

## I. Review

Many months ago, we started a study of Psalms going through it verse by verse. We believe this will probably be the last official study we go through before the Lord comes back, and I can't think of a better book than Psalms to be teaching in when the Lord comes back to take us home to be with Him. We have worked our way up to Psalms 19, and it's probably one of the richest passages anywhere in the Bible. We are going to take our time with it, and you're really going to learn some Bible here. There are so many different aspects to this as you can well see from just what we've covered so far.

### ➤ The Truth is Paramount

I've had people all my life in the ministry who tell me that they're simply looking for truth. Many times they don't know where to find it, and when they do see the truth, they can't recognize it. I was pretty good friends with a Christian psychologist who I spent a lot of time with helping him try to see how the word of God was the truth of God's word to man. He made a statement to me one time that I have never forgotten. He said that he believed the Bible was truth, but he also believed there was truth outside the Bible. **Let me just say to you that there is no truth outside the Bible. The Bible is the final authority for everything that God gave to man.** When he made that statement to me, it was like throwing a piece of raw meat to a dog! I immediately asked him to tell me what truth he had found that was not in the word of God. Every place he went, I took him back through time, history, and the word of God and showed him the fallacy of that truth. It didn't change his opinion, and I don't really care; however, for you, the good people of this church, I want you to know the truth because the truth, in the day and age we live in, is paramount.

Something else that I've found to be true in over 50 years of ministry is that many times it's easier to believe a lie than it is the truth, and I'm telling you right now that the word of God is truth. As we come through Psalms 19, you're seeing not just the verse that *the heavens declare the glory of God*, but a panoramic concept of God's truth to a fallen creation that God wants to redeem. **And I'll tell you this—there is no salvation outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.** There is no church, no baptism, no rules, or no good works you can do. We're all sinners in the eyes of God, and the only way for man to be redeemed is for him to come as a sinner to a crucified Savior who died, was buried, and rose again the third day.

## II. Five Ways God Declares His Glory (Jesus Christ) to His Creation

Last week I began to lay out for you how God will display His glory to planet Earth. When the Bible says *the heavens declare the glory of God*, there are five ways that God is going to declare that glory to His creation. **I also told you that when we talk about God's glory, we are**

**talking about Jesus Christ.** Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Christ is the brightness of God's glory. You will see in each case, and this is something I want to keep before you, that down through history when you understand even basically the plan of God and how God is moving through history from Genesis 1 to the time we're living in today and into the future, that **as God moves down through history to accomplish His plan, the devil moves in opposition to destroy that plan and ultimately steal the honor and glory that should go to Christ.** The unbelievable tragedy is that it's God people who help him do that. This will be one of the greatest misteachings throughout the whole Bible and throughout history. I'll say it again; **you cannot separate the God of the Bible from the God of history.**

Last week I took you to Ephesians Chapter 3, and we talked about the breadth, the length, the depth, and the height of God and that we as God's people should comprehend those four aspects about God. In a couple of weeks I'm going to take those four, and I'm going to show you these are the dimensions of Almighty God that He gave you here. He talked about how we are to comprehend the manifold wisdom of God—all the different aspects of God in a manifold effect coming down to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### #1 God will Declare His Glory Through the Heavens.

The first one we looked at was the heavens themselves. The heavens declare the glory of God. I showed you how God created everything in the heavens to show you His glory and the gospel message which we know as the Gospel of the Stars. It's God revealing Himself through His creation: the sun, the moon, the stars and the constellations. The zodiac are 12 constellations that are around the sphere of the earth and are connected to the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. The total constellations in the sky at night that you can see are 88, but God picked 12 to line up to the 12 tribes of Israel. They're going to play into the future when God's plan is established, and He rings them around the globe of planet Earth so that man can see the gospel every night. There are going to be three key verses that show you how the stars and the constellations do that which we will look at today.

