

## **A Summary of True Religion**

Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1986

### **1 Timothy 3:16**

*“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.”*

I’m speaking today on this subject: “A SUMMARY OF TRUE RELIGION.” My text is found in 1 Timothy Chapter 3:16. I wish that you would open your Bible because I am going to stay pretty close to the text on the subject: “The Summary of True Religion.”

Here is the text: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified (or vindicated) in the Spirit, seen of the angels, preached to the Gentiles, (that is interesting) believed on in the world and received up into glory.”*

I have always felt that those who preach the Word of God or teach the Word in classes should do so with four things in mind. I don’t care who it is, me or anyone else. Those who preach the Word of God or teach the Word of God ought to do so with these four things:

First of all: They should preach or teach to the glory of God. We better have that in mind. *“Whatever we do in word or deed, do it for the glory of God. Whether you eat or drink, do it to the glory of God.”* That is the first thing that we have in mind in this business of preaching.

Second: We ought to have in mind the truth of the Word of God. What does God say; not what do I think or what does my generation believe, but what does the Word of God say? That is what I am interested in teaching or preaching.

Paul said to young Timothy, *“Preach the Word.”* We don’t preach politics; that is not our business. Civic affairs and prophecy are not our business; the Word of God is our business if we are preachers. Paul said to that group of elders; *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God.”*

Third: We ought to have this in mind, sincerity of purpose. What is your purpose in preaching? Is your purpose true conversion or just conversion? Is your purpose to get personal empires, building a personal empire for your own glory, getting followers, getting people to follow yourself? Are you interested in people coming to really know Christ?

Do you keep numbers, do you keep records? Why do you keep records, why do you keep numbers? Why do you put all of these things down, “how many, how much, how big?” Does that really matter?

What is our purpose? Is our purpose to glorify God, the good of sinners? Do we want men and women, boys and girls to know God or to know us? Do we want them to know our name or recognize our name? Why do we plaster our names all over everything? Why do we name things after ourselves?

I think we should also have simplicity in mind. You can't make people believe but you can make the message plain. You can't make a man believe the Word of God but at least you can preach it so he can understand what you are saying.

My text today, is the clearest, plainest, declaration of the mystery of Godliness that you can find anywhere. I call it the “summary, the sum and substance of true religion.” Look at it again without debate and without argument or controversy, “*Great is the mystery of Godliness,*” true religion.

*“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of the angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world and received up into glory.”* There it is! You will notice that this text deals not with trivial matters but with great and lofty themes.

There is no idle boasting of denominationalism here. There is no argument about Baptists, Methodists and Nazarenes, Catholic, Jewish, or Protestants. There are no names and no sectarianisms. The message to all men here is simply, God has come to earth.

There is no setting forth of complicated ceremonies of religion. There are no drops of water here. Nothing is said here about drops of water. Nothing is said here about incense. Nothing is said here about solemn assemblies. Nothing is said here about processions.

The message to all men is this, “*God's mercy in Christ.*” God has come to the earth. How simple, how clear and how plain it is.

There are no arguments here about laws, rules and regulations. Nothing is said about what I can do and what I can't do and still go to heaven when I die. It is the coming to earth of a person, not a system. God has come to this earth; it is the coming to earth of a person, not a rulebook, not a big, thick, constitution which a church has by which you are to live and abide.

The Gospel is the Gospel of a living Lord, not cold, dead-letter logic. The Gospel is not in believing facts but in loving Him. There is a difference!

In this text there is no speculation about prophecy. I'm so weary of pre-millennial, post-millennial, a-millennial and all the other millennia's. I'm so weary of people talking about what they think is going to happen. Who cares what is going to happen; I'm interested in what has already happened.

Christ has come to earth! This is a bold declaration of what has already taken place. "*God was manifest in the flesh.*" Do you see that? Without argument, Paul arises to his theme, He says; "*Without controversy* (we are not going to argue about this, without argument, without debate), *without controversy,*" this is the most amazing truth, ever declared by human tongue or heard by human ears.

This is the greatest most astounding announcement that has ever been made, "*God was manifest in the flesh,*" or it is the most astounding deception every pulled off on the human race. Which is it? I will tell you this, I can't afford to be indifferent to this matter.

