

The Mystery Of Christmas

1 Timothy 3:16

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Follow with me very closely in your Bible, 1 Timothy 3:16. Paul says, “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,”—and Paul says he was —“received up into glory.” This is one of the great Scriptures of the New Testament because it was believed to be, as I said, a christological creed that was sung by the early church. What I mean by that is that it was actually a song that they sang, and then under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul the apostle penned it into his epistle to Timothy. He was telling Timothy how he should behave in the house of God, the church of the living God, verse 15, “. . . the pillar and ground of the truth.” What he gives us as “the pillar and ground of truth,” he takes us from Bethlehem and the incarnation to actually the ascension where Christ, verse 16, was “. . . received up into glory.” So, we have God manifested in the flesh, the incarnation, and then we have the ascension, verse 16, “. . . received up into glory.”

The reason Paul gives us this creedal song is because the church is “. . . the pillar and ground of the truth.” I think it’s so very, very important that we not just think sentimentally about Christ, we not think worldly about Christ, we don’t think about what the world says about Christ, but we think biblically about what the Bible says about who Christ is and what a better time of the year to think about Jesus Christ and understand who He is and why He came then at Christmastime.

Let’s look together at these six creedal confessions. In verse 16, there are six verbs that are used to define them: manifest, justified, seen, preached, believed, and received. If you’re taking notes, you can write them down. Let’s go back over them one at a time. The first is, “God was manifest in the flesh,” verse 16. Notice he starts with, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.” That phrase “controversy” means that there’s no debate here, there’s no discussion here. This is not a debatable issue. This is “. . . without controversy,” this is truth that is foundational for the church, and “. . . great is the mystery of godliness.”

When the Bible uses the term “mystery” in the New Testament, it’s not talking about something we cannot know, it’s talking about something we cannot know unless God reveals it, and God has revealed it. So, we have the “mysteries” in the New Testament that are something that in ages past, Paul describes in Ephesians, were hidden from us but are now revealed or made known to the people of God. A “mystery” is something that only God can reveal, and He has in His Word. This is “. . . the mystery of godliness,”—and here’s the first one—“God was manifest in the flesh.” This is, in these six creeds, the Christmas story. In one statement, we have Christmas—“God was manifest in the flesh.”

There are four clear references in this statement about Christ. First, it implies that He preexisted Bethlehem and that He is divine. The first, He preexisted Bethlehem and He is divine. Before Jesus was even conceived in the womb of Mary the virgin, He actually existed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit from all eternity. You know, sometimes people

want to ask the question, "Who made God?" The answer to that is no one made God, He's self-existent and eternal. You say, "Well, I don't understand that." That's because you are finite and He is infinite. If God were small enough for my brain, He wouldn't be big enough for my need. People say, "Well, how can God just be eternal?" Well, I don't know, but isn't it awesome! We need to just marvel at that. God always has been, always will be. He's eternal and He's immutable. He's unchanging.

God is just beyond our comprehension. He's also transcendent. He's beyond our understanding, and the only thing we can know about God is what God chooses to reveal to us. We can only know about God, if God chooses to reveal Himself to us. We cannot by searching find God. This is what the Bible calls "revelation." God must reveal Himself to us, and there are many ways He does that, but the primary way He does that is in the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible is the number one means by which we learn about God. It's God's self-disclosure, self-revelation. It's God's autobiography for God is making Himself known.

Also, God makes Himself known in the incarnation. But the implication here is taken from John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Write down John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word,"—which is a reference to Christ—"and the Word was with God,"—which means literally face to face. In the Greek it's very strong words, "God was the Word." In that first verse of John's gospel, chapter one, it tells us that Jesus is the divine Word, He is the eternal Word, and He's the personal Word. He's eternal, "In the beginning was the Word;" He's personal, ". . . was with God," face to face; and He's divine, and God was the Word. Who is Jesus Christ? He's the eternal God.

Secondly, it implies that Christ took on humanity. This is clearly the teaching of that statement that "God was manifest in the flesh." This speaks of His incarnation. So, we have His preexistence and His deity, and then His incarnation. For that, write down John 1:14 where it says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." That phrase "dwelt among us" means He pitched His tent among us. Now, the Word made flesh, here in 1 Timothy that "God was manifest in the flesh," so it speaks of the incarnation.

