

The Mysteries of Hidden Wisdom

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”
I Corinthians 2:7

“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”
Psalm 25:14

Introduction:

1. How blessed and special do you feel this morning? Do you have any clue as to God’s mercy upon you? Do you understand a little the unspeakable riches ordained before the world unto your personal glory?
2. If you do not feel special and incredibly blessed, you have not learned Jesus Christ and salvation aright.
3. My purpose in this study is to magnify God’s glorious grace in salvation, the gospel, and the ministry.
4. It is common for occult organizations, secret societies, and pagan religions to have “mysteries” and “secrets” for advanced members, to give them the honor of special knowledge for devotion and loyalty.
5. Yet our text states Paul’s ministry was declaring the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery (I Cor 2:7).
6. For God does have secrets, and He reveals them only to His chosen people (Psalm 25:14; Prov 3:32).
7. Consider briefly the history of the world and God’s dealings with the nations and peoples of the world.
 - a. For 1656 years God allowed man to multiply and sin until He drowned them all (Gen 6:5-7), during this time there were only a few saints who lived righteously and knew the true God. The rest of mankind lived in ignorance, lust, greed, abuse, fear, pain, and then died hopeless.
 - b. For 2400 years until Jesus, He left the nations to walk in their ignorance (Ac 17:30); during this time the obscure, ceremonial worship of God was limited to Israel, and there were no attempts to spread the truth to other nations – they were ignored or annihilated (Deut 7:6-8; Amos 3:2).
 - c. For the last 2000 years, the gospel has gone to Gentiles; but most have not heard, as much of the world has remained in abject darkness, ignorance, superstition, rebellion, and Christ hatred; for the record of Acts shows the gospel going to God-fearing Gentiles worshipping in synagogues.
 - d. Men, women, boys, and girls have died without knowing God, Christ, eternal life, or heaven; they offered human sacrifices, worshipped insects, barely survived, and were brutally abused.
 - e. When they sinned against creation’s truth, He gave them up to reprobate minds (Rom 1:18-32).
 - f. The vast majority of mankind by the evidence have been vessels of God’s wrath (Romans 9:22).
 - g. There is no unrighteousness with God, for man willingly chose to rebel and be His enemy; and the clay cannot question the Potter, Who is God blessed forever, Lord over all (Rom 9:14-21)!
8. Man’s wisdom is natural, foolish, and vain; yet it is worshipped as valuable and the human panacea.
 - a. He has declined in understanding as education increased, for now he even believes evolution, forbids punishment, despises authority, promotes horoscopes, aborts babies, saves seals and woodpeckers, allows rap music, promotes sodomy, outlaws references to God, etc., etc.
 - b. He has rejected all concepts of a Deity and requires all subjects be taught without such ideas.
 - c. Man is his own Saviour and can improve the world greatly without Divine help of any sort.
 - d. Men live and die; they create an information explosion; yet they are more ignorant than ever.
 - e. Adults of great years and much education and wide experience know no more than infants.
 - f. Mankind’s newspapers, magazines, textbooks, seminars, research labs, and universities have much information, speculation, and hallucination; but they have no clue of true wisdom.
 - g. He is ignorant of his origin, purpose, death, Creator, judgment, life after death, and salvation.
9. The premises of this study are totally contrary to man’s thinking of fairness, human equality, and rights.
 - a. It is now taught universally as an axiom of truth that God must love all men indiscriminately.
 - b. It is now taught universally that God owes mankind the truth and is trying to get it to them all.
 - c. It is now taught universally that any difference among men is by our own choice and ingenuity.
 - d. It is now taught universally that truth is available, easy to identify, easy to obtain, and free to all.
10. What do we mean by “mysteries of hidden wisdom” taken from I Corinthians 2:7 and related verses?
 - a. We mean that God has an eternal purpose of His will and counsel revealed only to His people.
 - b. We mean that God has practiced progressive revelation with many mysteries recently revealed.
 - c. We mean that God has revealed things in such a way that only the spiritual man can know them.

