

1Tim 24-03-17a

Good morning, we are here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is the 17th of March 2024. We're continuing our study in the Gospel of the Mystery as communicated to us from God through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Apostle Paul.

We got here by investigating 1 Timothy 3, and at verse 16, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. The mystery, and this led us to the sevenfold mystery. Paul labels seven different things as mysteries that were entrusted to him for revelation to the church.

They were not heretofore revealed to God's apostles and prophets. So we've been taking a look at those one at a time. The first one is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is in our passage, God was manifested in the flesh.

Of course, God, if you look at your New King James footnote, has been added with an effort at clarity, but it just says, great is the mystery of genuine religion, and who was manifested. So there's no direct reference to God or Christ in this summary, but we know it is talking about the Lord Jesus Christ who was manifested in the flesh. So that's the current focus of our study.

We're going to pick up where we left off, looking at the one another commands and the sphere in which the incarnation of Jesus Christ matters to us in terms of application. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, what a privilege to come into your presence, sanctified by the blood of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our savior, qualified to represent ourselves, to function as priests under our high priest after the order of Melchizedek, to be considered to be family, your family, your sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the firstborn, and we share in so many wonderful potentials, blessings, and privileges through him. We're grateful for that standing. It is a wonderful thing to live in this age and to be drawn closer to you through the Lord Jesus as we spend time together in fellowship and in seeking a better understanding of your word.

We ask that your Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts, give us understanding, shine light on our paths so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and that glorifies the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name. Amen.

So in connection with this idea of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we are looking at the scriptures to understand what that means to us. And there are at least two important aspects of it. We've looked at the first, which is the function that we have as body of Christ.

If he was incarnate and left, and he is now the head of the church and we are his body,

we are in some ways exercising functions that were accomplished when the Lord Jesus was here physically and personally. And this is shining the light of the glory of God, God creating that light and that glory in us so that others will be drawn to the father as they see the fruit of our lives. Jesus called this good works.

Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. Jesus has entrusted this function to us and we sometimes succeed and we sometimes fail, but this is an aspect of the incarnation. And we fully, we enter into one of the other mysteries revealed by Christ, which is the mystery of the indwelling of the Lord Jesus and Christ formed in you the hope of glory.

These interrelate, they are part and parcel of the same gospel. They are aspects and they connect and influence one another. And one of the best ways to reflect the presence of Jesus Christ in his role of glorifying the father for us is to experience and to cultivate the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To have his word and to guard it, to keep it, is to experience the presence of all three members of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit never leaves us, but the son and the father will come to us and make their home with us if we have the words of the Lord Jesus and keep them. This is an essential, probably the most important aspect related to the incarnation is that Christ is in a sense, metaphorically speaking, reincarnated in us as we have his words and keep them.

Faith and obedience, the presence of Christ, this is why where two or three are gathered in his name, he is there in the midst. This brings the effect, the function, the fruit of the presence of Jesus Christ into the present in and through us. What a privilege.

But we have to understand, we have to know his words and keep them. Of course, that led us to the words of Jesus. And we saw that extensive list of the words of Jesus, his commandments, and you should have a fulsome list of those.

I'm not going to review them, but that brings us then to the idea of incarnation that is misunderstood in some ways with respect to the image of God. How do we fulfill the words of the Lord Jesus, the commands that he has given us to love one another, for example. And there is a misunderstanding that is quite widespread in the professing church today with respect to who should be the recipients of this love.

Love your enemies and these other commands related to love and the treatment of others from the Lord Jesus, as well as in the apostolic writings, are not indiscriminate. They are conditional and we need to be wise in the implementation and the obedience that we express toward these commands. Otherwise, we are going to go astray.

There's a way that seems right to us, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. It doesn't actually reflect the glory of God because it winds up being spirituality by works.

It isn't done in God's way and doesn't fulfill God's command.

So, having looked at the words of the Lord Jesus, we are now looking at this idea of God reflected in man in general. And this took us back to Genesis 1, 26 through 28, where God makes man, makes Adam in his image and after his likeness and gives him dominion. And the definition of the image is not dominion, but the function to the extent that mankind exercises dominion, he is reflecting a delegated authority and a delegated responsibility from God.

