

Today's focus (even more so than normal), is on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next section we're coming to in 1 Timothy (Chapter 4), in my bible it gives it the heading "Some will depart from the faith". And basically we're going to be warned, that wherever truth is flourishing, error raises its ugly head, and some will fall from the faith...

But there is one verse before we get into that section. And today, we're going to study just that **one** verse. It's a verse about the faith we hold fast **to** – it's about the Lord Jesus Christ...

And because today's reading is a very short one, I might just read it myself.

1 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

There you have it: One verse, but for me, today, the challenge is going to be "knowing when to stop"...

*When I was a student at Ag College, there was a whole bunch of us from my home-town of Goondiwindi, arrived there in the same year. **Most** of us had been in the same school; Some of us had been in the same church... We knew each other pretty well – at least I thought we did.*

One day though, I was talking with a lad who, over the years, he'd been a really good mate; and we'd grown up in the same church and youth group; we'd been to the same youth camps... Anyway, we were talking about faith stuff, and my mate said to me:

I'm only a Christian because I was born in Australia and brought up as a Christian. If I was born in the Middle East and my parents were Muslims, I'd be a Muslim. And if I was born in India, I'd probably be a Hindu... There's no big difference... It's just the way we're brought up...

And that's the day I realised that my mate wasn't a Christian.

Christianity is not (at all) a different flavour of the same thing. It's not at all a product of a nation's customs or culture...

Being a Christian is about having an unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – the one Who

- is unique, because he's **not** just a man
- supreme and distinct among men

There is only one God, and there is no other....

¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

Godliness, is following the Lord Jesus Christ – none other – only the Lord Jesus... It's surrendering ourselves to Him, and **worshipping** Him, and **only** Him.

In the Scriptures, when we talk about the mystery of the Gospel/godliness, we're not talking about a mystery as in we can't understand it – it's more of an unveiling (*Here's the mystery prize – Tada!!! It's now been revealed*)... It's something, which at one time, had mankind universally stumped,, but **now** it's been made known. It once was hidden, but now it's revealed...

Ever since the creation of the world, and even today, the quest for many has been the quest for godliness... Some:

- are searching for the meaning **of** life (not 42);
- are searching for the meaning **in** life;
- are on a quest for spiritual enlightenment;
- looking for meaning beyond themselves, and even beyond the physical realm;
- turn to drugs and hallucinogens to try and connect themselves beyond what they know;
- dabble in the spirit world, looking for knowledge or power from what they don't know are demons;
- taste various world religions, hoping to find something that satisfies them;
- make their own religion smoothie (Put the bits they like from all the different religions, blend them up together, add a few of their own hopes and dreams, and that's what they decide is godliness)

Many believe, there's something out there, and "*I believe in something,,, I just don't know what...*"

We don't have to go down any of those roads. The mystery of godliness has been revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

This, is our Lord.

He was manifested in the flesh

How can one know God? How can we mere mortals ever hope to know and be known by the God who created the Heavens and the Earth and the whole Universe?

Many **false** religions appeal to the arrogance of man, and the teaching is: "Through certain disciplines and practices, I get more and more spiritual, so that I can come to know God... -

I can achieve a higher state, until “I’m with god”, or “I am god”... We bring ourselves up to God...

Let me let you in on a little secret: That’s a whole lot of cods-wallop... There’s nothing that a man or a woman can do, to bring themselves up to God... Nor is there anything that a man can do, to bring God down to us...

The mystery of Godliness, is God humbled Himself. And took on flesh... Our perfect creator God, became a skin-bag of meat & bones & bowels...

When Jesus was born, we call this “the incarnation”. God became man.

And He didn’t only choose to be born (and born in the most humble of circumstances) – He chose to be executed as the most despised of criminals...

But how do we know that this man “Jesus”, is God? How do we know that He was something special – that He wasn’t just an ordinary man???

We know this, because He was:
vindicated [or justified] **by the Spirit,**

That means, He was shown to be righteous by the Holy Spirit...

How???

Well, it was prophesied about Him before His birth.

- He will be called Immanuel, which means “God with us”
- He would be righteous (Jeremiah 23:5)

When He was born, the Angels proclaimed, “He is Christ The Lord” (Luke 2:11).