#### ➤ Part of Bob's Testimony – God Preparing him

I told you a while back that at some point in here I would give you at least part of my testimony. I got my first telescope when I was 10 years old, and I'm going to be 75 next month on June 14. It was a cheap Tasco telescope, but to me it was Mount Palomar. And that began my love affair with the heavens. By the time I was 19 or 20, I had gone through various telescopes as I got into it more. I learned where the constellations were, and I was a member of a couple of astronomy clubs and would go out with star parties. Little did I know back then that God was preparing in me where I was going to go with the word of God in time, and I say that because whatever God is doing with you in your life right now, He's preparing you for something. Most of God's people never see the preparation, so they never realize the end result. At that time, I didn't either, but as time went on, God has a way, if you're paying attention, of revealing to us what He is doing.

It was around 1971, and I had just gotten out of the army. I was out of fellowship with God, and church was not important to me. When my father passed away, who was a saved man, God began to work through that, and along with my mother and sister, we all began to go back to church. That was the beginning of God getting ahold of my heart. The first time I went back to church, I went to the College and Career class. It was run by a guy named Mel Sabaka who later became my father in the Lord. He taught me everything I know about the ministry and took me under his wing. It changed my whole life; however, Mel didn't preach that morning. It was a man by the name of Tommy Thomas. He was the director of the mission in Canton, Ohio. He was a good friend of Mel's, and he was an old Philadelphian preacher. I was sitting in the back, and Tommy began to preach in his booming voice with power in his preaching. He said he wanted to preach on the second coming of Christ. The question he wanted to ask us was, "Are you ready?" When he said that, he grabbed his chest and began to lean over. He said it one more time then fell to one knee. With the last breath of his body, he pointed his finger and yelled "Are you ready?" Then he went home to be with the Lord. How do you top that service? It was chaos. Mel came up and preached, and there were many people saved; however, all I knew was that when old Tommy Thomas went home to be with the Lord, and he screamed out the last time, "Are you ready?" that his finger was pointing at me, and I knew I wasn't ready.

### ➤ God Will Use What You Have in Your Hand

It was about time for the camping program. I wanted to do something for the Lord, but I didn't know what to do. I was a lot like Moses when God asked him what he had in his hand. He had a shepherd's staff, and God said they would use that. Then God did all the great miracles with that shepherd staff in his hand. All I had in my hand was a telescope. I went to Mel and suggested showing the campers the stars, moon, and planets. He saw the opportunity of what God was doing, and he jumped on it.

I knew nothing about the Bible or about the heavens; I just knew the stars from a secular standpoint. They put me with a guy named Chuck Schuster. He taught me and showed me the Biblical relationship to all of these things, and through the process of time, God developed a ministry that we called the Gospel of the Stars. For the next four or five years we preached across Ohio at camps, churches, and youth groups. We had a telescope that we took with us. I did the technical part, and he laid out the gospel. We even built an observatory at the camp that was 30 feet long, 10 feet wide, and had a roof that rolled off on both sides with a telescope in it. It was about 1972, and from there, that's when God started my ministry of preaching the word of God through the Gospel of the Stars. God had started preparing something in me long before the day that he called me into the ministry.

For 65 years of my life, I have studied the heavens, studied the stars, been at the eyepiece of a telescope, and photographed every nebula and planet in the northern hemisphere. When I connected it all back to the word of God, God's witness in the sky to His creation, all the lights began to turn on.

### ➤ Three Great Verses Showing You How God has Put His Witness in the Sky

Back in Genesis 1:16 when God was laying all the creation out, he simply says, “*he made the stars also.*” I showed you last week how the stars will form the constellations. God gave me three great verses that show how the stars and constellations ring around the earth so that men can see the gospel every night.

- *Isaiah 27:1. In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish **leviathan** the piercing **serpent**, even **leviathan** that crooked **serpent**; and he shall slay the **dragon** that [is] in the sea.*

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- *Psalms 104:25-26. [So is] this great and wide sea, wherein [are] things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 28. There go the ships: **[there is] that leviathan, [whom] thou hast made to play therein.***

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- *Job 26:10-14. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. 11. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof. 12. He divideth the sea with his power; and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. 13. **By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.** 14. Lo, these [are] parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?*

### ➤ The Belief that the Earth was Flat

Back in the dark ages, 500 A.D.-1500 A.D. (the Reformation), the Catholic church ran the world. She had thrown the world into darkness by all of the murder and suppressing of the true church. She was teaching at the time that the world was flat, not a globe or a sphere. The teaching was that these sea monsters in Isaiah 27:1 and Psalms 104 were in the ocean. When you sailed out past seeing land, these serpents and sea monsters would destroy your ship and devour you or you would fall off the edge of the earth.

