by bestowing the blessings He has received. He not only reveals the truth, but also bestows the blessings on humanity through His suffering and death. The Holy Spirit justifies by declaring His glory. He has lifted and removed the veil that covered Him, revealing the great splendor of the One who was enthroned in sinful flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁶ Revealing the glory of the veiled Savior is one of the great purposes of Holy Spirit-inspired revelation. The prophets saw the Savior as Jehovah Sabaoth. In summary, the Holy Spirit granted them a sublime vision in which they perceived eternity and vastness, filled with the majesty of His infinite existence and radiant with the brilliance of His immeasurable perfection.²⁷ The Holy Spirit also manifests the glory of the Redeemer through the wonderful miracles He performs.

²⁵ Walvoord and Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*.

²⁶ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

²⁷ Dibelius Martin and Hans, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*.

Seen by the Angels

The term "angels" here can be understood in two ways. First, it does not refer to the heavenly or demonic beings typically known as angels. Instead, it refers to the apostles and others who became Christ's messengers, bringing the news of His resurrection from the dead. These individuals are ministers of the gospel, or shepherds of the church, who care for the church of God. Second, it includes the heavenly angels who appeared at various significant moments in Jesus' life: at His birth to sing praises to God, in the wilderness after He was tempted by Satan to minister to Him, and in the garden during His time of suffering and agony. Angels also appeared at His resurrection, rolling away the stone from the tomb and announcing to the women that Christ had risen from the dead.²⁸ Now, in heaven, they continue to wait, worship, and serve Him, carrying out His will in the ministry of the gospel.

The concept in Jewish thought suggests that the term refers to angels. Peter insists that the term does refer to angels (1 Peter 1:12), a view supported by Paul (Ephesians 3:9-10). Angels are His ministers who are present in times of trouble, danger, and need (see Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11). These angels announced His coming, supported Him during His trials, witnessed His crucifixion, and guarded His tomb (see 1 Peter 1:12). The activity of these angels is underscored by their worship of Him (Hebrews 1:6) and their presence during His incarnation, trials, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. Their service to Him emphasized His importance in heaven. Therefore, the idea that angels are apostles or evangelists is not supported.²⁹

The old NIV translation, which renders the phrase as "who appears to the angels," is incorrect. It is almost impossible for Jesus to appear to the angels in reference to the angelic appearances recorded during Christ's birth, trial, suffering, resurrection, and ascension. In these cases, it is the angel that appears to Christ and others, not the other way around. Therefore, it is more accurate to interpret the phrase as referring to Christ's appearance to the angelic hosts, both at the time of the incarnation and at His return in glory. The grammatical approach using the passive "seen by the angels" suggests that the angels witnessed the events of Jesus' life. This is more widely accepted in recent translations. The mystery of righteousness was revealed to

²⁸ Walvoord and Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*.

²⁹ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI - Acts to Revelation*.

humanity and manifested through the historical person who, when incarnated in the flesh, was free from all sin in his innermost being.³⁰ This manifestation of the perfect Man is not only acknowledged by mankind but is also witnessed by angels, who can attest to its truth.

On these occasions, angels appear to Christ and others, not the other way around. Christ's appearance to the angelic host, both at the incarnation and at His return in glory, is a more plausible interpretation. The grammatical construction uses the passive "seen by the angels," indicating that the angels witnessed the events of Jesus' history. Therefore, the new translation is more acceptable. The mystery of righteousness was revealed to humanity and manifested through the historical person who is free from all sin in his inward spirit. This manifestation of the perfect Man is not only acknowledged by mankind but is also witnessed by angels, who can attest to its truthfulness.

Angels witnessed important events related to the Savior and had the honor of serving Jesus during His suffering. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, "the devil left Him, and the angels came and ministered to Him" (Matthew 4:11). The angels not only saw God appear in the flesh, but also understood the purpose of His appearance, including His life and death. By observing the love that compelled the Son of God to humble Himself and suffer, the angels learned to love and serve. The angels who witnessed God's appearance in human form were among the first to announce these momentous events to mankind. One of the angels informed Daniel that the Messiah would be crucified, but not for His own sake.³¹ Angels also became the first messengers of the Savior's birth. They are interested in understanding the mysteries of grace.

The angels watched in awe and wonder as God humbled Himself to dwell in the womb of a virgin. They were captivated by this great miracle of God who took on a human form even lower than their own. Angels are Christ's ministers who gaze in awe at His work. They watched and admired Him in His humility as a man and in His glory throughout His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.³² Angels testify to Christ before men, confirming His importance. God is manifested in man and seen by the angels through the plan of salvation: 1. In His humility, the angels may not be able to see God directly in His infinite nature. They had previously seen Him reigning with the Father in heaven, but now they see Him as a man. 2. In His divinity, God is visible to the angels through the mystery of His incarnation, though they see only a part of the full

³⁰ Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries.

³¹ Dibelius Martin and Hans, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*.