When Jesus was Baptised, The Spirit of God descended like a dove and landed on Him, and a voice from Heaven said: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

At the Mount of transfiguration, Jesus was transfigured and became bright white, and a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” (Matt 17)

But of course, the **ultimate** vindication – the ultimate justification, is that He was raised from the dead... By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus lives.

He was
seen by angels,

- The Angels were there before his birth;
- after his birth;

- they were there at the tomb, after He was raised from the dead...

And now, He walks where Angels tread...

The Lord Jesus Christ, is above angels and demons. Angels are mere messengers for our Lord.

It's interesting (you know), that throughout the Scriptures, when an angel appears to someone, the most common reaction is that they immediately fall down before the angel (in holy fear) and worship him. And the angels say, "No No No, don't worship us – we're just the messenger"... The Angels worship Jesus... He is the one for us to worship.

He was
proclaimed among the nations,

The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the hinge-point of history. It's where on the calendar BC and AD meet...

In 1966, John Lennon (Beatles) said:

*"Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that; I know I'm right and I will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now. I don't know which will go first – rock & roll or Christianity..."*ⁱ

What a bold and arrogant statement that is "We're more popular than Jesus"...

The thing is, the popularity of the Beatles is not at all what it once was. Nor do I believe they were ever more popular than Jesus... But the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ has been proclaimed among the nations for around 2000 years. And the Christian church is growing and growing and growing...

And wherever the Name of Jesus is proclaimed:

- people are saved;
- Men & women; Boys & Girls, are transformed as they commit their hearts to Him;
- This very day, hundreds of millions of people will gather together in churches across the globe... From large auditoriums in big cities, to backyard verandas in the bush, the faithful will be coming together with one purpose, and it won't be to listen to Beatles records... It will be to worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

And as the Name of Jesus is proclaimed today, the Holy Spirit will heal the hearts of the broken and bring joy where there is sorrow...

Because He **was** and **is**:

believed on in the world,

When Jesus walked this earth, at times, His love and His teaching, would attract the multitudes. But then he'd give a hard teaching, and the numbers would dwindle to a mere few...

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, He was deserted by all but a few women... But when He rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples. And can you believe the astonishment; the joy (“Guess who!!!”), and they believed.

Poor old Thomas (forever known as doubting Thomas),,,, wasn't there the first time Jesus appeared... And he said, “Unless I stick my hands in his wounds, I'll never believe... But then 8 days later, Jesus turned up again, and this time He said to Thomas: **John 20:25-29 (ESV) ...“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”**

28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said to him, **“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

Do **you** believe? Do you believe that Jesus lives? Some people will tell you, “Only an imbecile will believe that sort of stuff... But history has a different story. *Some of the brightest minds, and some of the most influential figures of History believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ...*

And they stake everything they have and are, on the fact that Jesus is Lord...

And He was:
taken up in glory.

The Son ascended to the Father. And some think “Oh, that’s sad. If only Jesus could be with us now.” Exactly!!! That’s precisely the reason the Son ascended to the Father... if Jesus was still here physically, I wouldn’t get a chance to talk to him because someone more godly than me would be hogging him...

And so, Jesus ascended to the Father, so that He could send His Holy Spirit to live in us. In Colossians 1:27 Paul tells us that this is the mystery that’s been revealed: **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

Christ in us. He is as close as God can be...

How do you explain that to someone? Once you’ve experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, it serves to strengthen our belief... But how can you explain it to someone who doesn’t believe???

The presence of the Holy Spirit because Christ has been taken up in glory???

And now today, we await His return... The Lord will return to judge the living and the dead.

Until that day, we continue to confess Christ.

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godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

This is the mystery of Godliness, as we:

- live for Jesus;
- proclaim Jesus;
- await Jesus...

This is what we stand firm in.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,
We praise Your holy Name.

- You are King;
- You are Lord;
- You are supreme.

There is no other God.

- God the Father
- God the Son
- God the Holy Spirit,

Yet there is One God...

The God who revealed Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ.
The God who now lives in us by His Holy Spirit...

We praise You,
that You have made Yourself known.

You are Lord,
Amen.

ⁱ <https://groovyhistory.com/beatles-more-popular-than-jesus-lennon>