

JOHN, the Mystical GOSPEL

by Witness Lee

In His person Christ is mystical. Concerning Christ's incarnation, there are two kinds of records in the New Testament—a physical record and a mystical record. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the record of the Lord's incarnation is altogether physical. We are told that He was born of a virgin, that He was laid in a manger, that shepherds came to worship Him, that He was taken from Israel to Egypt, and that He grew up in Nazareth. All this is a physical record. The record in the Gospel of John is absolutely different. Chapter 1, for instance, is not a physical record but a mystical record. Verses 1 and 14 say, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality." This way of speaking about the incarnation is mystical and mysterious. "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (v. 16). This also is mystical. John's account of Christ's incarnation is altogether mystical.

Actually, the entire Gospel of John is mystical. "All things came into being through Him [the Word]...In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1:3, 4). This is mystical. This One is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," and upon Him the Spirit descended "as a dove out of heaven, and He abode upon Him" (vv. 29, 32). This, too, is mystical. Those who believe into Him become stones (v. 42). Speaking of Himself as the heavenly ladder, Christ said, "You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (v. 51). To be sure, all these things are mystical. Christ's being the temple as the house of God (2:16-21) is mystical, and regeneration also is mystical. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (3:6). The issue of regeneration is to produce a bride, who is the increase of the Bridegroom (vv. 29-30). Once again, this is a mystical matter. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (v. 14). Christ's hanging on the cross as a brass serpent is surely mystical. In 4:10 and 14 Christ tells us that if we drink of the living water which He alone can give us, this water

will become in us "a fountain of water gushing up into eternal life." Then He goes on to say, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness" (v. 24). All this is mystical.

The Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is self-existing, ever-existing, and coinhering, with the three of the Divine Trinity dwelling in one another. According to John 14:10 and 11 the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son. This indicates that the Father is embodied in the Son and the Son is the Father's embodiment, forming a divine and mystical realm, the realm of the Triune God. Therefore, the Triune God Himself is a divine and mystical realm.

The divine and mystical realm into which we may enter today is actually not simply the divine and mystical realm of the Triune God but the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ. The terms *consummated Spirit* and *pneumatic Christ* are very particular.

Who is the consummated Spirit? The consummated Spirit is the compound Spirit typified by the anointing ointment—a compound of one hin of olive oil with four kinds of spices and their effectiveness (Exo. 30:23-25). Before the Spirit was consummated, He was the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit. He participated in God's creation only as the Spirit of God (Gen. 1:2). Much later, when the Israelites, God's chosen people, were in trouble, God came down to help them as the Spirit of Jehovah (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25). The Spirit of Jehovah was God coming near to His people in order to help them in an objective way but not in a subjective way.

The Old Testament is a record mainly of two things: God's creation and the history of Israel, God's chosen people. Because the history of Israel was miserable, they were constantly in need of God's help. Without His coming to help His chosen people in their troubles, they would not have survived. In God's creation the Spirit was

the Spirit of God, and in God's helping Israel the Spirit was the Spirit of Jehovah.

Through incarnation God became a man. God's becoming a man was something altogether new, and for this new thing a particular title is used for the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). In Greek the Holy Spirit is frequently called “the Spirit the Holy” (Luke 2:26; 3:22; 10:21; John 14:26). The title *the Holy Spirit* was used with respect to the incarnation because the incarnation was something utterly holy. God's coming to be a man was a most holy matter, and Luke 1:35 even uses the expression *the holy thing*. As the conception of the God-man was of the Holy Spirit, so what was born of that conception was a holy thing. The Spirit who carried this out was not only the Spirit of God nor only the Spirit of Jehovah but the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, therefore, the Spirit is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit.

In John 7 we see that the Lord Jesus, the God-man, attended the Feast of Tabernacles. On the last day of the feast, the great day, He stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me...out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water” (vv. 37-38). In the next verse John, the author of this Gospel, gives a word of explanation: “But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified” (v. 39). We need to pay special attention to the words *the Spirit was not yet*. The Spirit of God was there from the beginning, in creation; the Spirit of Jehovah had come again and again to help the people of Israel in their troubles; and the Holy Spirit had been active in the incarnation. How could John say that the Spirit was “not yet”? Yes, the Spirit was there as the Spirit of God in Genesis, as the Spirit of Jehovah in Judges, and as the Holy Spirit in Matthew and Luke, but *the Spirit*—the Spirit as the compounded and consummated Spirit—was “not yet” in John 7:39 because at that time Jesus had not yet been glorified. The man Jesus was glorified in resurrection (Luke 24:26). Thus, the Spirit was “not yet” until Christ's resurrection. In resurrection Christ, the last Adam in the flesh, became the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit that gives life (1 Cor. 15:45).

Now we can see something concerning the history of the consummation of the Spirit. Although the Spirit already was the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that gives life was “not yet” in John 7 because the Lord Jesus had not yet passed through death for man's sin and had not yet entered into resurrection. On the contrary, at the time of John 7 He was still in the flesh and could not enter into people to be their life. But in resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit, and

now He can come into the believers to impart life to them.

