

## HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

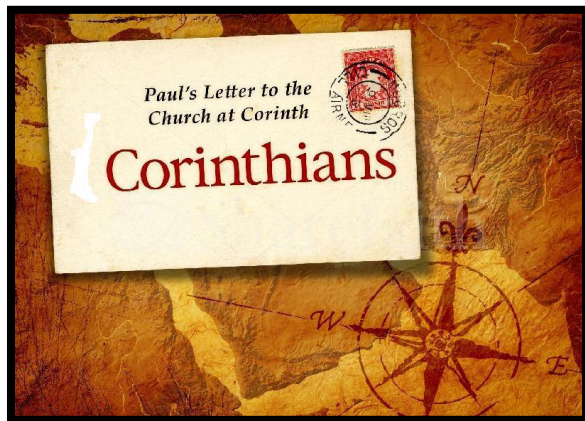
### 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567)

In this passage, Paul writes to the church of Corinth to explain how to discern what was wisdom from God versus that of this world. There were many false teachers. Were the Roman philosophers and their plethora of many gods correct concerning Christ? Was He truly but one god amongst many whose teachings were primitive? Were the Guardians of the Jewish Law correct when they said that Christ was not the Messiah but was yet to come? Even inside of the church, which leader's teaching should they follow, after all many of them seemed to vary in their opinions? Being close to so many divergent points of view one cannot help but sympathize with a church left wondering how they could tell which one had the truth concerning Christ verses whom was a false teacher! Paul's statement that one can only discern truth through aid of the Spirit of God is profound and has reaching implications for today's society.

### CHURCH OF CORINTH ISSUES

To interpret this passage correctly one must first understand some of the historical reasons why Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. Plagued with denominational politics, doctrinal disputes and liturgical preferences, one should not be surprised that this letter was



addressed to the spiritual babies at the church of Corinth (3:1-2). Living in one of the most prosperous cities in the ancient world, one that prided itself on their lavish lifestyles and tolerance to new ideas, had a profound affect on church unity amongst those who embraced the divergent thoughts of both the Roman and Jewish cultures. Surrounded by numerous pagan religions meant that Christianity was constantly being challenged by the Roman philosophers of their age. To make matters worse factions formed that gave their allegiance either to Paul, Apollos, Cephas or

perhaps Christ Himself. While the church of Corinth could boast that they were materially rich, they remained spiritually immature because they had given into the influences that did not know the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

## WISDOM CONTRASTED

**We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.**

### 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, NIV

Paul begins his argument concerning wisdom by pointing out the fact that there are two types of wisdom. First, there is a wisdom that only the mature speak. There is disagreement about what Paul meant by the term "mature." Some scholars believe mature means those Christians who are no longer babies in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1) but instead have attained a higher level of spiritual maturity. Other scholars claim that since Paul does not talk about the babies of Christ until chapter three, he most likely is referring to any born-again believer. Either interpretation is possible but the "we" that begins this passage seems to favour the mature being Paul and the apostles. Paul later will explain in more detail this type of wisdom.

Second, there is the wisdom of this age. Paul contrasts both mature wisdom that he and the apostles speak against the wisdom of this world. When Scripture talks about worldly wisdom the references are always negative. For example, in dealing with the argument about who is the greatest in the church, Apollos, Cephas or himself; Paul states that while we get to plant seeds in the kingdom of God our service becomes nothing without its foundation Jesus Christ who makes the seeds grow. For Paul knowledge is only wisdom when it comes from our Lord. Paul then warns the church that if any of them believe themselves to be wise by the standards of this age then they should become fools for the "wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight" (vs 19). In talking about those given over to their reprobate minds Paul said "although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and reptiles" (1:22-23). Other authors also talk negatively about worldly wisdom. James calls worldly wisdom demonic (3:15), Isaiah warns against those who are wise in their own eyes (Isaiah 5:21) and Solomon states that worldly knowledge may seem right but in the end, leads to death (Proverbs 16:25).