The word "incarnate," by the way, is a Latin word which means becoming flesh. So, it's speaking about Christ's full and real humanity while He maintained His full and real deity, so He was the God-Man. Someone said, "Every bit God as though He were not man, and every bit Man as though He were not God." Truly God, truly Man, one Person. He was the Word made flesh, the real Man, but sinless, born of a virgin. This also implies the virgin birth that Jesus was conceived of a woman, not of a man. He became flesh.

Thirdly, Christ took on humanity to reveal to us God the Father or the nature of God. Write down John 1:18. So, you have John 1:1, John 1:14, and John 1:18. Those are my favorite Christmas verses, by the way. You say, "I know they are, you preach them every Christmas." And you're probably getting tired of them; but some day, if the Lord tarries, He'll take me home, you'll still be here and you won't have to hear it anymore. The eternal Word, the personal Word, the divine Word, flesh became, pitched His tent among us, and he says, "(and we beheld his

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

In verse 18, which I just mentioned, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son,”—the English Bible says, Son of God, which is actually a reference to God, the only begotten God—“which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” That word “declared” means exegete or to explain. Jesus came to reveal to us God the Father. That’s one of the reasons for the incarnation or Christmas. Why did God become a Man at Christmas? To reveal Himself to us. In Hebrews it says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . by whom also he made the worlds.” Sometimes people say, “Well, if there’s really a God, why doesn’t He speak?” He has spoken. He’s spoken in Christ very clearly. Remember Jesus told Philip, “Have you not seen Me? “ . . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Jesus came to reveal God the Father.

Fourthly, Christ took on humanity in order to die for man’s sin, so He became the Redeemer. I like to think of Christmas because He would reveal God to us, He would redeem man back to God, He would reconcile us back to God, and that He would also then one day reign on the throne of David, the promise given to David, forever and ever “ . . . and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” He is the Redeemer.

In Matthew 1:21, when the angel spoke to Joseph about the birth of Christ, he said, “ . . . and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” The name Jesus is the New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament Joshua or Jehoshua, which means God saves. His very name speaks of why He came—to save us from our sins. So, the first point, “God was manifest in the flesh.”

Notice the second one, “ . . . justified in the Spirit,” verse 16. That phrase “justified in the Spirit” indicates that He was vindicated by the work of the Holy Spirit. How was Jesus vindicated and justified by the work of the Holy Spirit? Well, for starters, the Old Testament prophets spoke under the inspiration of the Spirit and prophesied of His coming. All through the Old Testament you have all the prophecies of the Christ who would come, and Jesus fulfilled that, but also, all the way through the life of Christ. At His baptism, remember when Jesus was being baptized by John the Baptist down by the Jordan River? When Jesus came out of the water what happened? The heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and it lit upon Him, it came down upon Him. Then, an audible voice spoke from heaven.

Now, if we had been there in the crowd, we would actually have heard the voice of God. Can you imagine that? That would’ve been so mind-blowing. I’ve had people say, “Why doesn’t God really speak? I want to hear His voice.” I say, “Read the Bible. When you read the Bible, you’re hearing God speak.” They say, “I want to hear God speak audibly.” Then, read it out loud. Can you imagine hearing God’s voice from the heavens, “This is My beloved Son in whom My soul delights.” The King James has, “ . . . in whom I am well pleased.” God the Father sent the Holy Spirit and testified of Christ, “My beloved Son in whom My soul delights.”

His miracles were the work of the Holy Spirit through Him. In Luke 4:18, when He went into the synagogue at Nazareth He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," and then He said to give " . . . sight to the blind," and He would perform other miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. Don't you love the stories of Jesus giving sight to, " . . . blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging." Don't you love it when He goes into Jairus' home and raises his little 12-year-old daughter to life, she was dead. Can you imagine your 12-year-old daughter's dead, and Jesus comes in and says, "Talitha cumi,"—little lamb or little maid—"arise," and she sat back up! What a mind-blower that must've been, and everyone rejoiced by the power of God. Or to stand at the grave of Lazarus when Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone," and said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came out of the grave. He's been dead for three days, so dead by this time " . . . he stinketh," Martha said, so full-on dead, and Jesus raised him from the dead. Or to speak peace to the raging sea, "Peace, be still," be muzzled, and the wind stopped. To cleanse the leper, to raise the dead, to multiply the bread and loaves and the fish to feed the multitude of five thousand, all the miracles that He did by the power of the Spirit, so He was " . . . justified in the Spirit."

