

**What we believe about Jesus**  
**1 Timothy 3:14-16**

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to tell his young protégé to

- stay in Ephesus

3a - *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus...*

- and provide him with a laundry list of things to do while he was there:

3b - *charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine...*

2:1 - *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people*

3:1 - *If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.*

3:8 - *Deacons likewise*

4:b - *...train yourself for godliness*

4:13 - *devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*

4:16 - *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

5:3 - *Honor widows who are truly widows.*

5:17f – *More about elders*

6:11-14 - *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before<sup>[d]</sup> Pontius Pilate made the good confession, <sup>14</sup> to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

6:20 - *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you*

At the end of his discussion about elders and deacons in chapter 3, Paul

- writes a personal note. 14a – *I hope to come to you soon,*
- Explains the rationale for his letter. 14b-15a – *but I am writing these things so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God*
- Defines the church. 15b – *which is the church of the living god, a pillar and buttress of truth*
- Draws a defining picture of Jesus. 16

<sup>16</sup> *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:  
He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory.*

### **First: Jesus is our Common Confession**

The Greek actually starts -

**“By common confession” = homologoumenos**

- *Homo = same*
- *Logou = speak*
- *Menos = we*

Translated as:

ESV – *We confess*

KJV & ASV – *And without controversy*

CSB – *And most certainly*

And then says, *“Mega estin” = Great is...the mystery of godliness*

*Godliness = eusebeia = godliness, holiness, reverence respect*

Paul is saying, *“We all reverentially acknowledge this...”*

This is what reverence looks like:

- *Mark 4:41 – (disciples) - And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”*
- *John 18:6 – (arresters) - When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.*

Paul is saying, *“This is something we all hold in reverential fear.”*

The truth Paul is preaching here is about Jesus. Here are some uncontroversial things, things we all believe and must believe about Jesus.

In these six sentences, Paul summarizes the entirety of Gospel. In the Greek, they are so rhythmic that some scholars think Paul is quoting a hymn the church sang

And since, the church is – vs 15 – the pillar and buttress (leaning support) of the truth, we all, without controversy, believe this about Jesus!

### **First: God was manifest in Jesus**

When God said to Satan – *“he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”* (Gen 3:15b) He meant that Jesus would show up to defeat the devil and all the evil that Satan intended.

When Job wished for a personal redeemer, Jesus is the answer to his prayer.

#### a) Job’s problem

**Job 7:20-21** - *If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you? <sup>21</sup> Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be.”*

#### b) Job’s Hope

**Job 9:32-33** - *For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. <sup>33</sup> There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both.*

#### c) Job’s Faith

**Job 19:25** - *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth*

#### d) Job’s Final Wish

**Job 14:13-15** - *Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! <sup>14</sup> If a man dies, shall he live*

*again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come. <sup>15</sup> You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands.*

Jesus is both God (1 John 5:20) and man (Hebrews 2:9). And as such, He is our high priest (Hebrews 2:17-18) and our mediator (1 Tim 2:5). He proves that “if God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom 8:31) because Christ’s intercession silences all opposition (Rom 8:34). In this, wildest hopes of Job are granted.

*Job knew he had a redeemer in heaven (Job 19:25) but he did not necessarily know how that redeemer would act for him. Overall, Job wished for forgiveness through a God-man mediator and resurrection. Job wished for the gospel. And that shows us something about the nature of the gospel. What does one, in the most intense suffering, really want? What does one in the most dire circumstances really need? What would give the ultimate relief and assurance that one needs? The gospel. Temporary relief from pain is exactly that. It only provides respite until the next trial comes. Even eradicating all suffering in this life does not ensure us about our final destiny. Moreover, it only gets rid of what is wrong and does not make all things new and right. Only the gospel can do that and Job, the expert on suffering, concludes with that very truth. The gospel is the definitive hope in suffering for it assures us that God cares enough not only to preserve His people in this suffering, but to usher them unto an incorruptible and glorious inheritance (1 Pet 1:4).*

It is what alone gives a living hope (1 Pet 1:3).

– Abner Chou

*By the coming of God in human form, Jesus, clothed the body with imperishable nobility. By Him who was made flesh, whose every muscle was a pulley divinely swung, whose every nerve was divine handwriting, whose every bone was divine sculpture, who, in kingly fashion, wore the flesh as a garment, the body has been made an instrument of Christ. Through the human mouth God in authority spoke. Through human eyes God in pity looked. Through human hands God in love wrought. Upon human feet God on errands of mercy went. Through a human heart God’s compassion was shown. Through human ears God heard humanity’s despairing cry.*

– R.G. Lee

## **Second: He was justified by the Spirit**

a) In his conception

Luke 1:36 – *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born<sup>l</sup> will be called holy—the Son of God.*

b) In his ministry

Matthew 3:16 – *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove*

*and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,<sup>l</sup> with whom I am well pleased."*

c) In his resurrection

*Romans 8:11 - If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus<sup>dj</sup> from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

*"You are the Christ," a Jewish fisherman said, "the son of the living God. Centuries have only confirmed this spontaneous tribute to Jesus's life. No one has yet discovered a word which Jesus ought to have said; none suggested a better word that he might have said. No action of his has fallen short of the ideal. This man alone never made a false step, never struck a jarring note.*

