



Steven Fitchie · Aug 30, 2018 · 3 min read

## "God was manifest in the flesh" or "He was manifest in the flesh", 1 Timothy 3:16



All translations should seriously consider the writings of the earliest Christians which predated many of the later Greek manuscripts when producing translations of the New Testament Scriptures. Among the clearest texts in the Bible proving that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man is found in 1 Timothy 3:16.

The Authorized Version translated 1 Tim. 3:16 as, "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."

Unfortunately, "God was manifest in the flesh," is missing in all modern translations. A typical translation, like the NIV, translates 1 Timothy 3:16 as,

"Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: **HE appeared in a body**, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."

According to modern translations, God no longer manifested Himself in a body of flesh; it has now become a description of any man. Modern translations have taken away this verse as it was written by the apostle Paul because they are based on a few corrupted manuscripts.

Another good example of the earliest Christian writers backing up the fact that God was manifested in the flesh to purchase His Church "with His own blood" is found in Acts 20:28-29.

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd **the church of God which He purchased with His own blood**. For I know this, that after my departure **savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.**"

Acts 20:28-29

Ignatius of Antioch (AD 107), Clement of Alexandria (AD 190-200), and Tertullian of Carthage (AD 195-225) all referenced Acts 20:28-29 by writing that it was “the blood of God” by which God purchased His own Church.

Ignatius of Antioch (AD 107), “Being **the followers of God**, and stirring up yourselves **by the blood of God**, ye have perfectly accomplished the work which was beeseeming to you.” (*Ignatius to the Ephesians, chapter 2*)

Clement of Alexandria (AD 190-200), Clement of Alexandria (Quis dives, c. 34) used the very phrase “**the blood of God**” which this passage suggests.

Tertullian of Carthage (AD 195-225) wrote, “We are not our own, but bought with a price. And what kind of price? The blood of God.” (*Tertullian, AD 205, Hendrickson’s Ante-Nicene Fathers, To His Wife, Vol. 4, Page 46*)

There are close to twenty early Christian writers who quoted or alluded to 1 Timothy 3:16 as “God was manifested in the flesh” rather than “He was manifested in the flesh.” Since Ignatius of Antioch cited 1 Timothy 3:16 in AD 107 almost exactly the same as “God was manifested in the flesh” in 1 Timothy 3:16, we know that the earliest Greek New Testament must have read that “God was manifested in the flesh” rather than “He was manifested in the flesh.”

Although Ignatius does not quote 1 Timothy 3:16 exactly, the early post apostolic writers seldom quoted verses word for word verbatim.

Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians (about AD 107): “There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; **GOD existing IN FLESH** (*Ignatius to the Ephesians 7*) ...”

Ignatius further wrote to the Ephesians, “**GOD Himself being MANIFESTED in HUMAN FORM** for the renewal of eternal life (*Ignatius to the Ephesians 19*)...”

Modern translations reject “God was manifested in the flesh” as written by Paul because they are based on a few corrupted manuscripts. Since Ignatius of Antioch cited 1 Timothy 3:16 as “God being manifested in human form”, we know that the earliest post apostolic witness cited the text as “God” being “manifested” rather than “He” being “manifested” in the flesh long before later Greek manuscripts were corrupted.

“God was manifested in the flesh” in 1 Tim. 3:16 and “God Himself being manifested in human form” (Ephesians 19) have identical meanings. Ignatius actually used the same Greek words for “manifested” and “flesh” in his Epistle to the Ephesians just as these words appear in some Greek manuscripts of 1 Timothy 3:16. Therefore, the later reading of “He was manifested in the flesh” rather than “God” is likely an error which crept into the text.

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