

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## A GREAT MYSTERY

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I have the gift of simplification, do you have it too?

It's a double edged sword, and often a keyboard with a worn down delete key. I love simplifying things, even when I don't do it well. I've recently been editing and a couple of friends' essays and cover letters, and my favourite part is pressing 'delete' on a huge chunk of information and then seeing that word count drop. I love it even more when I can reduce a 4 clause sentence to one. I string it out across the page and stitch it back together again with only the essential parts remaining.

It's a strange interest isn't it? It's like the feeling you get when you pack your holiday gear into the boot and fit it all together like a seamless Jenga tower. Or when you finally get a popcorn kernel out of your teeth with a toothpick. Or when you've chucked out a load of tat or taken it to the tip, and then returned to an uncluttered room. However, my powers of simplification were put to the test when I wrote my dissertation. I was given free reign, it was 10,000 words long, and it covered lots of themes – bad idea. In that task I learnt that I could on de-clutter so much. I kept wanting to concentrate it by boiling it down or filtering out it to find its essentials like you would with a fine barrel of port, but I couldn't, it was just too complex. I just couldn't narrow it down.

So, is our faith a complicated matter that's too tricky to understand, or is it something that all of us can grasp? The apostle Paul has answers. In his letter of 1 Timothy, he advises Timothy (his young associate) how to be a pastor and appropriately pass on the trustworthy core of the faith to the next generation. But... he encountered a problem. Some people in Timothy's church were talking trash. In a nutshell, he says "they want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm." (1:7). People were latching onto weird stories and myths which distracted them (and others) from following God. So how does Paul counter it and describe the faith?

He says this:

16 Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

He appeared in the flesh,

was vindicated by the Spirit,[d]

was seen by angels,

was preached among the nations,

was believed on in the world,

was taken up in glory.

The church is described as the pillar and foundation of truth just before in verse 15, but the origin of godliness is a mystery in verse 16. If we look at the rest of 16 we observe that the mystery of godliness is the person of Jesus who came to earth, was approved by the spirit at his baptism and taken up into heaven. So what does this mean for our faith?

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## Jesus is the mystery

False teachers and people obsessed with weird myths were missing the point. Paul does not say that the centre of our godliness is some kind of hidden or secret knowledge, it is actually a person, and that person is Jesus. By saying that he's accomplishing a lot. Who cares if the false teachers knew a lot? What was important was to follow Christ who is the only gateway to knowing and understanding the ways of God. Intellect is good, but it can't get us to godliness by itself.

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## God works mysteriously

God's plans could never have been guessed. Who knew that all people in the world would be able to know Jesus? Who had any idea that God would come to earth as a man? Who knew that he would be the key to godliness and having our lives changed? However, for the last 2000 years countless people testify to this truth. No one can explain exactly how it all works, but it does, and this should lead to humility rather than showing off.

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## Jesus is the source of godliness

Godliness is simple, and a mystery, because it all comes through Jesus. We only become Godly through him, but it's a mystery because we will never know him completely, and we depend on him for knowing God at all. There is no esoteric knowledge we can master to win salvation for ourselves or cut our own path to heaven. The mystery of our godliness is Jesus. It is inherently humbling and no one can boast. All people access God through Jesus alone. Where does that leave us? Is Christianity endlessly complex or profoundly simple? Romans 10:13 puts it like this: "...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Jesus is our profoundly simple point of entry. Even if we come to understand endlessly complex things about God over time, we never need Jesus less.

I look back a full year, to near enough the inception of the first lockdown and puzzle at how God has done so much in my life over that period of time. There have been enormous ups and downs. Even as I listen to my first Beacons, I remember how fragile those truths felt to me at the time. I was saying them, but they were very hard to stomach. I had no idea how God could be at work at times, and yet, he was. Mysteriously he's somehow brought me into a place of spiritual prosperity despite

So wherever you're up to in life, I encourage you to learn about him and trust in him. It's as profoundly simple as that.



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