³² John Muddiman and John Barton, *The Oxford Commentary the Gospel* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

truth. 3. In the plan of righteousness, the angels witness extraordinary wisdom in the execution of God's plan, which they had never seen before. 4. In the plan of righteousness, God is seen in the majesty of His justice. Christ is appointed as "the means of atonement to reveal the righteousness of God for the remission of sins. 5. In the plan of righteousness, the angels observe His overwhelming power entrusted to the incarnate Son to save mankind and defeat the enemy. 6. In the scheme of piety, God is seen in His infinite love, fully manifested. 7. In the mystery of righteousness, the angels perceive the perfect harmony of His attributes. 8. In the scheme of righteousness, God is seen in the majesty of His ultimate purposes.

Preached among All Nations

The message was preached to the Gentiles, who were considered the most despised people, at the command of Christ and in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. This message, a mystery hidden for centuries, is now revealed. Faith in Christ is the goal of this proclamation, which does not come by human effort, but as a gift from God and through the exercise of His power. In view of the shame and suffering that Christ endured through the scandal of the cross, it is remarkable that he continued to be believed. This enduring belief can only be attributed to the power of God that accompanies the ministry of the word.

Preaching to the Gentiles means that salvation is available to all mankind. This is a crucial aspect of the gospel message, known as the "mystery of the gospel," a profound truth that was not fully revealed before the Savior's coming (cf. Mt 13:11; Eph 6:19; Col 1:26-27; 4:3). Previously, there was a barrier between Jews and Gentiles, with Jews viewing others as outside the circle of God's covenantal mercy. However, the gospel teaches that all people are equal before God, and salvation is now available to all regardless of background (cf. Acts 22:21; Eph. 2:14-15; Rom. 3:22; 10:11-20).³³

Jews have no special privileges in matters of salvation, and Gentiles are not excluded from the hope of salvation. God's plan of salvation includes all mankind, regardless of colour, nationality, customs, or laws. The blood of Christ was shed for all people, making salvation available to everyone, everywhere. Everyone is a recipient of divine mercy. Christ died for all without exception. Social status, wealth, color, or personal status do not affect a person's salvation. Likewise, poverty, colour, slavery, or injustice do not prevent a person from receiving God's grace.

³³ Muddiman and Barton, *The Oxford Commentary the Gospel*.

Preaching the gospel to other nations is a crucial part of God's previously hidden plan. Now all nations are invited to join the Jews in the kingdom of God because Christ has torn down the barrier that once separated them. This is the heart of the mystery of salvation: Christ is the Redeemer and Savior of all, not just the Jews (Acts 13:47). To preach about Christ is to reveal the mystery of who he is and what his role is. Without understanding the true identity of Christ, believers cannot effectively preach the gospel. Christ must be the centered of all preaching. Everything preached must relate to Him: His work of redemption, His promises, His glory as Almighty God, and His role as the God-man redeeming lost humanity.³⁴

It is a mystery that God allowed people to live according to their own will for a long time. However, in His wisdom, He chose to reveal the gospel to the nations, even to those who suffer in the worst circumstances. The purpose of the gospel is to bring sinners to Christ, who is revealed to the nations as the divine Son of God. Christ, God made flesh, is proclaimed as having sacrificed Himself for the sins of the world through His death on the cross. As High Priest and Mediator between man and God, he reconciles humanity with its Creator. Christ is also proclaimed as the centered and means of unity for the whole Church of God, as well as the supreme and universal Judge. To proclaim Christ is to proclaim that He alone can serve as the mediator between man and God. To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus is to transform people from darkness to light, to show that Christ is sufficient to protect the human soul from any danger.³⁵ To preach Christ is to openly declare that He is the One who seeks and saves the lost.

Trusted in the World

This is one of the great mysteries of religion: the appearance of God in human form. His presence, blessed by the Holy Spirit and witnessed by the angels, broke down the barriers between worlds and united all on the same level. This is the essence of the mystery of salvation: that He who was crucified as a criminal is recognized not only as the promised Messiah, but also as the only Savior of sinful humanity.³⁶ The message of the gospel is accepted worldwide as the only way to salvation, even though it is contrary to human sinful tendencies. Christ is the Judge who will determine the fate of the living and the dead. Although many opposed Him, including a

³⁴ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI - Acts to Revelation*.

³⁵ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

³⁶ Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

significant number of priests, some Jews became His followers, thus proving His innocence (Acts 6:7).

The importance of faith in Christ is obvious. Paul emphasizes that saving faith is the belief that Jesus is the Messiah, a gift from God to every believer. This faith recognizes Jesus as the Mediator and Savior who atones for the sins of mankind through His suffering. The death and sacrifice of Christ are central to this faith. It is a remarkable mystery that people continue to believe in Christ even under the most favourable circumstances. Faith itself is a profound gift from God, not an ordinary thing. Because of the greatness of this mystery, the doctrines related to the incarnation of God are accepted despite their elusive nature. The incarnation of Christ, in which God revealed Himself in the flesh and died on the cross, was a momentous event.³⁷ This mystery demonstrates that all natural obstacles have been overcome, and people continue to believe in this truth.