- I. WHAT DID PAUL SAY ABOUT MYSTERIES AND HIDDEN WISDOM (I Cor 2:1-16)?
- A. Each verse in 1:17 – 4:5 is full of meaning for understanding salvation and the gospel.
 - B. The preceding context is God’s choice for foolishness of preaching to reveal (1:17-31).
 - 1. Paul did not use enticing words so to keep Christ’s cross a two-edged test (1:17).
 - 2. Christ’s cross reveals God’s power and wisdom to those already saved, and it is considered foolishness by those who will justly perish (1:18 cp II Cor 2:14-17).
 - 3. God knew what man wanted to hear, so He gave an offensive gospel to destroy the arrogant thinking of sinful rebels who speculate outside His will, yet this very same method and message is received with great glory by saints (1:19-24).
 - 4. But the “foolishness of God” and “weakness of God” is Christ’s riches (1:25).
 - 5. God ordered it this way to reveal His poor elect and mock proud man (1:26-29).
 - 6. Our salvation from beginning to end is by God’s wisdom in Christ (1:30-31).
 - C. The following context is Corinth’s problem of carnality in preacher following (3:1-23).
 - 1. Hearing God’s hidden mysteries of wisdom in Christ is hurt by carnality (3:1-4).
 - 2. Ministers are mere servants dependent on God’s blessing for success (3:5-9).
 - 3. Ministers are mere servants duty bound to preach a particular gospel (3:10-17).
 - 4. Trusting the wisdom of this world is to deceive yourself, for true wisdom comes by repudiating this world’s wisdom and trusting the God of wisdom (3:18-20).
 - 5. The safe conclusion is to see God’s incredible grace in giving us all things and to glory in Him regardless of men and our perception of them (3:21-23).
 - D. Let us now consider Paul’s thorough explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ (2:1-16).
 - E. Paul “dumbed” his delivery to leave God’s power and the content as influences (2:1-5).
 - 1. Repudiating seminary instruction and “common sense,” Paul chose to leave his speech plain and simple, so hearers would only believe by God’s power (1,4-5).
 - 2. His content, rather than adjust for audience preferences, was Christ crucified (2).
 - 3. His aura, rather than bold and charming charisma, was weak and trembling, even though his credentials both in the flesh and Spirit were substantial (3).
 - 4. These five verses contain a very condemning indictment of modern preaching.
 - F. Preaching does bring true wisdom to God’s saints, rather than man’s vain wisdom (2:6).
 - 1. Reversing “wisdom” and “foolish,” preaching is wisdom and saints are perfect; for preaching of the cross is heard as God’s wisdom by God’s elect (Phil 3:15).
 - 2. The world’s wisdom at any level is vain and profits nothing, and it will all amount to nothing in the day when truth alone shall reign (1:19-21; 3:18-20).
 - G. The gospel’s hidden wisdom are the mysteries of Christ ordained for our glory (2:7).
 - 1. Though the apostles did not speak man’s wisdom, they did speak God’s wisdom.
 - 2. God’s wisdom is a mystery, for the world cannot perceive or comprehend it.
 - 3. God’s hidden wisdom in Jesus Christ in the gospel is beyond the world’s senses.
 - 4. These benefits in Christ were ordained for us in eternity (Rom 9:23; Eph 1:3-4).
 - 5. And these benefits in Christ were secondarily designed for our glory (Eph 2:7).
 - H. The noble of this world did not have wisdom, or they would have preserved Jesus; and He even prayed on the cross for forgiveness for their gross ignorance (2:8).
 - 1. If they had known He was Creator God and coming Judge with eternal power, they would have submitted and obeyed Him out of even natural fear of death.
 - 2. If they had known He was Just and Holy, they would not have slandered Him.
 - I. The truth of things prepared for us is beyond human observation or imagination (2:9).
 - 1. Paul takes these words from Isaiah’s prophecy of God’s goodness (Isaiah 64:4).
 - 2. The natural man is quite blind, deaf, and dull to the beauty and glory of Christ.
 - 3. The ability of God to do quite above our imaginations will be realized in heaven.