If it is true, I have to believe it. If God did come in human flesh, if Jesus Christ is really God Almighty "*with Whom I have to do,*" I have to believe it. If it is deception I have to know it. Do you see what I am saying? This is the sum and substance of the whole matter. This is the theme, this is the summary of true religion. "*God was manifest in the flesh.*"

What are you saying preacher? Well, I am saying it as clearly as I know how to say it. I'm saying (let me quote some Scriptures in John 1) "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God: And by Him all things were made and without Him was not anything made that was made: And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" That is what I am saying.

The disciples said to Him one day, "*Show us the Father and it will suffice us.*" They wanted a glimpse of God. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "*Have I been so long time with you that you don't know Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. How sayest thou, then, show us the Father? I and the Father are one.*"

The angel announced His birth to Joseph. He said, "*Mary is going to bear a son and you will call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.*" This is a

fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah who said, "*Call His name Immanuel,*" (God with us).

In 1 John 5:20, the Scripture says this; "*We know that the Son of God has come.*" He came from heaven to earth. "*He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true even in His Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God.*"

Jesus Christ is not just a Prophet, a Healer, a Preacher, Teacher or a Messiah; He is all that but He is the True God. I'm saying that the manger in Bethlehem holds the God of glory in human flesh. I'm saying that the carpenter shop of Nazareth is the work-shop of God Himself.

I'm saying that the Son of the Highest became a "*man of sorrows.*" I'm saying that He who is "*Higher than the Heavens was made lower than the angels.*" I'm saying, "*The King of Kings and Lord of Lords took upon Himself the form of a servant.*" I'm saying, that in Him was life and yet He died on a cross. I'm saying that "*He who made woman was made of a woman.*"

All that He did depends on who He is. That is the reason this Scripture is summing up the sum and substance of true Godliness. The sum and substance of true religion, the first point is without debate or argument, "*God was manifest in human flesh.*" Don't go any further until you find out what that means. You are wasting your time.

Don't go to laws, rules and regulations; you are wasting your time. You have to find out who Jesus Christ is. If He is not God, then He is the biggest liar that ever walked on this earth. He said, "*I and the Father are one.*" He also said, "*He that hath seen Me hath seen God.*" That is what He said.

The Scripture says; He has the power to forgive sin and He has power to quicken the dead. Everyone that comes to Him has life. People that don't come to Him will be forever damned. A man that makes a statement like that is a liar if he can't back it up. If Jesus Christ is not God, then He is in hell and His bones are over there in a grave and they haven't found it yet. That is so! "*God was manifest in the flesh.*"

Preacher, aren't you a little queasy about making statements like that? Oh, no, not the least bit. I am sure and convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is God Almighty in human flesh. I am confident of it, sure of it and rest my eternal soul on it; if He is not, then you are lost, I am lost and we are wasting our time; we don't have a Saviour.

Second: The Scripture says, *“Great is the mystery of Godliness; He was justified in the Spirit.”* That is the Holy Spirit of God that Paul is talking about. What he is saying is that He was vindicated or justified. Justified means vindicated. The Holy Spirit of God vindicated and justified all of His claims, the claim that I just told you about. The Holy Spirit of God backed it up.

Jesus Christ said, *“I am God;”* the Holy Ghost backed it up. Jesus Christ said, *“He that has seen Me has seen the Father:”* the Holy Ghost backed it up. Jesus Christ said, *“Look unto Me and live;”* the Holy Spirit backed it all up. That is right!

The formation of His body in the womb of the virgin was by the Spirit of God. When He was baptized of John in the River Jordan, the Holy Spirit of God vindicated His claims and came down and abode upon Him.

When He was raised from the dead, He was raised by the Holy Spirit and His disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit when they were sent to preach His Gospel. Jesus Christ said, *“When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will take the things of Mine and show them to you.”*

The Holy Spirit is not going to speak of Himself; He is not going to glorify Himself; He is not going to brag on Himself and He is not going to exalt Himself; He is going to glorify Jesus Christ.