This teaching was based on these three verses. The Catholic theologians like Augustine had no discernment when it came to the word of God, so they actually thought that these waters were the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. Little did they know that none of this had to do with the oceans that they were looking at. These creatures here are the devil and his crowd which are up in the second heaven (outer space). They also taught that the earth was the center of the solar system instead of the sun. It was Copernicus that blew that fallacy out around 1500.

### ➤ Three Names Given for The Devil in Isaiah 27:1

These three verses show you how God has put His witness in the sky. The context of Isaiah 27:1 is the second coming of Christ. In it you have the devil. There are three names given here for the devil.

1. **Leviathan:** If you want to find out who Leviathan is, you will go back to Job Chapters 40 and 41. These are the two greatest passages in the Old Testament on who the devil is. Chapter 41 gives a great description of him, and the scholars today will say that the leviathan is a whale, elephant, or a whirlpool. It says that this leviathan will *“speak soft words unto thee”* although I have never heard a whirlpool speak anything except a flushing noise.
2. **Serpent:** That goes back to Genesis 3:1 where the devil, who was the serpent, beguiled Eve.
3. **Dragon:** Revelation 12 and 13 will be the two greatest chapters in the New Testament on the person of the devil along with Revelation 22.

He tells us in Job 26:13 that by God’s hand He formed the crooked serpent. The crooked serpent, which is talked about in these three verses, will be the constellation Draco the Dragon. It’s a system of stars that goes around the north. The Bible says that God’s heaven is north. It’s a crooked constellation which stretches across the north that is a dragon illustrating in the sky that the devil is out there to stop everything that God does. This is why in Genesis 1:26, when God is giving man dominion over the creation, He gives him dominion over the earth, sea, and sky; however, he does not give him dominion in outer space. The reason for that is because it’s the devil’s playground. He also says leviathan is formed *“to play therein”*.

### ➤ The devil did what he does best to Disguise, Discourage, and Destroy God’s Gospel of the Stars.

**The first thing he did was change the original message of the constellations through Greek, Roman, and Babylonian mythology.** Do you remember when God took Abraham out in Genesis 12 and showed him the stars? God told him that someday his seed was going to be like those stars. Whatever the rest of the conversation was, it was powerful enough that the Bible says that Abraham believed God and God counted it unto him for righteousness. There is something about those stars, and the devil wanted to stop that.

**The second thing he did is come up with what we know today as astrology.** Astrology has its roots back in Babylon which was the devil’s nation. In astrology, you guide your life by the constellations; the sign you were born under is the sign you guide your life by. I want to tell you something. There is only one thing that you can guide your life by, and that is the book God gave you—the word of God.

## #2 God will Declare His Glory Through the Nation of Israel.

Last week I showed you in Isaiah 46:13 how Israel was God's glory. I showed you how God called out and established them as His people from Abraham up into Exodus 12 when they go out of Egypt, and God sends them to the land that He has prepared for them. We know it as the promised land; today it's the middle east or land of Palestine.

God's plan in the Old Testament was for this nation to declare the glory of God to the world. I Kings 4 and I Kings 10 actually show you how that happened in history, and during that time the whole world recognized the nation of Israel as a nation of God's people who revealed the glory of God to the world. The devil, by destroying Israel, took God's glory from them and bestowed in on himself. At the end of Israel's kingdom, 606 BC up to the second coming (I laid it all out for you Thursday night 05/08/25), will be the times of the Gentiles where the devil now, as the god of this world, runs the world through the Gentile nations.

## #3 God will Declare His Glory Through the Son of God—The Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the coming of God and Him revealing Himself to the inhabitants of planet Earth in the person of His Son. I want to talk about the visible appearance of an invisible God.

*I Timothy 3:16. 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, received up into glory.*

When God came down and manifested Himself in the flesh, it was to redeem His fallen creation. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory. You see it again in Matthew 17 at the Mount of Transfiguration.

I told you last week that if you want to study the devil, there are three ways you study him in the Bible. If you want to study Christ, there are also three ways you study Him.