Almost any time you see a reference to the image of God, especially in the Old Testament, you see it connected to this idea that there is structure and there is function that God originally exercised and he has now devolved that onto mankind. So, first five and a half days of creation, God has dominion over the earth and the creatures, but he assigns this to man on day six. We will make him in our image after our likeness, let him have dominion.

And that is the function. So, to the extent that those functions are accomplished in mankind, there is an echo, there is a representation of the image of God, but this is not an individual sanctified spark. There isn't something of God present in every man.

This is a misunderstanding of man made in God's image. Mankind is made in God's image to fulfill delegated functions related to dominion. This extends to authority and it reaches its fullness and its God glorifying expression.

For example, in the church with the head of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ and the head of Christ is the father. And in Ephesians chapter four, Paul details this and this is where we see more and more of the recovery of that image of God that was lost at the fall. Adam in his perfection in the garden and Eve with him experienced this divine sanctified presence and reflection, but it is lost at the fall.

It is lost in the first Adam. It is recovered in the last Adam. And this is why there is such an emphasis in the New Testament on Christ, who is the image of God.

The details of this, we began last time and are looking in detail at because our treatment of others is not based on there is the image of God. Therefore, we should treat them with all of the one another commands, all of the enemy love commands. Everything applies to everybody because everyone has the image of God.

This is a very common misapprehension in the Christian world today. And we have seen that the scriptures distinguish for us those who are outside, those who are our neighbor and those who are brethren and one another's. And in our close personal contact, intimate circle.

And there are different applications of the law of love, the command to express love and to have love depending on the target. So it's important to understand who these people

are. And so we have seen that the Bible references those who are outside.

And as a quick review of that, Jesus told his own disciples in Matthew 10, 16, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. In the parable of the sheep and goats, there are clearly two different categories of people in the nations. Some are destined for the kingdom of the father and others are destined for eternal fire.

And they are not the same. And there is no Imago Dei there that Jesus says, well, you were made in the image and therefore your fate will be different because of that. God doesn't begin to inflict judgment and then say, oh, but wait, you were made in my image.

So I've got to step back. I'm going to treat you differently. Whatever one's understanding of the image of God is, when you look in scriptures, you don't find any reference to a change in whether we should associate or separate, whether we should maintain contact or step away based on this argument.

This is a human argument that takes that true concept of image of God and misapplies it. Mark 4, 11, the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those on the outside, everything is in parables. There are the insiders and the outsiders.

People don't like this exclusivity. They don't like the notion that, well, doesn't it say God is no respecter of persons? Taking that out of context, Colossians 4, 5, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. There is love for one another on the inside.

There are many opportunities for our spiritual gift to be expressed and to bless others. And we can be blessed by the gifts that are in the body, but things that happen in the body are by definition different than those that are outside the body. We walk in love toward those who are inside.

We walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. And like the serenity prayer, we can pray for the wisdom to know the difference. You cannot exercise the same type of love that is commanded and is fruitful and beneficial and edifying within the body toward those who are outside.

So walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Ephesians, that was Colossians 4, 5. Ephesians 5, 15, pay careful attention then to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, the wise walk, the worthy walk. Pay careful attention.

And in both cases, when Paul talks about redeeming the time, it's in the context of walking wisely. So Colossians 4, 5, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Ephesians 5, 15, and 16, pay careful attention then to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.

And it is a waste of time. It is poor stewardship. It causes problems rather than solving

them.

If we misdirect love, and if we fail to walk in wisdom, really important concept. First Thessalonians 4, 12, if you read the preceding context, which I'm not going to review, you will behave properly toward outsiders without being dependent on anyone. Live your life quietly, work with your own hands, mind your own business, do not let your good be spoken of as evil and so on.

You will behave properly toward outsiders. Behaving properly is a significant distance from love one another. Behaving properly is a different standard, a different sphere.

