1 Timothy 3:16 (Wilbur Smith) 54619

Christian Truth: Volume 31, 1 Timothy 3:16, Meditation on (3:16)

There are several mysteries spoken of in the Word of God, but the one spoken of here is that which will never, in time or eternity, be fully fathomed by created beings—the mystery of godliness or piety. God has been pleased to show the depth of His love in the gift of His own Son (John 3:16). The Father has been fully revealed in and by His Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Luke 10:22. The Lord Jesus could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." John 14:9. The Father, in all His grace and love, was fully manifested by Jesus here on earth, and especially at the cross where God made His own Son a sacrifice for all who avail themselves of the cleansing virtue of His shed blood. Truly, God has been manifested in His Son, but to know the Son is to know the Infinite, and our poor finite minds are not great enough to comprehend Kim who will for all eternity be the object of the worship and praise of His redeemed.

"God was manifest in the flesh." When Moses was with God on Mount Sinai, he was told, "There shall no man see Me, and live." Exod. 33:20. But on that momentous night at Bethlehem, the shepherds were told by an angelic messenger that "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11. There for the first time in history of this world God became visible to the eye of man. And what a sight for poor mortal man to behold! There He lay, in the weakness of a babe, in the manger—He who is to have the government of the world upon His shoulder—the One who is "The mighty God" (Isa. 9:6). He, who being in the form of God, had now taken upon Himself the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men. When his mother and Joseph brought Him to the temple to do for Him after the custom of the law, Simeon could recognize that here was the One of whom Isaiah spoke—here was God's Salvation, in the flesh—"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of... Israel." Anna, a prophetess, spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Israel. In later years, the people of His nation said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" Mark 6:3. But Peter, by the Spirit, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. 16:16.

He was "justified in the Spirit." At His birth God could witness of His Son, "Good pleasure in men" (Luke 2:14; J.N.D. Trans.). For the first time since Adam was unfallen, God looked down from heaven and saw One in whom He could take pleasure. Jesus, about to enter upon His ministry, came to John the Baptist to be baptized of him, and to take His place among the publicans and the multitude who were confessing their sins. God, in justice to His own Son opened heaven, and His voice was heard, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon Him. God was well pleased in what His Son had done, and He could not allow man to believe that this One was a sinner like those others. Later, the King, having been rejected by an unbelieving nation, was manifested on the holy mount in all His glory, and, "there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And Peter says, "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. 1:17, 18.) Was He not justified in the Spirit when He said, "Father, glorify Thy name"? A voice came to Him from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." John 12:28.

The angels were present at the creation when the morning stars sang together. They were present at Mount Sinai when the holy law of God was given, for it was given by the ministration of angels. God chose to send angels round about Elisha when he was threatened by the enemy. An angel, spoken of by name to Daniel, was the one by whom God chose to communicate with that great prophet. These were God's servants, created to do His bidding. But in all those ages they had never seen their Creator. Now on that most notable night, in the manger at Bethlehem, they viewed their King for the first time. There lay the Object of their worship and adoration, a Babe, helpless and an outcast from His birth, to be hunted so soon for His very life. No wonder that they proclaimed through the skies, "Glory to God in the highest."

As a man, when He had fasted for forty days in the wilderness, and had withstood all the temptations of Satan, the angels came and ministered to Him. An angel also appeared unto Him from heaven when He, contemplating the bearing of the sins of His people, cried out in the agony of His soul, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done." Luke 22:42. What a sight this must have been to the angels, to see Him whose word brought worlds into existence, thus prostrated in the Garden of Gethsemane. And they were to behold more. Poor, weak, puny men who were dependent on Jesus for their very breath of life, took Him and nailed Him to the cross, using Him most shamefully; and when they could think of nothing more to do to give vent to their hatred of Him, they sat down to watch His sufferings.

An angel was present on that glorious morning when Mary Magdalene, weeping at the tomb, turned herself and saw Him standing. Angels could say to the disciples at Bethany, "Ye men of Galilee... this same Jesus -" (Acts 1:11). What must have been the thoughts of those angelic hosts who had witnessed the incarnation and path of ministry of Him who had heretofore been invisible, but who had now manifested Himself in all meekness and humility to be the Savior by whom sinful men should obtain salvation from eternal judgment.

When the Lord Jesus went into the coast of Tire and Sidon, on being accosted by a Gentile woman, He said truthfully, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but nevertheless, on more than one occasion we have the record that His grace overstepped all bounds to reach out to meet the needs of those "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). And His words are recorded, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." But it was not until Peter entered the house of Cornelius that the Gentiles as a class had the Word of God spoken to them. God proclaimed His approval of the reception of His Word by the Gentiles by the giving and sealing of His Holy Spirit. At the same time, God was preparing in His school a chosen vessel to carry the Word to the Gentiles—Saul of Tarsus, later to be known as the beloved Apostle Paul. How wonderful the plan of God to prepare the way and the servants too to bring the light of the gospel to the Gentiles as He had promised. How fruitful has that work been! Think of the countless myriads of Gentiles who have had the gospel preached to them.

That many of those who have heard the gospel now find the Lord Jesus precious to their souls is evidence that He is "believed on in the world." The world, as such, goes on its way, willfullya ignoring Him whose claims are going to be heeded one day soon, but there are those who now, and also those who from the beginning, have believed to the saving of their precious souls. Oh! that all who hear the Word might receive it by faith in their hearts. It is sad to think that there will be some who refuse to believe God's Word concerning Jesus. Because they refuse to believe the truth, God will "send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth." 2 Thess. 2:11, 12. Oh, to think that those who reject God's Son as their Savior will go down to perdition, to be forever in the place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels.

If man refuses to honor the name of Jesus, yet God in righteousness to His Son must and will vindicate His name. Until that time comes, Jesus is waiting patiently at the right hand of God in the glory. God had proclaimed in the Psalms, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." How blessed to know that the Object of our worship is now in the glory. The world cast Him out with these words: "We will not have this man to reign over us." Then they sent a messenger after Him in the person of that faithful martyr, Stephen, to repeat and reaffirm the message. But though earth would not have Him, heaven has received Him till the times of restitution of all things (Acts 3:21).

May God enable us who believe, to keep our eyes on Him in the glory, that we might be filled with His glory, so that we too by reflection may shine with that same glory light.

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