- Son of Man
- Son of God
- The Glorified Christ

Now I want to explain something to you about the Lord Jesus Christ. You notice that there are three parts to His name. (You might know it was three!) Unfortunately, and this is not a criticism but an observation, most of God's people never think beyond the cross. They never think beyond their own salvation. Now I get that salvation is the most important thing to any of us, but the problem is that we never look past or think past the cross and our salvation. And because of that, we tend to look at everything in the Bible and history from a Christian standpoint. The problem with that is that it's very limited. You realize that God's plan is a 7,000-year plan and New Testament Christianity is only 2,000 years of it. We know from last week that God's ultimate goal is to have fellowship with His creation throughout eternity, and He reveals Himself to have that fellowship.

➤ The Invisible God Declares Himself Through a Visible Appearance of His Son Jesus Christ.

Today I want you to understand the purpose of Christ and His coming to earth in the flesh. I want to look at the Son of man, and as He was, the Son of God. Now here is the problem.

*John 4:24. **God [is] a Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth.*

God is invisible. You can't see or touch Him.

*John 1:18. **No man hath seen God at any time,** the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father; he hath declared [him].*

So then the invisible God declares Himself through a visible appearance of His Son Jesus Christ. I want you to notice the similarities between John 1:18 and Psalms 19:1. Psalms 19:1 says, *the heavens declare the glory of God*, and in John 1:18 we have *the only begotten Son* declaring Him. Both of them declare God's glory to a lost world.

➤ The Mystery of Godliness

Now 1 Timothy 3:16 tells us, *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, received up into glory.* In your Bible, this is called the mystery of godliness. In the Bible, when it comes to the church, there are seven mysteries that we are told not to be ignorant of. **Those seven mysteries will cover all of the major aspects of God and everything in the Bible then they'll tie back together to show you a complete composite of what God is doing.** There are twelve mysteries given to the nation of Israel which basically do the same thing but to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

Now this is not a criticism but an observation from a long time spent dealing with people. You couldn't find me 100 Christians in this city (outside of this church) who could lay out those seven mysteries; and yet, we are told not to be ignorant of those mysteries. In I Corinthians 4:1 we are told that pastors, church leaders, and Christians should be stewards of those mysteries and continue to teach them. So much for that idea!

➤ The Garments of Salvation

The Bible tells us in Exodus 33:20 that no man can see God and live. I'm going to show you why that is in a couple of weeks. How do you rationalize all of this and put it into some kind of working format? God is a Spirit. You can't see Him and live, but He's manifested through Jesus Christ. And I want you to see today, that when we get to this part in the Bible in time and history, it's the Person of Christ in God's plan to earth for man.

After man fell in Genesis 3 (you know the story of Adam and Eve), we now see God beginning the process to redeem man. Adam and Eve sinned against God. They were in innocence; now they know that they are naked. The Bible says they made aprons of fig leaves to cover their nakedness. That's a picture of every unsaved man and woman in the world today. The fig tree in

the Bible is a picture of self-righteousness. We see Adam and Eve, who are now in sin and alienated from God, trying to hide their nakedness by making their own clothes. God came down and said, “That ain’t going to work.” Do you know what He did? He killed something innocent and made them *garments of salvation* (Isaiah 61:10). He covered their nakedness with something innocent dying and shedding blood.

Do you know what God did when you and I got saved? He ripped off that apron of fig leaves, made you look at your own nakedness, and then he covered you with the garment of His salvation. And you are covered today by a garment of salvation; however, that garment of salvation had to come off of a Lamb. Somebody had to die, the Lamb of God, for you to get that garment. And now (as we’ve discussed over the past few weeks), God has set up the free will concept. In the 6,000 years that man is going to be on this earth, He goes to work to reveal Himself to man so that man will come back to Him. That’s really all your life is about today. You’ll go to work tomorrow, you have family and friends, but do you know what life is really all about?

### ➤ What Life is Really All About

Life is really about if you died right now, do you know for 100% certainty that you’d go to heaven? That’s the real question of life. We think it’s about where we’re going to eat this afternoon, what car we’re going to buy, or what we’re going to do next week. That’s not the real issue. The only way to go to heaven is to get the garment of salvation because Jesus Christ, the visible appearance of the invisible God, came down, revealed God’s glory through His life, and then pointed you to the crucifixion.

