

# 1 Timothy 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness** (καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον, kai homologoumenōs mega estin to tēs eusebeias mystērion)—'by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness.' Homologoumenōs means confessedly, admittedly, universally acknowledged. Mystērion is mystery—revealed truth. What follows is likely an early Christian hymn or confession about Christ:

**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**—This sixfold confession celebrates Christ's incarnation (manifest in flesh), vindication (justified in Spirit—His resurrection), angelic witness, global proclamation, worldwide faith, and ascension. Phaneroō (manifest) means revealed, made visible. Dikaioō (justified) means vindicated, declared righteous.

The 'mystery of godliness' is Christ Himself—God incarnate. This poetic confession summarizes the gospel: divine Son took flesh, died, rose vindicated by the Spirit, was witnessed by angels, proclaimed to nations, believed worldwide, and ascended in glory. This is Christianity's heart—not abstract philosophy but historical Person and events.

## Historical Context

---

Early Christian worship included hymns and confessions summarizing core beliefs (Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20). This may be a liturgical piece the Ephesian church sang or recited. The sixfold structure (possibly originally three couplets in Greek) presents Christ's story from incarnation to ascension—the gospel in poetic form. These confessions served both worship and teaching, embedding theology in memorable forms.

## Related Passages

---

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

---

1. Why is Christ Himself called 'the mystery of godliness'—how does He reveal godly living?
2. How does this sixfold confession summarize the entire gospel story?
3. What role do hymns and confessions play in teaching and reinforcing core Christian beliefs?

## Interlinear Text

---

καὶ	ὁμολογουμένως	μέγα	ἐστὶν	τὸ	τῆς	εὐσεβείας
And	without controversy	great	is	G3588	G3588	of godliness
G2532	G3672	G3173	G2076			G2150
μυστήριον·	Θεὸς	ἐφανερώθη	ἐν	σαρκί	ἐδικαιώθη	ἐν
the mystery	God	was manifest	in	the flesh	justified	in
G3466	G2316	G5319	G1722	G4561	G1344	G1722
πνεύματι	ὥφθη	ἀγγέλοις	ἐκηρύχθη	ἐν	ἔθνεσιν	
the Spirit	seen	of angels	preached	in	the Gentiles	
G4151	G3700	G32	G2784	G1722	G1484	
ἐπιστεύθη	ἐν	κόσμῳ	ἀνελήφθη	ἐν	δόξῃ	
believed on	in	the world	received up	in	glory	
G4100	G1722	G2889	G353	G1722	G1391	

## Additional Cross-References

---

**John 1:14** (Glory): 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.

**Hebrews 1:3** (Glory): Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

**Mark 16:19** (References God): So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

**Romans 16:25** (Parallel theme): Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

**Luke 24:4** (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

**Colossians 1:23** (Faith): If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was

preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

**1 Peter 1:12** (Spirit): Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

**1 Peter 3:22** (References God): Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

**1 John 1:2** (Parallel theme): (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

**Isaiah 9:6** (References God): For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.