Then, His resurrection. Some people feel that this is the main idea that Paul has in mind. Write down Romans 1:4 where Paul says, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," so He's declared, or testified, "to be the Son of God with power," by the Holy Spirit, so He's set off or horizoned off as being the Son of God. Notice again this is all "without controversy." We confess, we believe the resurrection of Christ, that He is the risen Lord and Savior.

Notice the third affirmation in verse 16, " . . . seen of angels." So, first, " . . . manifest in the flesh;" secondly, "justified in the Spirit;" and thirdly, "seen of angels." Now, you say, "Well, that's a no-brainer. That's a given. If He's the second Person of the Godhead, He's the eternal Son of God, obviously He's been seen by angels. He created angels." Now, we don't know when angels were created, but they are created beings. The Bible in Ezekiel 28, I believe, talks about the origin of the devil, who was actually an angel called Lucifer, and He talks about, " . . . the day that thou wast created." Angels are not eternal, but they are intelligent beings. Man does not have a monopoly on intelligence, the angels are very intelligent. They're powerful beings. People talk about other extraterrestrials, the answer is, "Yes, they're called angels." They're created by God, and they're here to do His bidding.

In Hebrews the Bible says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." You never know, that hitchhiker you pickup might be an angel. Angels come to assist us, and in this world that we live in, I'm glad that we have angels watching over us. The angels in this statement, I believe, " . . . seen of angels," indicates the involvement of angels in the redemption story. All through the story of Christ, angels are involved. It's an interesting study to look at angels in the life of Jesus Christ. Notice, "seen" means observed in the text.

In 1 Peter 1:12 it says, " . . . the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." Do you know that angels are really interested in our

salvation? I believe that when we gather, like we are here tonight, that there are actual angels here right now in a special way, and that they're watching us, listening to us, intrigued by this redemptive story. Angels. When Jesus was born, angels appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist. His wife Elizabeth got an angelic visitation, maybe Gabriel. Mary had the enunciation by Gabriel that she would be the mother of our Lord. Joseph had an angel wake him up in the middle of the night when he was sleeping to give him a dream and then revealed to him not to be afraid to take Mary to be his wife.

The shepherds in Luke 2, we love the story. We'll read that Sunday morning, Christmas day. When the shepherds were out in the field watching their flocks by night, an angel came into the sky and said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host," millions of angels. You think we've got some marvelous Christmas lights going on, can you imagine how that Bethlehem night lit up with the glory of those angels? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And the shepherds ran quickly to Bethlehem and found the Christ Child and worshiped Him. Angels were involved when Jesus was born.

The wise men, in Matthew 2, sometime later, they advised the wise men, the angels did, that they should go another way and avoid Herod who wanted to kill the Child. Then, Jesus when He was being tempted of the devil was driven by the Spirit, and after being tempted for forty days and the devil departed for a short time. The Bible says angels showed up and ministered to Him. Now, I've always loved that picture. Here's Jesus out in this desolate Judaeen wilderness. Believe me, it is a wilderness area, and angels came around the Son of God and in His humanity they had to strengthen and encourage Him. Another one of my favorites is in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus went into the garden and prostrated Himself on the ground, and when He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," and angels came and the Bible says strengthened Him and encouraged Him. In that time of agony when He's facing the cross, angels had to come and encourage Him.

In Luke 22:43 it says, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Think about that. He was the Creator of all things, including angels, but now in His humbled human body, the angels came to strengthen and encourage and help Him. Peter's sword in Matthew 26:53, when Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane, after this took place, pulls out his sword and tries to take off the servant's head and just got his ear. Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" A legion we don't know for sure, but a Roman legion of soldiers was around one thousand men. He's telling Peter, "I could call instantly to the Father, and He would send twelve thousand angels to defend Me." Peter, "Put up again thy sword," I don't need you to try to protect Me. We have angels watching over us. How marvelous that truly is.

At His resurrection, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all record angelic activity around the tomb and the resurrection. At His ascension, Acts 1, remember when Jesus was on Mount Olivet, and He ascended, which is a really key and important story in the life of Christ. We have the incarnation, we have the crucifixion, we have the resurrection, and then forty days later we have the ascension. We usually forget about that. Jesus visibly, physically ascended right back up into heaven. It only stands to reason if He came from heaven, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, rose from the dead, spake like never a man spake, performed all those miracles, that He'd have a pretty good exit when He left this place, right? Can you imagine, like on a par with hearing God's voice audibly, but now they actually watch Him lift off earth and go right back up into the sky and a cloud received Him out of their sight. How amazing that must've been! He came, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross a substitutionary death, rose from the dead, forty days later He ascended back into heaven.