### ➤ The Pre-Incarnate Christ in the Old Testament

We saw last week that in the Old Testament, God revealed His glory through the nation of Israel. During that time, you will find Christ appearing and showing up, but He doesn’t show up as the incarnate Son of God like He did in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. No, he shows up in a pre-incarnate appearance. The Bible calls Him in Galatians 4:14, the *angel of God*.

<i>Galatians 4:14. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an <b>angel of God</b>, [even] as Christ Jesus.</i>
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This verse tells us that in the Old Testament, when God appeared to the leaders of Israel like Moses and Joshua, it was Christ in a pre-incarnate form before He came into this world through Mary. And once the kingdom of heaven gets established with the kings (we saw it last week with David and Solomon), you won’t find the angel of the Lord showing up anymore. For the deeper Bible students, this will be broken down for you in Matthew 21:33-46.

Israel in the Old Testament was told to look for a promised seed. That promised seed was not going to come in the Old Testament. It was a promise that would have to come down the line, but Israel was told to look for it. They were told to look for a promised seed that would be their King. Do you know what the word Messiah means? It means “promised deliverer.” Every time they read Isaiah 7:13-14, they saw it.



*Isaiah 7:13-14. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; [Is it] a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?*

*14. Therefore **the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.***

Immanuel means “God with us.” They were told to look for a promised seed that was going to come from a virgin who was going to be their Deliverer, their Messiah, their Immanuel. And the devil destroyed that.

We use the King James Bible here, and most of you know why. There are plenty of other translations out there that people like to use, but I will tell you this—22 of the other translations take out the word *virgin* and put in *a young woman*. Now may I ask you a question that even a sixth grader could answer? What is the sign of a young woman having a baby? They have them all the time. The sign was a virgin; however, the devil took it out because he wants to destroy Christ being God’s glory.

#### ➤ The Promised Seed

That prophecy will come in time through history from two lines in your Bible. One line will be found in Matthew Chapter 1 which will be Christ’s kingly line back through David and the other line will be found in Luke Chapter 3 which will be Christ’s human line through Mary. One is the Son of David and the other is the Son of man. As the devil attacked the nation of Israel, God’s people, he did it by attacking the promise of the promised seed. So by the first coming of Christ, Israel has completely forsaken the idea of a Messiah coming to be their king in the person of Christ. This is why they crucified Him. This is why Pilate asks in John 19:15, *Shall I crucify your King?* What did they say? *We have no king but Caesar.* You know the rest of the story. They took my beloved Savior and put nails into his hands and feet. They put Him on a cross, and they crucified Him. Israel rejected the One who was the visible appearance of an invisible God. The devil had done his work.

The story doesn’t end there. Everybody thinks it did; the devil thought that it did; however, God’s plan was much bigger than that. In fact, Christ’s death on the cross is not the theme of the Bible. It may be the theme of your life and my life because of salvation, but the theme of the Bible is not the day that the world took Him, beat Him, spit in His face, pulled out His beard, and nailed Him on a cross. **The day God is looking for is the day His Son sits down in Jerusalem and is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.**

#### ➤ Old Testament Forgiveness and Abraham’s Bosom

Man in the Old Testament could get God’s forgiveness through the sacrifices under the law. The law had two types of sacrifices—sin offerings and trespass offerings. The trespass offerings were things that you did against your common man. The sin offerings were the things that you did against God. But you know in the Old Testament, under the law, even though they brought **the sacrifices, the sacrifices could not pay for man’s sin. It could only temporarily cover it.**

We see this great truth in Hebrews 9:11-15 where he's comparing the Old Testament sacrifices to Christ's death on the cross.