## WISDOM OF THE RULERS OF THIS AGE

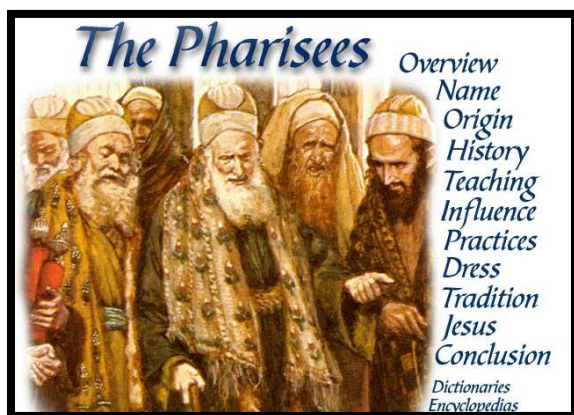
To closer examine the contrast between these two types of wisdom lets first look at the wisdom of this world. When Paul refers to the "rulers of this age" to whom is he referring? Let me begin by saying there may not be a clear answer to this question. Numerous commentators have provided some rather convincing arguments for the following four groups of people: the Roman Authorities, Pharisees, demons or possibly a church leaders.

## Roman Authorities

The authorities of this age could be a reference to Roman leaders who promoted emperor worship and an allegiance to a plethora of gods. During the time of the writing of the NT there was a time of peace called the Pax Romana. Per historians this was accomplished partly due to the promotion of worshiping all the gods of its conquered nations. Rome, who was proud of its religious tolerance, would not accept either the Jewish or Christian belief in but one God. They promoted Greek philosophy concerning their gods as being superior to that of Scripture. One had a choice to either synthesize/blend the beliefs of Scripture with that of Greek philosophy like Philo Judaeus did, or be publicly ridiculed for one's narrow beliefs. The tension between Rome and these "one God believers" got so intense that Rome eventually insisted Jews and Christians worship the emperor and all Greek gods or be put to death!

## Pharisees

Pharisees were a movement or religious sect within Judaism in the late Second Temple



Period. This sect came into being by a group of Bible scholars who had a genuine desire to see the Jewish people become holy by blamelessly following God's laws. Since they felt the Jewish priests had become corrupt and therefore incapable of demonstrating/teaching holiness, they appointed themselves the "Guardians of the Law." With great passion and vigor, they taught the Jewish people the legalities of following the Law. While their intent to teach purity started out good they became proud of their vast knowledge and soon added new laws to that of the Bible called the Mishna. The

Pharisees had no authority except for the power acquired through attaining this reputation as being experts in the Law.

While the Pharisees were founded on good intentions of teaching holiness, they were one of the most criticized groups in all the New Testament. When John the Baptist sees them approaching he calls them "brood of vipers" and tells them to "produce fruit in keeping of repentance (Matthew 3:7-10). In Matthew 23 Jesus calls the Pharisees "whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but full of dead mans bones and everything unclean" (verse 27). Due to greed and self-indulgence, the Pharisees had allowed their knowledge of God's kingdom to be nullified by their own wisdom (15:9) and thus were rightly called children of hell (verse 15). While John was announcing the kingdom of God was at hand he was also announcing that the ax was at the root any Pharisaic kingdom based on human acquired knowledge of God.

## Church Leaders

The phrase “rulers of this age” could also refer to false teachers inside of the church. Being near so many religious beliefs it is not surprising to find that the truth concerning God



was being corrupted by numerous false teachers. To Ephesus Paul warns them not to be carried away by the winds of the doctrines of those who are crafty and deceitful (4:14), to Titus he warns them to avoid the rebellious, empty talkers and deceivers (1:10-11) and to the church of Rome he warns them to avoid anyone who causes dissensions by teaching strange doctrine (16:17-18). Earlier Jesus warned that even though these false teachers wore sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15), they

would be ferocious in not only penetrated the ranks of leadership but also in leading many astray from the truth.

## Satan and his Demons

Some scholars believe that the “rulers of this age” is a general reference to Satan and his demons. In the NT it was the demons who were the first to recognize Jesus Christ as the



Messiah. When Jesus meets the two men from the region of Gadarenes, they called Him “Son of God” and asked Him if He had come to torture them before the appointed time. The Demons clearly have a knowledge of Jesus Christ, to the extent that they shudder in fear in His presence (James 2:19), but were not wise enough to give Him their allegiance. Instead they served the great deceiver in whom there is no truth to be found (John 8:44). To the church of Ephesus Paul warns Christians that their struggle not

with flesh and blood but against the false teachings of the spiritual forces of this evil realm (6:12). All who accepted the false teachings of Satan and his demons were destined to be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-15).

## Worldly Wisdom

**None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love Him.**

### **1 Corinthians 2:8-9, NIV**

Paul implores the church of Corinth to not listen to these rulers for none of them know the truth concerning Jesus Christ or they would not have had Him crucified. If it was not heinous enough that the Jews yelled “crucify Him, crucify Him,” the Roman legal system that failed to provide any justice to Jesus Christ. While these rulers had knowledge of the OT prophecies concerning Christ, Paul states they were unable to understand the truth because no eye has seen, nor ear can ever conceived the things God has prepared for those who love Him (verse 9). Those who want to keep their stone hearts (Ezekiel 36:26) and reprobate minds (Romans 1:28) cannot discern the truth because the human mind is incapable of doing so!

