

HWMR: LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH, (Week 9)

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 6:17; 7:25, 40

**The Function of the Church(2)
The Corporate Manifestation of God in the Flesh**

1 Timothy 3:15	But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
1 Timothy 3:16	And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
John 1:1	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
John 1:14	And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.
Colossians 2:9	For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,
1 Corinthians 6:17	But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
1 Corinthians 7:25	Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who has been shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful.
1 Corinthians 7:40	But she is more blessed if she so remains, according to my opinion; but I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Day 1

<i>1 Timothy 3:16</i>	- And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
<i>John 1:14</i>	- And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

Day 2

<i>Colossians 2:9</i>	- For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,
<i>John 14:10</i>	- Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

I. God's manifestation was first **in Christ as an **individual expression** in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 2:9; John 1:1, 14:**

- A. The New Testament does not say that the Son of God was incarnated; it reveals that **God was manifested in the flesh**—1 Tim. 3:15-16:
1. God was manifested in the flesh not only as the Son but as the **entire God**—the **Father**, the **Son**, and the **Spirit**.
 2. The entire God and not only God the Son was incarnated; hence, Christ in His incarnation was the **entire God manifested in the flesh**:

- a. In His ministry in the stage of incarnation, **Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man**; in Christ, the infinite God and the finite man became one—John 8:58; 7:6; 12:24.
- b. Through incarnation the divine incorporation—God in His Divine Trinity coinhering mutually and working together as one—was brought into humanity; Christ is therefore the **incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man**—14:10-11.

God's manifestation was first in **Christ** as an **individual expression in the flesh**. Concerning this, Colossians 2:9 says, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." In this verse "fullness" does not refer to the riches of God; instead, it refers to the **expression of the riches of God**. What dwells in Christ is the expression of the riches of what God is. We need to see that the fullness of the Godhead is the **expression of the Godhead** and that this expression is in Christ individually.

Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead. This means that the fullness of the Triune God **dwells in Christ in a bodily form**. The fact that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that it dwells in Him in a way that is both real and practical. This implies the physical body which Christ put on in His humanity. It indicates that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ as the One who has a human body. **Before His incarnation**, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him as the eternal Word, but it did not dwell in Him bodily. After He became incarnate, the fullness of the Godhead began to **dwell in Him in a bodily way**. Thus, He is the manifestation of God, the individual expression of God, in the flesh.

The expression "the fullness of the Godhead" refers to the **entire Godhead**, to the complete God, including the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Because the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, it would not be correct to say that the fullness of the Godhead includes only God the Son and not also God the Father and God the Spirit. Since the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. As the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, **Christ is not only the Son of God but the entire God**. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: God, Christ, and the Spirit, Volume 1, chapter 13*)

- B. The Word, who is God, **became flesh**—1:1, 14:
 1. *Became flesh* (v. 14) means in the **likeness**, in the **fashion, of man**—Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7-8.
 2. In the **form of a man** Christ appeared to people, yet He was God manifested in a man—2 Cor. 5:16.
 3. The God who the Word is, is not a partial God but the **entire God**—God the Son, God the Father, and God the Spirit.
 4. The Word is God's definition, explanation, and expression; hence, the Word who became flesh—God manifested in the flesh—is God's **definition, explanation, and expression in the flesh**—John 1:18.
- C. In Christ dwells **all the fullness of the Godhead** bodily—Col. 2:9:
 1. *All the fullness of the Godhead* refers to the entire Godhead, to the **complete God**.
 2. Since the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the **fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit**.
 3. That all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the **Triune God is embodied in Him**—John 14:10.
 4. As the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, Christ is not only the Son of God but also the **entire God**.

Because God is abstract, mysterious, and invisible, there is the need for God to be the Word in order to **explain** Himself, **define** Himself, and **reveal** Himself. The Word in John 1:1 refers to the defined God, the explained and expressed God, the God revealed and made known to human beings. This Word is our Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. The **Word is the embodiment of the Triune God**. Although the Triune God is mysterious, He is nonetheless embodied in the Word. The Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of the mysterious and invisible God. The Triune God embodied in the Word is explained, defined, and expressed.

