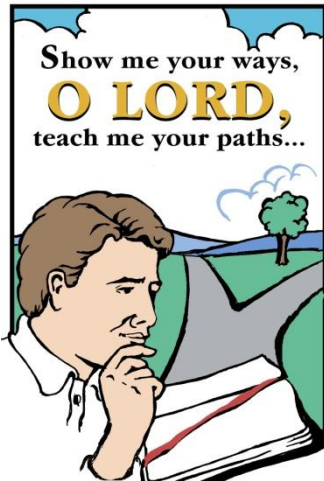


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 6



THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

Scripture Texts: 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:7-12; Colossians 1:26-27; Ephesians 1:9-10

What is the mystery of godliness? By what means can we understand it? Is it important that we understand it? Does a person who has a Bible or a place of worship necessarily have the Gospel? Do living with Christians or attending Sunday school and preaching services guarantee that one knows the Gospel or understands the mystery? (**1 Corinthians 2:14**.) Does knowing the words of the Bible reveal to one the mystery? How does our text agree with the song that says, "It is no secret what God can do?"

Salvation is a mystery to those without God's Spirit. The mystery is that God's Son came, became flesh, died, rose, and returned to Heaven to save man from sin.

MEMORY VERSE: *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.*

—1 Timothy 3:16

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—**Psalm 25** A prayer to be taught of God.
- Tue.—**Matthew 13:10-17, Matthew 13:35** Reason for parables.
- Wed.—**2 Corinthians 4:1-6** Gospel hid to the lost.
- Thu.—**Ephesians 1:1-12** Purpose of the mystery revealed.
- Fri.—**1 Peter 1:3-13, 1 Peter 1:20** The mystery revealed.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 3 Mystery made known to Paul.

Great Is the Mystery

1 Timothy 3:16 Without controversy—certain, without possibility of refutation—**great is the mystery**—something secret, hidden, not known to all—**of godliness**—of Godlikeness, of making men like God. This is the greatest plan that concerns mankind. Paul names six details of how the plan will be carried out. (1) **God was manifest in the flesh**—Jesus Christ, or God the Son, became man. He took upon Himself a human body. **The Word was made flesh (John 1:14)**. These statements prove the deity and also the humanity of Jesus. (2) **Justified in the Spirit**—was proven by the Holy Spirit to be what He claimed to be. At His baptism (**John 1:32-34**), His resurrection (**Romans 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18**), and by His miracles (**John 10:25**), the Spirit **justified** Him. (3) **Seen of angels**—That angels have an interest and a part in the redemptive work of Christ is shown by their activity in preparation for His coming, at His birth, flight to Egypt, temptation, agony, resurrection, and ascension. They rejoice **over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:10)**. They **desire to look into** these truths (**1 Peter 1:12**). (4) **Preached unto the Gentiles**—to non-Jews as well as Jews. It is a precious part of this mystery that Jesus tasted death for every man, not one left out (**Hebrews 2:9**). (5) **Believed on in the world**—among the unbelievers there are also those who believe everywhere Christ is preached. Sinners whose sins He denounces embrace Him as their Savior. (6) **Received up into glory**—ascended back to Heaven from where He came. This is all important to us. His living is the promise of our living (**John 14:19**). His entrance into Heaven is the promise of our entrance. His going with His visible, human body is the promise of our going with ours. His eternal living is the promise of ours. Praise God! These and more belong to the plan of salvation whereby sinful people are made godly. This is truly a mystery. The world cannot understand this.

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A Mystery to the Unserved

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom. Hidden because it is not understood. God's plan of salvation through Christ was **ordained before the world**—was planned by God before creation of the world. God gradually made it known through His Prophets, but they themselves did not fully understand what they wrote of Christ (**Romans 16:25-26; 1 Peter 1:10-12**). The fuller revelation came with the coming of Christ. None of **the princes of this world** knew—earthly, natural men, those out-side of Christ, did not know this mysterious wisdom, this plan of God (**Mark 4:11**). Thanks be to God! It can be known.

The Mystery Revealed by the Spirit

1 Corinthians 2: 9-12 The things which God hath prepared for them that love him—the blessings of salvation in this present life. Many separate verse 9 from verse 10 in the context and so misinterpret it. Man's natural eyes, ears, and heart cannot grasp these things, **but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit**. The spirit of man **knoweth the things of a man**. The Spirit of God knoweth **the things of God**. God planned it this way. That is why He gave us **the spirit which is of God**—the Holy Spirit—that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. Through the working of the Spirit, we can take His gift of salvation, can experience it, grow in it, know it, feel it, and know God and Jesus Christ. Knowing the mysteries, we hold them in our hearts. We are made **stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1)**. As stewards, we are bound by love and duty to teach others.

The Substance of God's Plan

Colossians 1:26-27 The riches of the glory of this mystery . . . is Christ in you. The whole plan, from beginning to end, is to bring about the indwelling of Christ in the hearts of men. What a great mystery! God wants us to know this. He also wants us to know the purpose for which Christ dwells in us. God tells us the specific details of His plan that is great enough to occupy His attention from before the Creation until time shall cease. Then **the mystery of God shall be finished**, not ended, but complete (**Revelation 10:7**).

The Goal of God's Plan

Ephesians 1:9-10 The mystery of his will . . . that in . . . the fullness of times—this is the next dispensation which will begin at Christ's Second Coming when the world ends and time shall be no more—then He will **gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth**. All who have salvation will be brought together in one great family to dwell **even in him**. This includes God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the angels, and all redeemed people. Then **we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2)**.

Oh, how great is the mystery of godliness! Dear friend, don't miss it. Start today. Make Christ your personal Savior.

JUST A THOUGHT

"Man gets and forgets; God gives and forgives."

—Myron F. Boyd

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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