Christ said Himself, *“If I bear witness of Myself then My witness is not true; do not believe Me.”* If He is the only Word we have for this business; then let’s throw it away. He said, *“John the Baptist bore witness of Me; the works that I do bear witness of Me; the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me. The Scriptures bear witness of Me and the Holy Ghost glorifies Me.”* That is a string of witnesses isn’t it? All that we need *“let every Word be confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses.”* Yes sir; *“Great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.”*

Do you hear me? Do you understand it? You might say that you don’t believe it. That is all right, but do you understand it? That is what I am talking about when I say preaching in sincerity and simplicity. You do know what I said. It is not cloudy is it? *“God was manifest in the flesh and He was vindicated by the Spirit of God.”*

Has it ever occurred to you that the religious doings of men today, all this massive evangelism, football stadium crowds, civic center crowds, coliseum crowds and county-wide revivals that most of the religious doings of this day are not honored by heaven at all? Have you noticed that it does not attract the attention of heaven?

What men do today in religion is done by their promoting and by their organizing. They organize the whole thing and they promote the whole thing. How do they get these great offerings? They do it by telethons. God doesn't send it, they promote it.

There is begging, telethons, selling, building, programs and promotions. Nothing is supplied by heaven. We are supplying it. Nothing is supernatural. Nothing is great, nothing is angelic and nothing is heavenly. There is nothing unusual or nothing that is spontaneously produced; we organize it.

My soul, with a little bit of organization, with a little bit of promotion and with a little bit of advertisement, we can get a full length ad in the paper. We can get all the churches organized. We can work two years ahead of time. In some of these revival campaigns, they begin work on them two years ahead of time.

They should have a crowd there by the time the evangelist hits town. They have advertised in every magazine, radio, TV and newspaper. People have promised to come. People have been button-holed, begged and bribed. God didn't fill up that building; we did it.

Everything that Jesus Christ did was recognized by heaven and it was recognized without any promotional programs, organizations or selling supernaturally. At His birth, the angels appeared; nobody sent for them or no one advertized; they appeared. A star appeared in heaven also. God recognized it.

In the wilderness of temptation the angels ministered to Him. At the tomb, the men came to the tomb. Who did they meet? They didn't meet a public relations man. They didn't meet an advanced director of the revival; they met an angel. He said, "*Why do you seek the living among the dead: He is not here: He is risen?*"

At His ascension, when the disciples stood out there and the Lord talked to them and was taken up into the heavens with a cloud, who appeared? An angel appeared and said, "*You men of Galilee; why do you stand around here looking up into heaven: this same Jesus which is taken up from you shall so come in like manner?*" When He comes again there will be, "*the sound of the trumpet, the voice of the arch angels.*" In Hebrews it says, "*Let all the angels of God worship Him.*"

I'm talking about "godliness." I'm not talking about playing games. I'm not talking about religious shenanigans; I'm not talking about religious programs and promotions; I

am talking about “*godliness.*” “*God was manifest in the flesh, vindicated by the Holy Ghost and seen (announced and witnessed) by the angels of God.*”

If God is in anything, God will own it and God will bless it; you won't have to promote it. You won't have to pay for it; God will. You won't have to go into the red and have all the creditors chasing you. You won't have to have debts all over the country; if God is in it He will pay His bill.

He will pay your bill without you begging, selling, bribing and giving things away. You won't have to tell people that you are going off the air if they don't send you a dime or a dollar. God pays His bills! I'm telling you the truth. If you keep promoting these charlatans and hucksters and money-mad covetous preachers on TV, then you are a part of their evil deeds.

If it is a work of faith; let's quit talking about it and let's quit begging; there is no faith involved in it anyway. If you have to turn to a man and ask him for anything, then faith went out the window. Abraham said, “*I have lifted my hand to God and I will not reach my hand out to any man.*” I'm talking about no man. If God is in it, He will supply the need. I am telling you the truth!

Fourth, “*He was preached to the Gentiles.*” What is so unusual about that? Do you mean that the Gospel of God's grace in Christ is preached unto the Gentiles? Is that a mystery preacher? Is that a miracle? Boy; it sure is! The Jews once said this, “The nearest thing to God is an angel and the farthest thing away from God is a Gentile dog.” That is what they thought.

The Gentiles didn't have a tabernacle; they didn't have a prophet; they didn't have a high priest; they didn't have a mercy seat; they didn't have a holy of holies and they didn't have the atonement. In Ephesians 2, the Scripture says; “*You remember, (you pagans, that is what He calls us) wherefore remember that you being in times past you were Gentiles in the flesh called uncircumcision. At that time you were without Christ, strangers to the Covenant, having no hope and without God in this world.*” That is a Gentile!