**The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.**

### **1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV)**

Is Paul saying that not a single human being who studies Scripture can understand the truth concerning Christ? The answer is YES! Without the Spirit of God, the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). To the Jews, Christ was a “stumbling block” (1:23) for they could not accept the servant Messiah that did not come to conquer Rome but instead break the chains that bound them to the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). To the Gentiles, who relied on their philosophical prowess, the Gospel message was mere foolishness compared to their “great thinking.” Knowing and understanding the truth for Paul can only be accomplished when a person is born again of the Spirit! Since those who have been given over to the depravity of their sins cannot know or accept any truth concerning God, Paul tells the church of Corinth to not listen to or follow their false teachings.

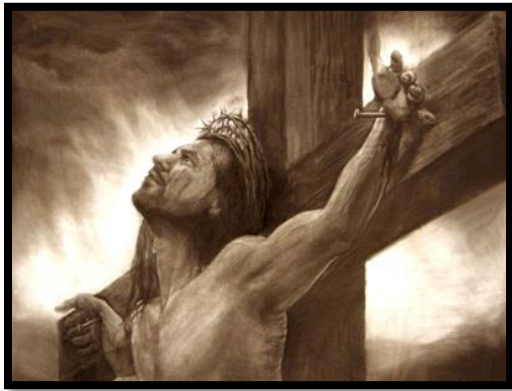


## WISDOM OF GOD

**No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.**

### 1 Corinthians 2:7, NIV

In verse seven Paul states he knows and declares the mystery of God's wisdom. God had conceived of the plan of redemption through the birth, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus



Christ long before time began. Jesus came to usher in the kingdom of God that was not based on genealogy but on belief in the atonement of a risen Savior. Even though this plan of redemption was clearly written down in the OT, it was "hidden" from previous generations because they could not understand the penetrating truth of the cross without the Spirit to reveal God's self-disclosure and identity in Christ (Colossians 2:2). To those perishing in their sins, the message of the cross remains either a stumbling block or foolishness but to those who are born again it is the power of God (1 Corinthians

1:18). God's wisdom then is Christ crucified!

**This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.**

### 1 Corinthians 2:13, NIV

In verse ten Paul states it is only the Spirit of God who can search the deep things concerning God. "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In



the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (verse 11). The plan of salvation that was once hidden, could only be revealed by the Spirit of God who knows the deepest thoughts of God because He is God! This should be a great source of joy for the believer for here Paul promises that the Spirit will teach the truth to our human minds that are incapable of receiving and approving it on our own! The ability to learn about God is not contingent on our own intellectual prowess but on His saving grace. At the end of this

passage Paul concludes with great joy that we have been given access to the mind of Christ!

### **MODERN DAY IMPLICATIONS**

While this text was written to an audience and culture that only existed two thousand years ago, there is much we can apply to our modern-day setting. First, since we have not received the spirit of this world but the Spirit of God (verse 12), we are not to seek knowledge of God from the rulers of our age. Today's society is like the time of Rome in the respect that most of the people would have us Christians embrace a multitude of gods or be ostracized as narrow minded buffoons, full of prejudice and lacking in understanding. As born again believers we are to reject their foolishness to embrace God as the only credible source of all truth.

Second, be wary of the false prophets for they still exist in today's churches! There are wolves dressed in sheep's clothing whose only desire to promote their own reputations. While they appear to be holy and often speak the right words, they are ferocious and capable of creating divisions inside of our churches. Be especially careful of those who say "God revealed something secretly to me" for the same Spirit that lives in them lives in you! Have nothing to do with those who clamor for positions of power and have nothing to do with those who refuse to be corrected by Godly men and women of the church. When you recognize one of these false prophets by their fruits dismiss their teachings as nothing more than self-glorified rhetoric from Satan himself!

Lastly, remember every born-again believer has the same access to the spiritual truths concerning God. While it is important to learn from those given the spiritual gift of teaching, one should not relegate one's search for the truth to them alone. Regardless of your intellectual abilities, learning and applying God's word is available equally to all people. It is very easy in today's world to relegate the hard work of study and meditation to the scholars of this age but no human can match the Spirit's power to teach a person the spiritual truths that He alone can understand!