

God revealed and Sin Removed

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"No man hath seen God at any time; the only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1: 18).

It stands to reason that no man hath seen God at any time. We can take account of a thing if it be a score of miles in length or breadth, and if it be a solid substance to be weighed. But can we imprison the wind to measure its dimensions, or tell where the light ends? God is a Spirit; and heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. He is everywhere present throughout this vast universe, greater than all He has created, not subject to change or break-up. Where could we begin to take account of Him? We may well ask this, as we read Job 38. He is "the King of the ages, incorruptible, invisible" (1 Tim. 1: 17, New Trans.).

But when the time came that God would reveal Himself in all that He is in nature and character, there was in the Godhead an adequate means of doing so, for the only-begotten Son in the Father's bosom, in all the intimacy of His Divine and eternal relationship, knew all that God is. It was in God's mind that His Son would become Man, and that in Man, and to men, should be made known all the depth of the Divine nature and all the lustre of the Divine glory. We cannot comprehend this by argument; it is one of those simple but stupendous facts that deny analysis. We cannot define life, nor can we measure space, nor explain eternity. So, without controversy — great is the mystery of godliness.

When I see God in the Person of His Son, a tender infant in Mary's arms, I am dumbfounded, and can only cry, "Great is the mystery." When I see Him, in the seclusion of a carpenter's home, increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man, yet truly God manifest in flesh, "great is the mystery." When this Divine Person makes Himself friendly with poor sinners to secure their ear for the holy message He brought, calling the weary and heavy laden, touching lepers, healing demon-possessed men, to express God's mercy to them, "great is the mystery." When at last I see Him hated and despised of men, and submitting to it; spit upon and scourged and crucified; and in the hour of His deep sorrow and suffering abandoned of God for my sin's sake, enduring wrath and judgment for me, that nothing might remain untold of all that God is, then I bow my head, and in deepest self-abasement own, "Great is the mystery."

God is fully told out in His Son. But the Son is now risen, glorified, seated in the Father's throne as Man; so that there is a present and continuous delight in studying Him as the Revealer of His Father's Name.

But soon another great fact comes to light for we read that,

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29).

There is only one gospel that speaks of the act of the soldier who pierced the side of Jesus on the cross, and it is the gospel which alone speaks of Him as the Lamb. Moreover, the page which describes Him here as the Lamb is full of His Divine glories. While we think of Him in His sacrificial character as the Victim, slain to secure God's glory and to put away sin, it is important to remember who the Lamb is. No one less than He who is God could meet God about sin, and glorify Him; and no one but

He who is man could atone for men. John said, "After me cometh a Man" (verse 30). But he added, "He was before me." The first speaks of a Being who is truly a Man in His holy nature; the second refers to the truth of His eternal Godhead glory, as described in the earlier part of the chapter. Such is the Lamb. It is a title taken from the types and shadows of the Old Testament, and especially from Genesis 22.

This One is the Lamb of God. He is the One brought forth when man's lambs had had their day and served their purpose as foreshadowings of Christ. He it was whom God provided for Himself, as Abraham said, for a burnt offering. He was truly here in weakness as the very figure of a Lamb implies, yet to Him was entrusted the mighty task of securing the glory of God, and of removing sin ultimately from the world. But it was not a living lamb in the Old Testament type that sheltered Israel from the destroying angel in Egypt; it was the blood of a slain one. It is not the life of Jesus here, though without blemish and without spot, which avails for our redemption, but the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1: 19) .

To its value all the heavenly inhabitants bear witness (Rev. 5: 8-12). The representatives of sinners saved from earth, and the myriads of angels too; the first as having experienced its efficacy, and the second as spectators of God's ways, and filled with adoring praise. It is the Lamb whom God entrusts with the task of bringing order out of sin's chaos, and of establishing His supreme authority where man and Satan have so grossly and daringly refused it. It is the One who suffered here for God's glory and our sin who is the centre of all administration in God's throne; and the day of His blest intervention in the world's affairs will be the day when Satan will be bound, and there will be no more curse. From the throne of God and the Lamb will proceed life and healing and light, and holy and happy service as none have served below. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22: 20).