Let's read that again, “*Without Christ, without hope and without God;*” that is a Gentile. Here is good news; here is a miracle of God's grace. This Gospel of God's mercy in Christ is preached to us Gentiles. That's right; I am a Gentile but in Christ I am a Jew. I am true Israel. I am a true son and a seed of Abraham.

They have a lot of battles going on across the ocean between the Ishmaelite and the Israelites (the Arabs and the Jews or Israelites). Let me tell you something, the Ishmaelite who knows Christ is the true seed of Abraham. The true seed of Abraham is not an Israelite who does not know Christ. An Ishmaelite or an Arab who knows Christ is the true seed of Christ and is true Israel.

That group over there battling is not true Israel because they do not know Christ. True, spiritual Israel and a true Jew is “*one who is inwardly a Jew*” and inwardly an Israelite, not one outwardly. I am telling you the truth; it says that in Romans 2: 28 and 29. You see; the seed of Abraham is Christ. All who are in Christ are sons of Abraham.

Fifth, it says in the next part of this “*mystery of godliness, He is believed on.*” Jesus Christ is believed on in the world.

“*God was manifest in the flesh*” and some people actually believe that. That’s right; there are some people that believe that God was manifest in the flesh. They actually believe that God inhabited a human body.

There are some people in this world, believe it or not, who actually believe that Almighty God who rules and reigns in heaven and in earth who created all things, actually came down here. They actually believe that very God of very God came down here. They actually believe that Christ walked on this earth for 33 ½ years in a body of flesh and was “*tempted and tested and tried in all points as we are.*”

He wearied, He hungered, He thirsted, He slept, He bled and He died. There are actually some people that believe that. It is a miracle; saving faith is a miracle. You don’t expect anybody to believe that do you? You won’t believe it without saving grace.

Do you mean to tell me that you expect me to believe that is my God hanging on that cross? No, I don’t expect you to believe that without a miracle of God’s grace taking place in your heart. It will have to be a miracle. You are not going to believe that by nature.

I will tell you what you will believe (left to yourself); you won’t believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God but you will believe that you can go down to the river and get baptized and it will wash your sins away. That is dumber than the other! That’s right!

Some of you believe that if you give 10% of your income to God, God will prosper you and take you to heaven. That is the dumbest thing that I have ever heard! That’s right!



Some of you believe that if you join a church and get sprinkled when you are a baby, your momma and daddy brings you to church and some priest sprinkles water in your face that it confirms you in a covenant and takes you to heaven when you die. That's dumber than anything I have ever heard!

You see; the miracle of godliness is not so outrageous and astounding after all compared to some of the dumb things that we believe. A true disciple of Christ believes that Jesus Christ is God Almighty and that He lived on this earth and died on a cross and redeemed us from our sins by satisfying all that the justice of God demands. That is a miracle that should be believed! I believe it and some of you believe it don't you?

You know, men know of God's existence but His essence has to be revealed. Men know about God's works but His will and His wisdom in Christ has to be revealed. That comes by revelation. Men know about God's power but His purpose in Christ has to be revealed. We have to know how that He can be "*Just and Justifier.*"

Why did Christ die on the cross? He died to enable God to be Just and Justifier. Why did He live on this earth and thirst and hunger? Why was He weary and why did He know pain, temptation and trial? The reason was to fulfill the law of God which must be obeyed. He represented a people. That has to be revealed. Men know about miracles but mercy has to be revealed. Men know about judgment but God is "*Just and Justifier*" and this has to be revealed.

True conversion and salvation is more than a decision. They will say, "Have you made your decision? This is your hour of decision." I hear so much of that. Salvation is more than a decision; it is a new creation in Christ. Salvation is more than an acceptance of facts. They say, "Do you believe that Jesus died, was buried and rose again; then you are saved?"

No, you are not; the devil believes that. Salvation is not just accepting some facts and doctrine. Salvation is a living union with the living Lord; it is a miracle of God's grace. It is a new creation in Christ; a miracle that God accomplishes. "*Great is the mystery of Godliness,*" that Jesus Christ is actually believed on in the world. That is a mystery and a miracle! He is received up into glory as our Representative and our Mediator.