That's First Thessalonians 4, 12. We've already seen in our current passage, First Timothy 3, 7, someone who desires to be an overseer in the church, within the body, must have a good report of those who are outside. Shouldn't have a bad reputation in the eyes of outsiders because this reflects on the church, and this is a discouragement and a basket over the light that should shine.

On a lampstand to draw people to Christ and through him to God. We saw the context in First Corinthians 5, 12, and 13. Paul distinguishes the judging of those who are outside and judging those who are within, and it is once again emphasizing that you've got to know the difference between those who are inside and those who are outside and act accordingly.

There are different standards, different commands, different requirements. We are not indiscriminate. People want to dumb down Christianity.

Well, it's just easy. Just love everybody. Pay no attention.

Don't discern. It doesn't matter if somebody is a wolf in sheep's clothing because I don't distinguish between wolves and sheep. We've already seen that Jesus told his disciples, I am sending you as sheep among wolves, and you need to know the difference.

There are those who will accept you in my name, and there are those who will not. They will condemn you and they will attack you for my name's sake, and you have to know the difference. And you have to know the commands that pertain, and that's what our study is currently.

And we saw all of those references in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 13, 5, 17, 7, 17, 12, 21, 21, 22, 21, and Judges 20, 13, that all deal with identifying those who do not belong inside and removing them either by dismissing them out of the fellowship or by actual capital punishment. You must purge the evil from among you. We cannot be accepting of everything and everybody.

You can't overlook perversion and immorality in the name of brotherly love. When there is perversion and immorality, we are commanded to purge it. That's the Old Testament

example, and it is the New Testament command.

So when you go to 2 Corinthians 6, O Corinthians, verse 11, we have spoken openly to you. Our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us.

You are restricted by your own affections. You are misdirecting your affections. I am speaking to you as to children.

You need to be receptive. Verse 14, 2 Corinthians 6, 14, do not be unequally yoked together with the faithless. Your King James, New King James says, unbelievers, the word in Greek is apisteia, alpha privative.

It does not exist. It isn't there. Pisteia is faith.

You don't have to determine somebody's salvation status. Well, when you were six and a half, did you go to vacation Bible school and get saved? Those who are walking in a faithless manner, this is not hard to distinguish. Now, it doesn't say purge them from among you here.

What does it say? Don't be yoked together. There is a difference in cattle that are standing in a field, have free association and can get next to each other or maintain a distance. And those that are yoked, those that are bound together, one cannot leave the other.

And the command here in 2 Corinthians 6, 14 is do not be unequally yoked. Notice unequally. A faithful believer and a faithless believer, for example, are not equal, not equal.

And when there is that inequality in the realm of faith, just a vast difference between its presence and its health and its growth and its function. And someone who is completely apathetic and indifferent, and though they may have their name in the book of life somewhere, it doesn't show. It's not in evidence.

So when we were first going over the commands for those who are outside and it says, don't meet, don't greet, don't eat, maintain a full separation, we say, well, what about people in my periphery? This is why it is so important to go over the scriptures because there are different standards for people in different status. And this is not outsiders. This is to the Corinthians.

And this is toward the end of Paul's second letter. Then he has told him all kinds of things about being unified. Remember 1 Corinthians, the whole opening section of that letter is I hear that there are divisions among you and it should not be so.

Well, for every truth of scripture, you've heard me say this many times for every truth of scripture, there is at least one other truth that balances it and prevents us from taking it

to an extreme. There is a time to unite and there is a time to divide. There is a time to be intimate and there is a time to separate.

And determining that time is why we're looking at these scriptures. So, O Corinthians, we are speaking to you as children. Do not be unequally yoked together with faithless ones.

Now, how faithless do they have to be? If they don't agree with me on the finer points of non-essential things, is that faithless? They don't believe what I believe about the timing of the rapture. They don't believe what I believe about the image of God or whatever it might be. Here is Paul's description of what it is to be faithless.

Same verse, do not be unequally yoked together with the faithless. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? If someone claims to be a believer, but they are disregarding the worthy walk, the commands that reflect faith and obedience, this becomes visible. And once again, it is easily observable with those who are near at hand.

