

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying Message Nine : The Function of the Church (2) — The Corporate Manifestation of God in the Flesh

I. Overview:

The New Testament does not say that only the Son of God was incarnated; it reveals that God was manifested in the flesh. God was manifested in the flesh as the entire Triune God. In His ministry in the stage of incarnation, Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man; Christ is therefore the incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man. The Word, who is God, became flesh; which means in the likeness, in the fashion, of man. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. All the fullness of the Godhead refers to the entire Godhead, to the complete God. Both Christ and the church are the mystery of godliness, expressing God in the flesh. God is manifested in the church as the enlarged corporate expression in the flesh. When a church is taken care of, 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. The principle of incarnation means that divinity is brought into humanity and works with humanity. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 7 in the principle of incarnation. 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.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound the meaning of the word 'godliness' in 1 Timothy 3:16.

The word godliness in 1 Timothy 3:16 means "God-likeness." Hence, this verse indicates that human beings may have the appearance, the expression, and the manifestation of God. In the context of this verse, the phrase the mystery of godliness means that God in His mystery can be manifested and expressed in the flesh, in human beings. Godliness is God manifested in the flesh; the mystery of godliness is God manifested in human beings.

B. Explain the words in John 1:1 & 1:14.

The Word, who is God, became flesh. 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 (v. 18). God was manifested in the flesh not only as the Son but as the entire Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Day 2 —

A. Expound that Bible reveals God's heart's desire.

God's good pleasure, God's heart's desire, is to have many sons for the expression of His Son so that He may be expressed in the Son through the Spirit. For this purpose, God has manifested Himself, first in Christ as an individual expression in the flesh and then in the church, the Body of Christ, as the enlarged corporate expression in the flesh. Ultimately, God will be manifested in the New Jerusalem.

B. Explain that Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead.

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 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.

Day 3 —

A. Explain the meaning of the conjunction 'And' in First Timothy 3:16.

First Timothy 3:16 begins with 'And'. The conjunction here indicates that Paul has not finished speaking about the church in verse 15. The church is the house of the living God and the pillar and base of the truth. Paul's use of the conjunction at the beginning of verse 16 indicates that the church is something even more than the house of the living God and the pillar and base of the truth. The church is also the mystery of godliness.

B. Expound that God expressing is a great thing.

Godliness refers to God expressed; the angels recognize and appreciate that. When the Lord Jesus was born, a host of angels praised God. If the angels had seen the church of Christ's increase and enlargement, would they also rejoice at it? Furthermore, when the Lord Jesus, living out God and manifesting Him on earth, confronted the

demons, the demons cried out. No doubt when the church is living out God and manifesting Him, the demons and the evil angels will be terrified.

Day 4 —

A. Expound “seen by angels” and “preached among the nations” in 1 Timothy 3:16.

In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul also says “seen by angels.” Angels saw the incarnation, human living, and ascension of Christ. Christ was also preached among the nations. Christ as God’s manifestation in the flesh has been preached as the gospel among the nations, including the nation of Israel, from the day of Pentecost. Furthermore, Christ has been “believed on in the world.” Christ as the embodiment of God in the flesh has been believed on, received as Savior and life, by people in the world.

B. Explain 1 Timothy 3:16 with the phrase taken up in glory.

This refers to Christ’s ascension into glory. According to the sequence of historical events, Christ’s ascension preceded His being preached among the nations. However, it is listed here as the last step in Christ’s being the manifestation of God in the flesh. This must indicate that the church too is taken up in glory. Hence, it implies that not only Christ Himself as the Head but also the church as the Body are the manifestation of God in the flesh.

Day 5 —

A. Expound the significance of the godliness in 1 Timothy 3:16.

Not only Christ Himself as the Head is the manifestation of God in the flesh but also the church as the Body of Christ and the house of God is the manifestation of God in the flesh— the mystery of godliness. Both Christ and the church are the mystery of godliness, expressing God in the flesh. The mystery of godliness is the living of a proper church. God is manifested in the church as His enlarged corporate expression in the flesh.

B. Explain the principle of incarnation.

The manifestation of God in the flesh began with Christ when He was on earth. The manifestation of God in the flesh continues with the church. This is God manifested in the flesh in a wider way according to the New Testament principle of incarnation. The principle of incarnation is that God enters into man and mingles Himself with man to make man one with Himself.

Day 6 —

A. Expound that exercise unto godliness is profitable for all things.

We need to exercise ourselves unto the manifestation of God in our flesh in all things. Paul compares exercise unto godliness to bodily exercise. Physical exercise benefits our health, but it is profitable only for a little. It does not compare to the profit of exercise unto godliness. Exercise unto godliness is profitable for all things.

B. Fellowship the pattern of brother Muller left behind.

After George Muller was saved, he became a godly man. The first thing he did every morning was to read the Bible and pray, mingling his prayer with the reading of the Word. Müller’s practice to combine his prayer with his reading of the Word of God no doubt contributed to his long life. The word of God washes away our worries and anxieties and will help us to be healthy both spiritually and physically.

III. Conclusion:

In the church we are expressing God. Each local church must be a place where Christ is regenerated into the saints. Furthermore, every local church must live out God to shorten the days of the devil. On the one hand, when the church measures up to God’s standard, the angels will sing and rejoice; on the other hand, the devil and evil angels will be with fear and trembling. When the church is properly taken care of and the overseeing of the elders with service of deacons is fully established, then the church will function as the house of the living God for His move on earth; and there is the divine reality of Christ and His Body for a testimony to the world. Thus the church becomes the continuation of Christ as God manifested in the flesh.