



CHEERFUL GODLINESS "The Mystery of Godliness" 1 Timothy 3:14-16

No. 4131

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Contemporary songs have a brief life. Traditional songs last a little longer. But today's Scripture reading includes a fragment of a Christian hymn 2000 years old. That alone makes it worthy of consideration. It's about Christmas and "the mystery of godliness."

I. Common Confusion About Godliness.

A. Confusion in ancient times.

1. Ancient dualism—spirit is good, matter is evil.
2. If matter is evil—then creation is evil, including the body.
3. So godliness requires the negating of the body—a major heresy.
4. This separates God from His creation—a major error.

B. Confusion in modern times.

1. Godliness is unattractive and restrictive.
2. Godliness ("spirituality") is attainable without God.
3. Godliness is reserved for a religious elite.
4. Godliness is a total irrelevance—repeating an ancient error.
 - a. "God has nothing to do with my body—it's my body!"
 - b. "God has nothing to do with my food—I cooked it!"
 - c. "God has nothing to do with my sexuality—I have my needs!"

II. Christian Convictions About Godliness.

A. Godly conduct is expected in the community of believers. v. 15

1. It is the "household of God."
2. It is the "church of the living God."
3. It is the "pillar and foundation of the truth."

B. Godly conduct is related to the "mystery of godliness." v. 16

1. Mystery—God has revealed that which was previously hidden.
2. That which He revealed shows what godliness truly is.

C. Godly conduct was demonstrated by Christ in His Incarnation.

1. "He was manifested in the flesh"—in the natural human realm.
 - a. This repudiates the idea that flesh is evil—dualism.
 - b. This negates the concept that God can be separated from His creation.
 - c. This makes it possible for the invisible God to be made visible.
2. "He was vindicated in the Spirit"—in the supernatural, spiritual realm.
 - a. After death and resurrection He entered the supernatural realm.
 - b. There His life and work "in the flesh" was affirmed and accepted.
3. "He was seen by angels"—they witnessed each stage of His ministry.

D. Godly conduct must be proclaimed throughout the world.

1. "He was preached among the nations"—with conviction and relevance.
2. "He was believed on in the world"—with life transforming results.

E. Godly conduct anticipates the future glory—"He was taken up in glory."

Point to Ponder: How will my enjoyment of Christmas contribute to my godliness?