

# The Mystery of God Manifested in the Flesh

## A Bible Study in [1 Timothy 3:16](#) with [John 17:6](#)

---

### Introduction

Paul writes to Timothy in the context of church order — how to conduct oneself in the house of God. But in [1 Timothy 3:16](#), he pauses and makes one of the most theologically weighty declarations in all of Scripture. He calls it a mystery, and says that mystery is great. Before examining what the mystery contains, we need to understand what he means by that word — because everything that follows depends on it.

---

### I. The Setting: The House of God and Its Mystery

[1 Timothy 3:15-16](#) — "...if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. **Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

- Much is covered in verse 16, but **this study deals specifically with "the mystery... and "manifested..."** The next study will hopefully cover "**justified...**", "**seen...**", "**proclaimed...**", "**believed on...**" and "**taken up...**".
  - The church is called "a pillar and buttress of the truth." That truth is what verse 16 declares. Paul introduces it with a strong affirmation: "Great indeed, we confess..." — meaning, this is not speculation. It is settled, confessed truth.
  - Two key words give us the framework:
    1. **Mystery** — *mystērion* (Strong's #3466): "a sacred secret; something previously hidden that is now disclosed to those who receive it." In the New Testament, a mystery is not something unknowable — it is something that was once concealed but has now been revealed. Paul uses this word in a specific, technical sense.
    2. **Godliness** — *eusebeia* (Strong's #2150): "reverence, piety, godly conduct." Here, the "mystery of godliness" likely points not just to how we live, but to the One toward whom our reverence is directed — the object of our devotion.
- 

### II. The Mystery Planned Before the World Began

**This mystery did not emerge from crisis or circumstance. It was purposed before creation itself.**

[1 Peter 1:20](#) — "**He was foreknown before the foundation of the world** but was **made manifest in the last times** for the sake of you."

- Notice the verb: "**made manifest**" — the same word we will encounter again in [1 Timothy 3:16](#) . What God purposed in eternity, He made visible in time.

[Ephesians 3:3-6](#) — "...**the mystery was made known to me** by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into **the mystery of Christ**, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it **has now been revealed** to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

[Colossians 1:27](#) — "**To them God chose to make known** how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of **this mystery**, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**"

- **Paul consistently identifies the mystery with a Person** — Christ. Not a doctrine, not a program, but **the Son of God** Himself. The mystery has both a personal center and a redemptive breadth that extends to all peoples. But its core, as Paul names it in [1 Timothy 3:16](#), is the incarnation: **God manifested in the flesh**.
- 

### III. God Manifested in the Flesh — The Heart of the Mystery

This is where [1 Timothy 3:16](#) and [John 17:6](#) meet, and the connection is not incidental — it is linguistic and theological.

[John 17:6](#) — "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word."

- **Manifested** — phaneroō (Strong's #5319): "to make visible or known what has been hidden or unknown; to bring to light."
- In [1 Timothy 3:16](#), God is manifested in the flesh. In [John 17:6](#), Jesus says He has manifested the Father's name, which is usually a reference to His identity, which Jesus clearly defines in [John 17:3](#). The same verb — phaneroō — bridges both passages. Jesus is the vehicle and the embodiment of that manifestation. He came, as He said here, to make the Father, His identity/character, known.

[Hebrews 1:3, 8-9](#) — "He is the radiance of the glory of God{Father} and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power... But of the Son he{Father} says, 'Your throne, O God{Jesus}, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'"

- This passage holds two things in careful balance. In verse 8, the Father addresses the Son directly as "God" — Theos (Strong's #2316). The Son is the "exact imprint" — charaktēr (Strong's #5481): "a precise expression, an exact representation" — of the Father's nature. **Yet in verse 9, the same Son is spoken of as having His own God — "God, your God, has anointed you." The Father is the Son's God. The Son bears the divine nature, but He receives it.** ([John 5:26](#)) Both truths stand side by side in the same two verses.
  - "[All things were given of the Father to His beloved Son](#)" - a Bible Study.
- 

### IV. The Purpose of the Manifestation

The incarnation was not simply a theological demonstration. It had a redemptive purpose.

[Hebrews 2:9-13](#) — "But we see him who for a little while was **made lower than the angels, namely Jesus**, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that **he, for whom and by whom all things exist**, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again, 'Behold, I and the children God has given me.'"

- God was manifested in the flesh so that the Son could taste death for everyone — and through that death, bring many sons to glory. **He became what we are so that we might become what the Father purposes for us**. And notice: He calls us brothers. **The manifestation of God in the flesh draws us into family**.
-

## Practical Summary

The "**mystery of godliness**" Paul speaks of is not a puzzle to be solved — it **is a Person to be known**. What was hidden in eternity was unveiled in history: the Son of God, who bears His Father's nature and name, stepped into human flesh. This was not an emergency plan. It was purposed before the foundation of the world ( [1 Peter 1:20](#) ) and disclosed in fullness through the gospel ( [Ephesians 3:3-6](#); [Colossians 1:27](#) ).

[John 17:6](#) shows us how Jesus understood His own mission — He came to manifest the Father's name/character. First [Timothy 3:16](#) tells us what that manifestation was — God in flesh. Hebrews 1 holds the tension that defines His person: the Son is addressed by His Father as Theos, the exact expression of the Father's nature — and yet the Father remains His God, the One from whom He receives. And Hebrews 2 tells us why — so that He could taste death for everyone and bring many sons to glory. He is not ashamed to call them brothers.

This is the great mystery. Not great because it is complicated, but because nothing greater could ever be said: the Son, bearing the fullness of His Father's nature, was manifested in the flesh — for us.

The church of the living God — that pillar and buttress of the truth — stands on this confession. We do not merely teach about this mystery. We are the people called out by it, gathered around it, and sent into the world because of it.

---

Desiring to live by every word that comes from the mouth of Jehovah ( [Deut8:3](#); [Matt4:4](#) )

-[Sid Nash](#): 05/29/2026. Latest version: <https://sidnash.org/docs/GodManifested.html>