*Hebrews 9:11-15. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;*

*12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [for us].*

*13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:*

*14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

*15. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

And the Bible says in Hebrews 9:22, *And almost **all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*** Now this is why in the Old Testament, up to the resurrection, they couldn't go to heaven when they died. They had to go to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16). That's because it took the blood of Christ to take away man's sin. Redemption could not come from the Old Testament blood of bulls, goats, and lambs. It could only come through the blood of God's Son: The Lamb of God which had the power to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

### ➤ God Takes on the Form of Man to Redeem His Creation

So now we begin to see the mystery of godliness. God who was a Spirit; God who is invisible; God who no man can see and live, to redeem His creation had to take on the form of a man, the Son of man, The Lord Jesus Christ. And then He came down to redeem a fallen creation—you and me. **That's the mystery of godliness.** He came to this earth (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) through a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), as the promised seed to redeem a fallen creation from Genesis Chapter 3.

Now the devil thought, and you've got to see this, that by killing Christ, he would eliminate the promised seed and keep earth for himself with all of the kingdoms. II Corinthians 4:4 tells us that the devil is the god of this world. We saw in Matthew Chapter 4 where he came to tempt Christ. He waited until Christ had fasted for 40 days and was in a weakened condition, and then he came to tempt Him. (Now that's a great key for all of us. When we are weak, that is when the tempter will come). He comes at him three ways. The last time is when he takes Him up into a mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of this world then says that he will give Him all of those kingdoms if He will bow down and worship him. Jesus Christ gets those kingdoms in Revelation Chapters 19-20, and God gives them to Him. The devil never stops. Christ's answer was *it is written*, and the Bible says the devil left Him.

## ➤ The Devil had the Keys of Hell and Death

The devil's next plan was to kill Him. Do you know why the devil wanted to kill Him?

*Hebrews 2:14-16. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;***

*15. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

*16. For verily he took not on [him the nature off] angels; but he took on [him] the seed of Abraham.*

Throughout the whole Old Testament, and throughout the gospels right up to Christ's death on the cross, the devil had the power of death. He held the keys to death and hell, and nobody could get out. That's why nobody could rise from the dead. That's why they couldn't go to heaven but had to go to Abraham's bosom. The devil thought that Christ wasn't ever coming out because the devil had the power of death. When Jesus Christ gave up the ghost on the cross, the devil and all the hordes of hell must have been throwing one whale of a party. God was dead, He was in the tomb, and the devil had the keys.

## ➤ When Christ Came Out of the Tomb, He Won the Victory for us All

You know what happened next. Up from the grave He arose! He came out of that tomb! **The Bible says in Revelation that when He came out of the tomb, He now has the keys of death and hell, and the devil is defeated.** That's why Paul says in I Corinthians 15:55, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* We don't have to fear death because He tasted death for you and me. If you're saved, you recognized the Son of God coming down from God to redeem fallen man and accepted that, so you're never going to die. You may close your eyes in the sleep of death in the flesh, but who cares! The moment you close your eyes, your soul steps out of the body, and bless God you're absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). It's all because when Christ came out of that tomb, He won the victory for us all. The devil is now defeated. God's people just don't understand that, so they let him manipulate them and push them around.

**And now we enter the church age with the message of God through the word of God that God came down in the form of a man and died for His creation.** But again, it's a choice. The devil never stops, and now he counters the true church, the true message, and the true salvation with all the false churches and all the false teachings which take you completely away from God and send you to hell in a handbasket. Somebody said to me one time that they didn't believe there were religions out there run by the devil. Really? Then why does the Bible say in Matthew 23:14 *ye shall receive the greater damnation.* He was talking about a religious church at the time. Now we see the counterfeit churches that the devil produces from around 400 A.D. up through the Reformation and then the 1800s up through today. Every one of them teach salvation different from the Bible. Some teach that you must be baptized, others that you have to join a particular church, some say you have to live a moral life or do this and that; however, the

Bible is clear that there isn't anything in your life that you do that's going to merit your salvation. They're all produced to take the glory of God, that God wanted to give us through Christ, and then the devil takes it for himself to destroy the mystery of godliness and to start the mystery of ungodliness.

### ➤ The Mystery of Iniquity

The mystery of iniquity is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9. Paul tells us that it's already at work in his day. The mystery of iniquity is the mystery of how the devil down through the history of man on planet earth, when God had a plan for man's redemption, the devil destroyed it. It's one of the greatest studies in the Bible. This was Paul's great fear in 2 Corinthians 11:3 where he said to the church at Corinth, *but I fear, lest by any means, **as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*** And boy, the devil was right on target!