- J. But the Spirit of God through His word has revealed even the deep things to us (2:10).
 1. God's revelation of mysterious things is certainly by His word (II Tim 3:16-17).
 2. But we also need personal light of the Spirit of God (Eph 1:17-19; I Jn 2:20-27).
 3. God's Spirit has perfect and absolute knowledge of even God's deep things, which things are free justification by imputed righteousness rather than 666.
- K. As with man, only he knows himself by his spirit; and only the Spirit knows God (2:11).
- L. We have the Holy Spirit from God, as His children, to know the things of God (2:12).
 1. The Spirit is sent into our hearts as part of regeneration (Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:6).
 2. We have been given a different spirit from the God-rejecting, truth-hating spirit.
 3. Two blessings: we have the Spirit and the Spirit reveals things prepared for us.
- M. True preaching according to the apostolic pattern is to preach the Spirit's word (2:13).
 1. The content of preaching is the things of Christ revealed by the Spirit of God.
 2. We do not teach these things by man's words or concepts, but by the Spirit's.
 3. We compare spiritual things with spiritual things – using the Spirit's own words of Scripture and not comparing spiritual things foolishly with earthly concepts.
- N. The wisdom of God is hidden to natural men, who have no ability to understand (2:14).
 1. Though these things are glorious and terrible, natural men mock them as foolish.
 2. Though all and every effort is made to convince them, they lack ability to learn.
 3. Man's intellectual ability is great, but his spiritual ability is brutish (Ps 49:20).
 4. The defect is in his motives and affections – for he hates God (Ps 10:4; Ge 6:5).
- O. The child of God is made spiritual by regeneration and is not detected by men (2:15).
 1. Spiritual men, as opposed to merely natural men, know, understand, and receive the mysteries of God in Christ – they have spiritual discernment of such things.
 2. But the world cannot know, understand, or perceive this difference in the saints.
- P. No man can know God or the things of God, but the saints with God's Spirit (2:16).
 1. Using Isaiah 40:13, Paul denies the natural man any knowledge of God at all.
 2. We do know the mind of the Lord, for we have the mind of Christ by His Spirit.
 3. A child of God walking in the Spirit has wisdom exceeding all men and angels.

II. DOES GOD HAVE MYSTERIES?

- A. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Everything in the mind of God is a mystery.
- B. Clearly the counsel of God's own will has many secrets hid from angels and men.
- C. God does have secret things belonging to Him, and He reveals things for us (De 29:29).
- D. Job's friends knew God had secrets – even twice known knowledge (Job 15:8; 11:5-11).
- E. But our subject is rather those things of God and Christ unknown to the natural man.
- F. What does a man know at birth? Nothing. What does a man know at death? Nothing. Where then is the knowledge of the universe? Its origin? Purpose? End? And glory?
- G. What is the origin of the earth? God created it and all that is in it in six literal days. God knows this; the angels know this; but man in "wisdom" rejects it. But we know it.
- H. He told a secret to Abraham – He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33).
- I. Daniel understood many secrets or mysteries (Daniel 2:18-19,22,27-30,47; 4:9).
- J. How about the deliverance of Israel from Babylon by God's servant, Cyrus (Is 48:6).
- K. Paul presumes mysteries when describing perfect faith and knowledge (I Cor 13:2).
- L. The gospel was kept secret from the beginning of the world (Matt 13:35; Ro 16:25-27).
- M. The prophets wrote things for us that were unknown to them (Mat 13:17; I Pet 1:10-12).
- N. John the Baptist was the greatest ever born of women, yet the least minister in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he – based on the knowledge of Jesus Christ, saving grace, and the spiritual blessings prepared for the elect (Matthew 11:11).

III. DOES MAN HAVE A RIGHT TO TRUTH?

- A. Man is a creature: he deserves nothing. He is the clay in the hands of the Potter. Man is a rebel: he chose lies and death over truth and life. Only God's justice limits His acts.
- B. Man died in Eden, not in intellectual ability to know God, but rather in his motives; now by nature he passionately prefers lies to truth and rebellion against God to obedience.
- C. God is a God of truth; Jesus is the Truth; but that does not mean He owes this blessing to His enemies, when they come to Him in malicious hatred and fervently prefer lies.
- D. Man's choice in Eden caused death to God and truth (Gen 2:17; John 8:45; Ro 3:9-18).
- E. Man's heart is so corrupt and hateful toward God that Jesus Christ is sufficient cause to reveal the hearts of men in two directions (Luke 2:34-35; John 7:43; II Cor 2:14-17).
- F. Men who do not have faith – which is a gift from God – are unreasonable men incapable of truth (II Thes 3:1-2), and from these men we should pray for deliverance.
- G. Intellect and/or education are handicaps for wisdom: they promote vain babblings and false science (I Tim 6:20) and prefer fables to truth (II Tim 4:4; Is 30:8-11).
- H. The more man learns, the less he knows (II Tim 3:7), for he tries to learn with a corrupt heart and while rejecting the foundation of even the beginning of wisdom (Pr 1:7; 9:10).
- I. Men choose ridiculous lies, from which they cannot escape (Is 44:9-20); and our nation is far worse than tree worship for teaching we came from explosions and monkeys.
- J. Men live and die like beasts, yet their posterity approves their philosophy (Ps 49:1-13).