Then, His exaltation—He's seated at the right hand of God the Father, and He ever lives to make intercession for us. He's a sympathetic, compassionate High Priest. It also implies that because He rose from the dead, that He is indeed God manifested in the flesh. And then, we're not done yet, at His Second Coming, Matthew 13:41, it says He will, “. . . send forth his angels, and they shall gather . . . “ together the sheep, and He will gather the tares together and burn them with fire unquenchable. In Revelation 20, an angel throws Satan into the bottomless pit, so when Christ returns, angels again will come and do His bidding.

Angels worship Christ around the throne in heaven. If you can turn there real quickly, flip to Revelation 5:11-14. I wasn't going to have you turn there, but check this out, Revelation 5:11-14. John says, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,”—that's just basically a way biblically of saying, “Lots of angels,” a bunch of angels. We actually do not know how many angels there are.

Verse 12, “Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen.” They're the Pentecostals in heaven. “And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” Notice that this is a clear statement of angels in heaven around the throne with I believe the Church and these other angelic beings worshiping around the throne Jesus Christ. The point is, angels confirm that Jesus is God incarnate, “. . . seen of angels.”

Here's the fourth, verse 16, “. . . preached unto the Gentiles.” They would sing this, “Manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles.” The term “Gentiles” used here is referring to nations, so it could be translated, “proclaimed among the nations.” Anybody that wasn't a Jew was a Gentile, but this speaks of the fact that the gospel is universal. You know, the cool thing about Christmas is Christ came to die for the sins of the

world—everyone. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” not just the Jews, not just the western world, not just a certain race of people, but every race, every creed, every color. It’s the affirmation of who Jesus is through the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. Jesus gave them the Great Commission. He’s given us the Great Commission, and He said to do what? “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” under heaven, “ . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” This is the affirmation through the proclamation of the apostolic preaching of Jesus Christ.

Write down 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul says the gospel is “ . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried,”—indicating He was truly dead—“and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures,” so the gospel message is an affirmation through the proclamation of who Jesus Christ is. Paul says in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power”—the *dýnamis*, the dynamic power of God —“unto salvation . . . to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,” or the Gentile. So whoever believes in Him will be saved.

That Great Commission still stands today. The greatest need in the world is for us to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The truth of Jesus Christ, the God-Man, was proclaimed and confessed by the apostles’ preaching, and it should be continued by us. We sing at Christmas, Go tell it on the mountain, Amen? Over the hills and everywhere . . . that Jesus Christ is born.

Here’s the fifth, write it down, verse 16, “ . . . believed on in the world.” So the proclamation of the gospel of Christ brought salvation to sinners. How? By believing. The Bible is very, very, very clear. Go back to verse 16. This is “without controversy,” that man is saved by grace through faith, it’s not of himself, “ . . . it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” We can’t vary it from that, we can’t switch that or change that. We can’t add to that. Salvation is a gift given by God, but received by the sinner through faith by believing, here it says. What does it mean to believe? It means to trust in Him. It means to rely upon Him. It means to cling to Him. It means to put all your weight upon Him. It doesn’t mean that you intellectually just believe that there’s a God out there. It’s not an intellectual assent to some facts or information about Christ, it’s an actual commitment of yourself to Christ.

You came into the church sanctuary tonight and you put yourself into a pew and sat down, in faith, right? You didn’t get on the ground underneath the pew and make sure the screws were tight. You didn’t shake it a little bit first and just kind of gingerly sit down to make sure that it would hold you. As a matter of fact, you can go on all kinds of it. You got in your car tonight and pushed the dash button—stepped on the brake and hit the button—or turned the key and started the ignition, all by faith. When you approached the intersection, you picked up your foot and put it on the brake - how?- by faith that that car would stop.

When you go to a restaurant and you eat the food, you do that by faith. Why are you laughing? I tell you I’ve gone in some restaurants, it’s like, “Uhhhh, I think let’s go find someplace else to eat,” you know. I can’t imagine if the restaurant looks this bad, what the kitchen looks like. I call this “Twilight Zone” restaurants, “Let’s go somewhere else.” But you eat by faith.