It is hard to believe that this good news would be received by an often skeptical humanity. Human history shows that people tend to reject God's message or the truth He preaches. The Jews even rejected the prophets He sent, including the Messiah Himself, and put them to death (Matt. 23; Acts 7). This reflects the general human tendency toward unbelief. Of course, people tend not to believe in God. However, it is encouraging to see that the Savior's message has been received worldwide, indicating the great power at work to overcome this unbelief.³⁸ This is proof of God's grace, which is able to transform unbelief into faith.

The magnitude of this transformation is the reason for his faith. The gospel has been accepted by thousands of people in the countries where it is preached. This is a testimony to the truth of these teachings and the great power of God. Although it is contrary to natural human instincts, many people believe in the mysteries related to salvation. The Gospel Has Overcome the World's Unbelief. Every time a person repents, it is proof that the gospel is from God and a new example of the greatness of this mystery. This proclamation is God's decision to produce faith, open minds, and draw people to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). The gospel is called the word of faith because it promotes faith, and it is called the ministry of reconciliation because through it God proclaims peace.

³⁷ Dibelius Martin and Hans, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*.

³⁸ Fee, *Pauline Christology an Exegetical Theological Study*.

Lifted Up in Glory

Christ was exalted to glory, raised from the dead with a glorified body. He ascended to heaven in a miraculous way, passed through the clouds, was received by the Father, and sat at His right hand, given the glory and honour that had been in Him before the world began (John 17:5; Acts 1:9). This event is considered the culmination of the Christian faith, the crowning of Christ's great work.³⁹ There is no greater event in the universe than the triumphant ascension of the Son of God into glory after completing the redemption of the world. The concluding verse of this chapter offers a profound view of the plan of salvation, as well as the majesty and glory of Christ. It reveals the great mystery of the incarnation and the interest of the angels in the redemptive event. The influence of the gospel on the pagan world and the role of Christianity in breaking down barriers between people have placed all races on an equal footing. The ascension of the Son of God to heaven reveals remarkable truths to believers that are unparalleled in any other religious system and warrant the profound attention of mankind. For Christ appeared in the flesh to men, not to angels (1 Peter 1:12). Conversely, the fact of God's incarnation in the flesh also merits the attention of angels.

Christ was exalted to glory; even the human nature He took from Mary was not only raised from the tomb, but also exalted to glory in a profound way. This is part of the divine mystery that is difficult to fully comprehend. Although believers have substantial evidence, it remains difficult to fully understand. His ascension into glory is central to the Christian faith. Jesus Christ, in his human existence, stands continually before the throne as a sacrifice and intercessor for believers.⁴⁰ His ascension, which occurred before He was widely believed in the world, marks the culmination of His earthly ministry. This event signifies not only His ascension, but also His position at the right hand of God, where He intercedes and holds all power in heaven and on earth (Heb. 2:14). This conveys several truths: First, that God, who revealed Himself in the flesh, is truly God, both in position and in nature. Second, that Christ, who was manifested in the flesh, was indeed fully human. Third, that salvation is a profound mystery that must be earnestly respected and believed in, from the incarnation to the ascension of Christ. Fourth, as a great mystery, believers should contemplate it with humility and accept it with conviction.⁴¹

³⁹ Walvoord and Roy B., *Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*.

⁴⁰ Clarke, *Commentary on the New Testament*.

⁴¹ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI - Acts to Revelation*.

There are several historical facts related to the Ascension of Christ: 1. His Ascension took place on the Mount of Olives, a place where He often prayed and experienced both sorrow and joy. It is a place of deep significance, marking both His humility and His exaltation. 2. After completing the tasks assigned to him, he declared, "I have finished the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4). 3. The angels testify to all this. They joyfully announced His incarnation and rejoiced even more when He ascended into glory. Now Christ is at the right hand of the Father, bearing His human nature-a profound mystery. In His state of glory, He fulfilled all His duties in the most magnificent way. He was a great prophet, sending His Spirit to teach and open hearts. He is also the great Priest, representing us before God in the heavenly sanctuary, and He reigns as King forever.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ is a profound mystery in righteousness, supported by strong and irrefutable evidence for those who believe in Him. The incarnation of God reveals extraordinary truths and serves as the foundation of the entire doctrine of salvation as described in the gospel of salvation. The terms "foundation" and "pillar" emphasize the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation. Without the incarnation of Christ, the entire foundation of salvation truth would be undermined. Just as a foundation supports an entire building, so the incarnation of Christ supports the entire doctrine of salvation. This was the first foundational teaching of the apostles in Christianity: the incarnation of Christ and His redemption through His blood. The mystery of the divine incarnation of Christ is an undeniable fact. The incarnation of God is a profound mystery of piety, which shows that one must accept God as man in order to attain righteousness. The knowledge of God is central to Christianity, and it can only be attained through Christ. To accept God incarnate, one must accept this mystery with humility.

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