In resurrection the Spirit of God was mingled with Christ's humanity, with His death and its effectiveness, and with His resurrection and its power. The issue of this mingling is the compound, consummated Spirit. The Bible unveils the fact that the Spirit has become the consummated Spirit. Because many Christians have not seen the revelation in the Bible concerning the consummated Spirit, they need to be reeducated. Some may say, “God is the same from eternity; He has never had any change.” However, the Bible clearly reveals that God, who is Spirit, became flesh (John 1:14). Was that not a change? Furthermore, the last Adam in the flesh became the life-giving Spirit. Was that not also a change? First, God changed in that, through incarnation, He became flesh, and then He changed again in that, in resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit, and this Spirit is the consummated Spirit. I hope that those who are under the influence of old, traditional theology will be willing to learn what the Bible, our highest authority, reveals concerning the consummated Spirit.

The Bible reveals also that Christ has become the pneumatic Christ. In eternity Christ was God as the Spirit, but then He became flesh. Romans 1:3 and 4 say that He “came out of the seed of David according to the flesh” but that He “was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead.” The title *the Spirit of holiness* refers to Christ's divinity, His divine essence. First Peter 3:18, speaking of Christ's crucifixion, says that He was, on the one hand, “put to death in the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the Spirit.” The crucifixion put Christ to death only in His flesh, not in His Spirit as His divinity. His Spirit as His divinity did not die at the cross when His flesh died; rather, His Spirit as His divinity was made alive, enlivened with new power of life. Thus, while He was dying in His humanity and even after He was buried, His Spirit as His divinity remained active.

In John 12:24 the Lord Jesus referred to Himself as a grain of wheat: “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” When He fell into the earth as a grain of wheat, death began immediately. But as His “shell” was dying, the divine life within Him was growing. From this we see that while the Lord Jesus was dying, He was also growing. Without this kind of action, He could not have been resurrected.

Jesus' flesh was crucified and buried. How could it be resurrected? In John 20 Peter and John came to the tomb in which the Lord had been buried. Peter “entered into the tomb; and he beheld the linen cloths lying there and the handkerchief which had been over His head, not lying

with the linen cloths, but folded up in one place apart” (vv. 6-7). The body surely had not been stolen. How, then, was it possible for the Lord’s dead and buried flesh to be resurrected? The answer to this question is that according to His flesh He had been buried there, but according to His divinity He had remained very active. Between the time of His burial and resurrection, His Spirit as His divinity was working to resurrect His humanity, to uplift it, and to bring it into divinity so that His humanity could be born of God. According to Acts 13:33 it was in resurrection that God begot Jesus to be the Son of God. He was therefore begotten to be the firstborn Son of God by having His humanity uplifted into divinity and even brought into the divine sonship. Simultaneously, He became the life-giving Spirit and thereby became the pneumatic Christ.

We have seen that the Spirit has been consummated and that Christ has become the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ. Thus, we may now speak of the divine and mystical realm of this consummated Spirit and of this pneumatic Christ. What a marvelous realm this is!

We have pointed out that the three of the Divine Trinity are self-existing, ever-existing, and coinhering, and as such the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are a divine and mystical realm. With the Triune God Himself as a mystical realm there are no “complications,” but in the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ there are a number of “complications,” all of which are blessings to us.

God wanted us to be in Him. If He were merely the Triune God without Christ’s humanity, death, and resurrection, and we could enter into Him, we would find the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but nothing of humanity, death, and resurrection. However, when we enter into the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ, we have not only divinity but also the humanity of Christ, the death of Christ with its effectiveness, and the resurrection of Christ with its repelling power. Everything is here in this wonderful realm.

Although I was born in China and have become a naturalized American citizen, I can testify that I do not have the feeling that I am either Chinese or American. My realm is not China or America—my realm is the complicated and complicating Triune God. I am here with the Father, with the Son, who was crucified and resurrected, and with the consummated Spirit. Since I am in such a Triune God, I have whatever I need. If I need crucifixion, I find that in this realm I have been crucified already. If I need resurrection, in this realm I have been resurrected already. Praise the Lord for such a divine and mystical realm!

At this juncture, let us consider what is revealed in John 14

concerning the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ. Verse 1 says, “Do not let your heart be troubled.” In what realm are we troubled? We are troubled on earth, in the world (16:33), in the physical realm.

In this verse (14:1) the Lord Jesus went on to say, “Believe into God, believe also into Me.” Here the preposition *into* is very important. We should believe not only in God and in Christ, but we should believe into God and into Christ. Our heart is troubled because we are in the world, and the way for this trouble to be solved is for us to enter into Christ by believing into Him. Here we can see two realms: the physical realm—the world where all the troubles are—and the mystical realm of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, where peace is.

In 16:33 the Lord Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” Here again we see both the physical realm (“the world”) and the mystical realm (“Me”).