What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? Faithlessness will be reflected in lawlessness, not having Jesus' words and keeping them and having no interest in so doing. It's not out of ignorance or innocence or I didn't know that's what God required. This is disregard because someone is willfully deciding that they know what's best.

Lawlessness, he goes on to say, and what communion, notice being yoked, this is fellowship and communion, close contact. What communion has light with darkness? If time spent with someone who we suspect is in the faithless category here, does the contact generate light or does it partake of darkness? Is there upbuilding, is there appreciation for God through Christ, our salvation? Is there something in common where we can celebrate? I have contact with believers of every denomination you can think of, and even some that aren't denominations and they're more like cults. I've tuned pianos in Latter-day Saint churches.

I've tuned pianos in all kinds of strange places. And when you are conversing with people, you quickly figure out if whatever their persuasions, whatever their creed, whatever their leanings toward the more Pentecostal side or the more Calvinist side or the more emotional side or the more strictly academic side, very soon I can tell within a few minutes of conversation if someone shares my enthusiasm for being saved, for being in Christ, for being in the hands of the Father and negotiating this life and circumstance and politics and world events and current events in the light of belonging to God. It's a part of our identity.

It matters. If our relationship to God matters, that shows very soon. You can't talk to a faithful believer for more than a few minutes without something slipping out.

Oh, that was a blessing. When somebody says a thing is a blessing, they're not saying it's a blessing from Buddha. They're not saying it's a blessing from yin and yang.

That is a clue that they consider this to be from God, from the Christian God, from the God of the Bible. And a few more interactions of that nature and you find out whether someone is of the faith or is faithless. And so these are the descriptions.

We don't have fellowship with lawlessness because we are pursuing righteousness. We don't have communion with darkness because we are endeavoring to walk in the light, 1 John 1, 7. And if contact with someone tends to knock us off the narrow road and out of the light toward the darkness, we wind up entangled with the affairs of this life, with gossip, judging, maligning, with frustration because there are obvious answers to problems that are not visible to someone because they are not walking in the light and they're not interested in the light. And when you attempt to speak the truth in love, it is rejected.

It is pushed away. It is a source of angst. That's not light.

That's darkness. And what had cored has Christ with Belial? What does Belial represent? Belial is the world's answer. Christ is our answer.

Christ is our guide. He is our savior. Belial are the ways of the world.

This is worshiping that which you covet, covetousness, which is idolatry. And remember the sons of Belial description of those who are not interested at all in God, his word, his ways, his son, and the honor that is due him. Remember in Malachi, all of the lack of honor among the people who were ostensibly God's own people and the abuse of the sacrifices that bringing the weak and the lame and the flawed animals and so on that we went through Malachi not long ago.

Do not be unequally yoked together. Don't be bound, obligated, trapped in conversations, in relationships. What accord has Christ with Belial or what part has a faithful with an unfaithful? It's translated believer with an unbeliever.

And we tend to polarize that into going to heaven or going to hell. It is faithfulness or faithlessness. What part, what portion? This is Meros.

Is this going to contribute to inheritance? Is this stacking up gold and silver and precious stones that only shine when you've got a bright light source, which is the glory of God? And gold, silver, and precious stones reflect God's glory. It's not just riches that we can go spend on something nice in eternity, is it? The gold and silver and precious stones are like those that were in the breastplate of the high priest. They are designed to glorify God.

And if the glory of God does not emerge from an association between people who claim to be believers, there is a faithless element in there somewhere. And the old saw, I've quoted it many times, but if you put a good apple in a barrel of bad ones, the good apple doesn't turn the bad ones good. What happens? The rot spreads from the bad to the

good.

We do not have the ability to drag someone into the light. We can sometimes be used by God to pull someone out of the fire, but you still have to hate the by the flesh and touch not the unclean thing. Touch not.

Contact defiles. Despite the fact that we are representing the Lord Jesus and we are his body, we can't touch something dead and make it alive like he did. We can't touch a leper and cleanse him the way he did.