In John 1:14, the Word, the embodiment of the Triune God, became flesh. In the incarnated Christ God is **expressed in a man in the flesh**. This is according to God's plan. God's plan is to manifest Himself in man and through man in the flesh. John 1:14 continues to say that the Word, after becoming flesh "tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from a father), full of grace and reality." This indicates that the **Word was incarnated to declare God**. As the manifestation of God, Christ declared God in a way that was full of grace and reality. He declared God by presenting Himself as grace and reality. God, the very God of enjoyment, becomes grace and reality to us in Christ for our enjoyment. Through enjoying Him we gain Him as grace and reality. He declares God to man in the way of enjoyment.

Christ as the Father's only begotten Son declared God by the Word, life, light, grace, and reality (John 1:1, 4, 9, 14). The Word is God **expressed**, life is God **imparted**, light is God **shining**, grace is God **enjoyed**, and reality is God **realized**. It is by these things that **God is declared in the Son as His individual expression**. Christ explained, defined, declared, and expressed God, by being the Word incarnated to be life and light to man with grace and reality for man's enjoyment. It is in this way, God was declared to man in the Son. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: God, Christ, and the Spirit, Volume 1, chapter 13*)

Day 3

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 - But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all; The secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you.

Day 4

Ephesians 2:19 - So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Ephesians 1:22-23 - And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

II. First Timothy 3:15-16 indicates that **not only Christ Himself as the Head is the manifestation of God in the flesh **but also that the church** as the Body of Christ and the house of God is the manifestation of God in the flesh—the mystery of godliness:**

- A. *Godliness* in verse 16 refers not only to piety but also to the living of God in the church, that is, God as life **lived out** in the church to be **expressed**:
1. Both Christ and the church are the mystery of godliness, **expressing God in the flesh**.
 2. The **church life is the expression of God**; therefore, the mystery of godliness is the living of a proper church—1 Cor. 16; 14:24-25.

What is the church? The **church is God manifested in the flesh**. This is a mystery. At this time, if we are in a normal condition, one that is up to the standard, God will be manifested when we are meeting here together in His name and in His Spirit. Apparently, we are ordinary people who are outwardly no different from any other people, but there is a **mystery within us**. This mystery is the manifestation of God in the flesh. What kind of mystery is this? It is the mystery of godliness.

In the New Testament, godliness does not refer to being well-behaved, self-composed, or God-fearing. These are not godliness. In the New Testament, **godliness is God manifesting His image**. When God is manifested, it is because of a certain condition in your being, and that condition is godliness. For example, a person might honor and obey his parents very much, but what is manifested in that person is honoring of parents. Some people are very moral, proper, and righteous, well-behaved in everything, so you see morality in them. However, Christians should not manifest only these things. Strictly speaking, when we truly live in the seven Spirits and walk by the Spirit, the condition that is displayed in us is not only honoring of parents or morality but also **God being manifested**. This is far superior to honoring of parents or morality. There is a condition in a brother that cannot be described by human language. It is hard to say whether it is his honoring, being humble, or some other virtue. According to the Bible, it is **godliness**. Godliness is God manifested. God is manifested in that person by a certain condition so that people cannot help but glorify God. This condition is godliness. (The Subjective Truths in the Holy Scriptures, chapter 8)

Day 5

Ephesians 5:32 - This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

1 Corinthians 6:17 - But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

Day 6

Revelation 21:2 - And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:11 - Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

- B. God is manifested in the church—the house of God and the Body of Christ—as the **enlarged corporate expression** in the flesh—Eph. 2:19; 1:22-23:
 1. The manifestation of God in the flesh **began with Christ** when He was on earth—John 14:9.
 2. The manifestation of God in the flesh **continues with the church**, which is the increase, enlargement, and multiplication of the manifestation of God in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- C. When a church is taken care of according to what is written in 1 Timothy 1—3, the church will function as the **house of the living God** for His move on earth and as the **pillar and base of the truth**, bearing the reality of Christ and His Body—3:15.
- D. Such a church becomes the **continuation of Christ's manifestation of God in the flesh**—Christ lived out of the church as the manifestation of God—Eph. 5:32.
- E. This is God manifested in the flesh in a wider way according to the New Testament **principle of incarnation**—1 Cor. 7:40; Gal. 2:20:
 1. The principle of incarnation is that **God enters into man and mingles Himself with man** to make man one with Himself; thus, God is in man, and man is in God—John 15:4-5.