Chapters 14, 15, and 16 of John are a section. At the beginning of this section the Lord Jesus indicated, in 14:1, that He intended to speak something to help us to believe into Him. We should not think that believing into Christ is a simple matter. If He had not died on the cross to take away our sins, to crucify our flesh, and to terminate our old man, and if He had not resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit, there would be no way for Him to come into us and to bring us into Him.

If we had been there when the Lord Jesus spoke about believing into God and into Him, we might have said, “Lord, I want to enter into You. Tell me how to believe into You.” As the following verses reveal, for us to enter into Him He had to die and be resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit, that we may receive Him by believing into Him and calling, “O Lord Jesus.”

Between 14:1 and 16:33 we have the Lord’s teaching concerning how to believe into Him. John 14:2 says, “In My Father’s house are many abodes.” In 14:1 the Lord Jesus spoke about believing into God and into Him, but here He suddenly spoke about His Father’s house. The Father’s house is surely not a heavenly mansion but something mystical. According to the interpretation in 2:16 and 21, “My Father’s house” refers to the temple, the increase of Christ in His resurrection to be the church, His Body, as God’s dwelling place (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:21-22). At first the body of Christ was only His individual body. But through His death and resurrection, the body of Christ was increased to be His corporate Body, which is the church, the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), the temple of God (Eph. 2:21). Have you ever realized that

when you believed into God and into the Son, you entered into the church?

John 14:2 tells us that in the Father's house are "many abodes." These abodes are the believers, the members of the Body of Christ. Every believer is an abode, as affirmed in verse 23. In the latter part of verse 2 the Lord Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." The words *I go* mean "I die." By saying "I go" He was speaking about His death in a mystical way.

At this point I would remind you that the Gospel of John is a mystical book and that the entire record in John is a mystical record. To speak of the incarnation by saying "the Word became flesh" (1:14) is to speak in a mystical way. Likewise, to speak of living water becoming in us a fountain of water gushing up into eternal life (4:10, 14) is also to speak in a mystical way. Because John is a mystical book, when we read it we need to understand it mystically.

In John 14:3 the Lord Jesus continued, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be." Here He spoke of both His going and His coming. *I am coming* is a present continual, indicating that when the Lord Jesus spoke these words He was already coming. While He was speaking, He was preparing to enter into resurrection. "I go" is to die, and "I am coming" is to be resurrected. Before He died, He knew that He would come back. Here His going and His coming, His death and resurrection, are referred to in a mystical way. In this verse the Lord Jesus said, "I...will receive you to Myself." If we had been there, we might have said, "Lord, will You not receive me into the Father's house? Why do You say that You will receive me to Yourself?" The answer to such a question is that the Father's house is just Christ Himself.

Verse 3 ends with the words *where I am you also may be*. He is in the Father. Thus, for us to be where He is means that we also will be in the Father. This is related to our believing into the Father, the divine and mystical realm. The Lord Jesus went on to say, "And where I am going you know the way" (v. 4). Then Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going; how can we know the way?" (v. 5). According to verse 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." Here the Lord did not say, "No one comes to the Father's house"; He said, "No one comes to the Father." To come to the Father is to come to the Father's house, for the Father is the house. The phrase *except through Me* reveals that we can come to the Father as the house only through Christ as the way.

In the next verse the Lord Jesus said, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and henceforth

you know Him and have seen Him." When Philip heard this, he said, "Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us" (v. 8). Verses 9 and 10 continue, "Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works." Here we see that the Son's speaking was actually the Father's speaking, the Father's working by abiding in Him. This is altogether mystical.

We have emphasized the fact that the Triune God is a divine and mystical realm. As revealed in the first part of John 14, the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son. In verses 16 through 18 we have a word not only concerning the Father and the Son but also concerning the Spirit: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you." The first Comforter was Christ in the flesh, and the other Comforter is the Spirit of reality. The "He" who is the Spirit of reality in verse 17 becomes the "I" who is the Lord Himself in verse 18. This means that the Christ who was in the flesh went through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ. This is not merely spiritual—it is mystical. We cannot say that the Spirit of reality is spiritual and the Christ who was in the flesh was not spiritual, for when He was in the flesh, Christ the Son was surely spiritual. What we need to see here is not something that is spiritual only but something mystical.

Verse 19 continues, "Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live." This refers to Christ's resurrection. Because He lives in resurrection, we also live, for we were regenerated in His resurrection, as revealed in 1 Peter 1:3.

In John 14:20 the Lord Jesus spoke of "that day." "That day" was the day of His resurrection (20:19), the day on which He became the pneumatized Christ, the pneumatic Christ. Hence, *in that day* actually means "in the resurrection day."

Finally, we come to verse 20: "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." This refers to the divine and mystical realm where not only the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are but also where the believers are. Praise the Lord that, as believers in Christ, we are now in the divine, mystical realm of the consummated Spirit and the pneumatic Christ! **AFI**