- John Watson

*Jesus never struck a jarring note, never made a misstep. On Him circumstances left no fingerprints. Popularity never caused Him to hasten a footstep. Hostility never caused Him to falter. Temptations never loosened a moral fiber. As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean so Christ is the ocean in which all moral excellencies and spiritual pleasures meet. Even His enemies said they could find no fault in Him. Even His worst foe proclaimed Him innocent.*

- R.G. Lee

### **Third: Seen by Angels**

a) At his birth

*Luke 2:8-11 - And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

b) In his ministry

*Mark 1:13 - The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.*

c) In his sorrow

*Luke 22:41-43 - And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." <sup>41</sup> And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless,*

not my will, but yours, be done.”<sup>43</sup> And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

d) At his resurrection

Matthew 28:1-7 - Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he<sup>[a]</sup> lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”

**Question:** Did the seraphim of Is 6, turn their heads to watch Jesus during the incarnation?

#### **Fourth: Preached among the Gentiles**

1 Corinthians 1:20-25 - Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach<sup>[b]</sup> to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Because we believe the Holy Spirit attends preaching

#### **Fifth: Believed on in the world**

Matthew 28:19 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 2:5-11 - Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup> both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

Philippians 4:22 – *All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.*

Romans 15:24 - *I hope to see you in passing as I go to **Spain**, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.*

The Columbus Monument is a statue in Valladolid, Spain. On it, are the words “*Non Plus Ultra.*”



*Non Plus Ultra = No More Beyond*” was a saying allegedly inscribed on The Pillars of Hercules at the Strait of Gibraltar, warning sailors of their ultimate doom as they left the safety of the Mediterranean Sea and Europe for the vast unknown of the Atlantic.

Of course, Christopher Columbus proved this wrong. On the statue, you can see a lion ripping off the word “*Non,*” leaving only the phrase “*Plus Ultra*” or “*More Beyond*” which is now the national motto of Spain and part of the Spanish flag and Coat of Arms.

**Note:** There is “*more beyond.*” This silly world will try to convince you there is “*non plus ultra*” after this life. Those who do are as simple-minded as flat-earthers. In kindness, can we say to our unbelieving friends, “*It is as ludicrous not to believe in “more beyond” this life as it was to believe the world was flat. We now know the Universe is constantly expanding. Even beyond this earth, there is always “plus ultra,” more beyond.*”

Why is this important?

Philippians 2:9-11 - *God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee [believers and unbelievers] should bow, in heaven [angels] and on earth [people] and under the earth [Satan and demons], <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Now as Savior or later as Judge, every person will eventually, forever acknowledge Jesus as Lord

### Sixth: Taken up in Glory

*“He was so received because his work is finished. He would never have gone into his glory if he had not finished all his toil. He would have accepted no reward had he not fully earned it.”*  
-Spurgeon

Luke 24:51 – *While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.*

Hebrews 1:3b – *After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

1 John 2:1 – *But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

Hebrews 7:25 - *...he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

Hebrews 2:7-8a - *You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, <sup>8</sup> putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control*

*Psalm 110:1 - The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

Psalm 22 – The Psalm of the Cross

Psalm 23 – The Psalm of his Care

Psalm 24 – The Psalm of his Coming

- **The ascension** - <sup>7</sup>*Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!*
- **The 2nd Coming** - <sup>9</sup>*Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts he is the King of glory! Selah*

The Scripture reminds us that God will raise us from the dead with glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:54) and we will forever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17).

**Conclusion:** In effect, Paul has summarized the Gospel. This is what

*“we confess” (ESV), “most certainly” (CSB), “without controversy,” (KJV/ASV)*

about Jesus.

### **Conclusion:**

It is providential that we should be reading 1 Timothy right now because our church is conversing about a reinterpretation of 1 Timothy 3:12. The elders have encouraged our congregation to view the qualifications for deacons as a secondary or tertiary issue and not a primary one.

And so, it's equally providential that we would be reading 1 Timothy 3 right now, only to discover that Paul ends the chapter with a summary statement about Jesus that we all believe. *"Without controversy, most certainly, we all agree...."*

What we think about Jesus is a primary one. We may disagree about deacon qualifications but that is not what defines Christianity or binds us together.

Jesus defines Christianity. And, as the head of the body, he binds us together.

### **Community Groups:**

- 1 – How are you doing in this resurgence of Covid?
- 2 – Why did Paul write the book of 1 Timothy?
- 3 – Read the text. Why do you think Paul concludes chapter 3 with this doxology?
- 4 – What does it mean that Jesus is our common confession?
- 5 – How can we "reverently fear" Jesus?
- 6 – Talk about how Jesus satisfied Job's problem, hope, faith and final wish.
- 7 – How was Jesus 'justified by the Spirit?'
- 8 – Where was Jesus seen by angels?
- 9 – Why might this be an important point in Paul's argument about Jesus?
- 10 – How does Paul's note in Phil 4:22 speak to the success of the Gospel in the midst of a world that was violent toward it?
- 11 – Talk about "non plus ultra" versus "plus ultra" and how it can be used in a discussion with nonbelievers.
- 12 – What does the Scripture tell us that Jesus is now doing in Heaven?

13 – How does centralizing our faith in Jesus help us, in the church, in the world?