You get in an airplane. Think about how crazy it is that you get in an airplane! You don't meet the pilot and cross-examine him and check him out and look at his credentials. The first time—no kidding—the first time I'd ever flown on an airplane, it leveled off at about thirty thousand feet, and the pilot walked by. I thought, Who's flying this sucker? I didn't know they had co-pilots; I didn't know they had autopilots. I'm thinking, This is really scary. I heard of a guy that got into an airplane and it took off. The voice came on the speaker and said, "Congratulations! You are the first to fly on a fully-automated flight. There's no pilot, no crew—a fully-automated flight. Don't worry, nothing can go wrong, go wrong, go wrong, go wrong, go wrong." "Ahhhhh!" freak-out.

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? It means to put your weight on Him. It means to trust in Him. It means that you don't bring anything in your hand. It means, Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling. You can't properly celebrate Christmas without celebrating the cross. So, when you look at the stable in Bethlehem, you remember Calvary. Remember Jesus came to die. He was born to die. He was incarnate with a body like us, a Man, so that He could suffer and die, pay for the sins of the world. He could be our Redeemer.

Last, but not least, verse 16, the sixth, He will be " . . . received up into glory." This is a reference to the ascension. This is the ascension. So, we have, "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." It is Christ's ascension, Acts 1, I've already mentioned that. It was God the Father's vindication and exaltation of God the Son. It was God the Father saying, "I've accepted the atoning sacrifice that Jesus died on the cross. How do we know that when Jesus died on that cross, how do we know that it atoned for our sins and that God the Father accepts that? God the Father raised Him from the dead. The resurrection was God's stamp of approval on the finished work of Christ. Someone said, "Jesus cried, 'It is finished,' and God the Father said, 'Amen!' and raised Him from the dead." Then, He ascended back into heaven.

It also reminds us of the reality of heaven. Notice where it says He went, " . . . received up into glory." That's where we're going. It's heaven. It's a place, a real place. In John 14, what did Jesus say? "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," so He's coming back from glory to take us to glory, heaven. "And If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." What a marvelous truth that is! He's coming back to judge the living and the dead. So, He was " . . . received up," but He's coming back.

You know it's an interesting thing the contrast, the two comings of Christ. The first Advent He came humbly. He came to suffer and die and to pay the penalty for sin. In His second Advent, when He comes back the second time, He's coming back in power and glory and majesty. Every eye will see Him. He's coming not to be judge for sin, but He's coming to judge sin. When He first came, He came as the Lamb of God who would die for the sins of the world. When He comes back the second time, He's coming back as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He's coming back to judge sin.

The Christmas mystery of the incarnation that “God was manifest in the flesh,” it is “without controversy.” It’s foundational. All the hopes of mankind are found in Christ Jesus, and Christmas is when we celebrate that incarnation. We sing, The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight.” Think of all the heartache. Think of all the sin. Think of all the tragedies. Think of all the death and the dying. Christmas means there’s hope.

When you go to a cemetery and you lower your loved one into the ground and your heart is broken, thank God for Christmas. When you’re getting old and you’re facing death yourself, thank God for Christmas. Amen? Thank God when the world is getting darker and darker and darker and darker and you say, “Where is peace on earth that Jesus Christ will come,” and He is going to reverse the curse. He’s going to sit on the throne of David, and righteousness will cover the earth as waters cover the sea. There will be peace on earth and good will toward men. What a marvelous new world we will live in. We’ll talk about that next Wednesday night.

The angel said to the lowly shepherds in Luke 2, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 3 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Jesus came to save us from our sins.

Tonight as we pass the Communion trays, we ask that you hold your portion until we’re all served. You take the cup, you take the bread, once we’re all served, we’ll pray and partake together. Communion is something that Jesus instituted that we do in remembrance of Him. Now, Communion won’t save you. You can drink all the grape juice you want and eat all the crackers you want and it’s not going to save you. You must believe in Jesus Christ. You must put your weight on Him. You must put your faith in Him, not in a rite, not in a ritual, not in your good deeds, but in Jesus Christ alone. Amen?

If you haven’t done that, that’s what you need to do. You need to receive Christ today. The Bible says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right”—which means the authority, the privilege—“to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” If you haven’t trusted Christ, that’s your great need, that’s what saves us from sin. We’re here tonight to celebrate Christ’s coming, Christ dying and paying for the penalty of our sins, and Christ coming again. Jesus said, “I will not drink . . . until . . . I drink . . . with you in My Father’s kingdom.” I always think of Communion as looking not only back, but forward to the coming King. Amen? Let’s pray.