There are aspects of the incarnation that we, as the body of Christ, express and reflect. And there are others that we cannot because we are not divine and we are not on the mission that the Lord Jesus was on to authenticate the message of the kingdom to Israel by means of the works. Jesus told him, if you don't believe my words, believe the works.

They testify of me, who I am and what I have come to do sent from the father. We don't have that function and we don't have that ability. We cannot touch the unclean thing and sanctify it.

The reverse effect will take place. What agreement? This is such a central and clear passage for us. Again, 2 Corinthians 6, 14 through 16, verse 16 here, after righteousness and lawlessness, contrast, light and darkness, contrast, Christ and Belial, contrast, faithless and faithful, contrast.

What agreement in verse 16 has the temple of God with idols? The temple of God. What happens at the temple? Worship. Christ and Belial, this is more identity.

This is who I am. This is what defines me. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creation.

If any man be in Belial, he is the old man, the old creation that is passing away. I trust science. I trust the community.

I trust what I see on social media. I trust what I searched out on the web. I trust the experience and the evidence of my eyes in Belial.

Here, the temple of God with idols, this is what you worship. This is what you prioritize. This is the highest of your goals and values and priorities.

This is what's important to me. Our favorite passage on idols is where a man takes a log and saws it in half and he makes an idol out of one half of it and cooks his dinner with the other. And it's all about what pleases me.

Idolatry pleases me. The temple of God is where we go to be acceptable in His sight. For you are the temple of the living God.

As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. And this gets back to our

idea of the presence. The genuine image of God is recovered in faithful believers.

Christ formed in you. Christ in you, the hope of glory, the Father and the Son coming and joining the Holy Spirit to indwell us. That is, there was a temple in Israel, but not everybody went to it.

Not everyone went there to worship. Not everyone went there. Remember the money changers? Remember Jesus driving them out with a whip of cords, driving them out of the temple.

Isn't it a good thing if people are coming to the temple? The fact that there's merchandise and it's become a den of thieves, but at least they're coming to the temple. You could see someone rationalizing, well, we'll just be all things to all people so that by all means we can save some. And so this is legitimate.

They're at least coming to the temple and Jesus drove them out. We were here in the family, we have an extended Saturday morning Bible study usually, and we were back to David numbering the people and which of the three doors do you want to choose in terms of judgment for numbering the people? Do you want seven years of famine? Do you want a war from the outside or do you want three days of pestilence? And David chose the three days. And so the angel of God is going through and people are dying by the scores and God says, it's enough.

And the angel pauses over the mountain and Aaron with his threshing floor and David makes an offering from the equipment and the oxen that were pulling it. But Aaron wants to give it to him and he says, I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing. And he buys the oxen, he buys the equipment and he buys the field.

And I was speculating afresh that David owns that patch of ground. He bought it. He's got title deed to that ground.

And the Lord Jesus, as the son of David is driving the money changers off of his own property, even in the human sense, not just out of the presence of God, the way you would get those who weep for Tammuz out of the temple, but he's actually got right of ownership for that land. It's an interesting idea to me, but what agreement has the temple of God with idols, those who worship and live their lives. We err and come short and fall on our face again and again, but we endeavor to please God and to worship him as we live our lives.

And as we invest by way of stewardship, our time and our talents and our resources, what agreement has the temple of God with idols? You are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be my people, my people, this inner circle of the faithful.

Therefore, verse 17 of second Corinthians six, come out from among them and be

separate says the Lord. There is a difference. There is a distinction.

There's them and us come out from among them and be separate says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters says the Lord almighty.

It's a hard truth when we have those that we love in this world who aren't interested in God or the things of God, believers or unbelievers, but it's a matter of priority. Do you want to sacrifice being received by God for the sake of this temporal connection and this earthly love? It's a high price and it is one we are commanded to understand and make the right choice. Those who are outside God judges, Paul says.

Those who are inside, we have to discern. We have to judge and make a distinction and endeavor to be obedient. Well, that's a review.

We're going to pick up with our look at the one another's. We got about two-thirds of the way through that list last time. We'll see the rest of them when we come back from the break.