We are warned in 2 Corinthians 11:4, *For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or [if] ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with [him].*

Galatians 1:8-9 says, *but though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9. As we said before, so say I now again, **if any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*** And the devil did it all down through the last 2,000 years of church history. I could give you religious group after group, and the people on planet Earth fall for these counterfeits by the millions.

And as time moves toward its ultimate end, the rapture and the second coming, God will continue to reveal Himself to man and the devil will continue to counterfeit to stop it. Life will be about the choices we make. I've talked with many Christians who were saved for many years and did not understand how the redemption really came about. They go to church, they hear the preacher, they know they've got to trust Christ as their own personal savior, but they never understand the mystery of godliness. They never understand the aspect of God being man in the flesh and why God did it the way He did it.

## III. Conclusion

Most of you older folks will know who Paul Harvey is. He was a radio broadcaster who was a saved man. He had a weekly radio broadcast and always had some incredible things to say. I heard one that he did back in the 1970s about Christ coming to man—God manifested in the flesh; Christ coming down as the visible appearance of an invisible God. It was Christmas 1975, and I heard it live.

Paul Harvey told the story about a family whose father was an atheist, but the mother and kids were believers. It was Christmas Eve, and the mother and kids were getting ready to go to church for the Christmas Eve program which was just down the street. The father informed them that he would not be going and didn't believe in all that stuff about Christ. He said if he went,

he'd just be a hypocrite. So, they left without him. He got himself a cup of coffee and sat at the kitchen table. There was a snowstorm outside, and the wind was howling and the snow falling heavily. It was very cold, and he sat there and began to read his paper.

Suddenly, there was a thud up against the window. He was startled and looked up to see a little bird trapped in the terrible storm. It had seen the lights in the house and tried to fly in, but the window stopped him. The little bird had slammed into the window and fell on the windowsill. Even though the man was an atheist, he had some compassion for this little bird. He didn't want it to freeze to death. He bundled up and went outside to open the shed. He turned the light on hoping that the little bird would fly into the shed so it would be saved from the storm; however, the bird didn't fly in. It stayed up against the window.

Next, he went into the pantry and got some breadcrumbs. He started putting the breadcrumbs from the window to the shed hoping the little bird would follow it and fly inside. The bird didn't move. He tried to pick up the bird, but it just flutter-flattered and went into a panic. He realized that the little bird was afraid of him. He thought that the little bird must think that he was some kind of giant creature who was going to kill him. He said, "If only I could think of some way to let the little bird know that he can trust me. I only want to get him to where he can be saved from the storm, but everything I do frightens him." Finally he thought, "If I could only become a bird, and let him know that I could save him. If I could mingle with him and speak his language. If I could show him the way of salvation out of the cold winter storm. If I could just become a bird, I could make him understand that I don't want to hurt him. I want to save him!"

At that exact moment, the church bells rang down the street, and the Christmas service began about Jesus Christ leaving the portals of heaven and coming down to a creation who could not understand God and was fearful of Him. God manifested Himself to be one of us. He spoke our language, walked our streets, and worked our jobs. He didn't present Himself as anything but a common man with a common language with a message of God. God thought if He could just become a man, He could save us. The moment the man understood, the Holy Spirit of God broke his heart. He fell on his knees and trusted Christ as his own personal savior.

### ➤ God Shows us Through the Person of Jesus Christ How Much He Loves us

**When God wanted to reveal Himself to man, He became one of us.** God manifested Himself in the form of Jesus Christ, called the mystery of godliness, for the redemption of a fallen creation. It doesn't matter to God that we fall and make the wrong choices. God is a forgiving God and the God of second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth chances. God saw us as His fallen creation and realized that God coming down in a booming voice, a pillar of fire, or an earthquake would just scare us to death. So you know what he did. He became a man, and He came down to me and you. God, who is invisible and a Spirit, came down in the form of a man, Jesus Christ, and through His sinless blood gave us the way to wash away our sins. And when we do, He restores each one of us back to fellowship with Him through salvation. But life is about choices. He's not going to force you to trust Him. He is simply going to do everything He can to show you through the person of Jesus Christ how much He loves you.