2. The principle of incarnation means that **divinity is brought into humanity and works with humanity**—1 Cor. 6:17; 7:40; 1 Tim. 4:1.
3. The New Testament principle of incarnation is that, in Christ and through Christ, the divine life and nature are **mingled** with the human life and nature so that we and God may have one life and one living—1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 2:20.
4. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 7 in the principle of incarnation:
 - a. The principle in verse 10 is the same as that in Galatians 2:20: the principle of incarnation—two **persons living as one person**.
 - b. In verses 25 and 40 of 1 Corinthians 7 we see the spirituality of a person who is so **one with the Lord** and **permeated with Him** that even his opinion **expresses the Lord's mind**.
 - c. If we are **saturated with the Spirit**, what we express will be our thought, but it will also be **something of the Lord** because we are one with Him— 6:17.
- F. The great mystery of godliness is that **God has become man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead** to produce a corporate God-man for the manifestation of God in the flesh—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; Eph. 4:24.
- G. Ultimately, God will be **manifested in the New Jerusalem** as the consummated corporate expression of the processed and consummated Triune God in the new heaven and new earth—Rev. 21:1-2, 10-11.

What does the mystery of godliness mean? It means that although we are men—some Chinese, some American, and some Japanese—when we sing and praise, a certain condition is manifested that makes people ask, “What is this?” This is not honoring of parents, nor is it morality; instead, it is a kind of indescribable condition. It is not merely noisy activity, nor is it excitement. These people are here in a kind of condition that is hard to describe and very mysterious, so it is difficult for people to understand.

If you get very excited when you watch basketball or baseball games, then others immediately know that you are a sports fan. When a baseball fan watches a baseball game, he gets excited. What about us? Here there is no baseball, basketball, or any other kind of ball. There is just a group of people sitting here who are well-behaved. They are neither too excited nor too formal; they neither laugh loudly nor laugh softly, but simply smile warmly. What is really happening here? Moreover, they keep coming here every morning and every evening just to hear such a person speak. He does not speak about astronomy, geography, politics, or military science, and he does not know anything about mathematics, technology, or other matters. Yet it seems that they are “addicted” and keep coming back to listen. What kind of “addiction” is this? This is “God addiction,” which is a mystery, the mystery of godliness. In this godliness **God is manifested—God is here**. This is why 1 Corinthians 14 says that if some unbeliever comes to the meeting, “falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you” (vv. 24-25). This is the mystery of godliness. (The Subjective Truths in the Holy Scriptures, chapter 8)

In summary, God manifested in the flesh implies God manifested **not only in Christ**, the Head, but also in the **church**, His Body. When Christ lived on the earth, God was manifested in the flesh of Christ; now in the church age, the same God is **manifested in the flesh of the believers**, who compose the church. This is the great mystery of godliness, that is, the great mystery of the expression of God. The manifestation of God first in the flesh of Christ and then in the flesh of the members of His Body is a great mystery. Such a manifestation of God in the flesh is witnessed by and justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, and taken up in glory. The manifestation of God in the flesh is also the truth, the reality, borne by the church of the living God. **Today the church is not only the manifestation of God in the flesh but also the bearer of the truth of the living God.** In the universe God alone is the reality, and this reality rests upon the church. Therefore, the church is the pillar and base of the truth, bearing the Triune God Himself, who is the unique reality in the universe. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: Experiencing, Enjoying, and Expressing Christ, Volume 2, chapter 363*)