IV. DOES GOD HIDE TRUTH?

- A. The Judge of all the earth does right (De 32:4), and He certainly hides truth from most.
- B. Consider the story of Ahab (I Kings 22:1-40). God gave him the lie that he so desired.
- C. When men do not love the truth He provides, He takes away their understanding (Exodus 14:4; Luke 8:18), He turns them over to reprobate minds (Romans 1:17-32) and sends them strong delusion to believe lies (II Thess 2:9-12).
- D. Why did Jesus speak in parables (Matthew 13:1-23,34-35; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:1-18)?
 - 1. **Parable.** A comparison, a similitude; any saying or narration in which something is expressed in terms of something else; an allegory, an apologue.
 - 2. It is common today to hear this pitiful definition: “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning to make it easy for common people to understand.”
 - 3. The truth is exactly the opposite of this gross perversion of definition and intent.
 - 4. Jesus did not speak in secret (John 18:20), but He did use parables to hide the truth and He gave much more revelation to His apostles.
- E. He hid Himself and truth from Jews (Luke 18:34; John 9:39; 12:36-41; Is 53:1; 6:9-13).
- F. He hides it from some and reveals it to others based on His own will and the apparent lack of earthly advantage (Matthew 11:25-27; Luke 10:21-24). These verses are great!
- G. Divine revelation is necessary to know Christ and things of Christ (John 6:41-47,60-66).
- H. God hides Himself from those who do not come rightly (Eze 14:1-11; 39:29; Is 1:15).
- I. Paul limited his ministry, as the Gentile apostle, to worshippers of God (Acts 13:16,26).
- J. Why did Paul write hard things (II Pet 3:15-16)? Couldn't God inspire it more clearly?

V. WHAT ARE THE MYSTERIES?

- A. We want so much to make the mysteries the prophecies of the Bible or other such matters that tickle our curiosity and please our flesh, but spiritual men look for more.
- B. The mysteries are the virgin birth, priestly intercession, pardon, election, resurrection of the body, reconciliation, predestination, hell, promise of eternal life, incarnation of Jesus Christ, justification, glorification, everlasting covenant, adoption, Book of Life, propitiation, regeneration, vicarious death, forgiveness of sins, particular redemption, heaven, sanctification, reprobation, eternal inheritance, etc.
- C. Our children must learn the world – even “Christians” – do not all believe these things.
- D. The Christ of God is an absolute sovereign who will separate men like a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matt 25:31-46; Rev 20:11-15).
- E. The greatest enemy of God’s saints would be an apostate church of Rome (Rev 17:5,7).
- F. The Man of Sin was called the mystery of iniquity for two reasons – he would be the blasphemous head of a Christian church and Paul spoke of him discreetly until the caesars were taken out of the way (II Thess 2:3-8). But the saints have always known.
- G. The Object of faith as opposed to the law was hidden until Jesus Christ (Gal 3:22 – 4:7).
- H. The LORD of heaven walking among His despised churches is a mystery (Rev 1:20).
- I. The blind of elect Israel, who were enemies of the gospel, is a mystery (Rom 11:25).
- J. Jesus will be revealed or shown from heaven in glory (II Thess 1:7; I Tim 6:13-16).
- K. The gospel is the mystery of Christ, for it is the revelation of God’s eternal purpose in Jesus Christ for the redemption and glorification of the elect and the eternal judgment of devils and sinful men, which by nature no man would or could ever discover, understand, believe, love, or obey.
 - 1. The revelation of Jesus Christ must include His everlasting covenant (Ps 25:14).
 - 2. The resurrection of our weak, corruptible bodies and their transformation into glorious, spiritual bodies is a mystery declared by Paul to us (I Cor 15:33-51).
 - 3. Election, predestination, and the spiritual blessings involved are mysteries of the abundant wisdom and prudence of God’s eternal purpose and will (Eph 1:3-12).
 - 4. These blessings of election and predestination (1:3-12) coupled with the inclusion of Gentiles (2:11-22) were a mystery revealed to Paul (Eph 3:1-12).
 - 5. The love and union between Christ and His church, which is here pictured by a man’s proper love of his wife, is a great mystery (Eph 5:32).
 - 6. Paul sought prayer that he would boldly make the mystery known (Eph 6:18-20).
 - 7. Paul was made a minister of the riches of the glory of the mystery in Christ, which was hidden from ages and generations prior to the apostles (Col 1:21-29).
 - 8. See Paul’s great concern for the saints to be comforted with full assurance of this rich mystery, which glorious treasures are hid in Christ Jesus (Col 2:1-4).
 - 9. He sought prayer that he would properly make the mystery manifest (Col 4:2-4).
 - 10. The promise of eternal life is made manifest by gospel preaching (Titus 1:1-3).
 - 11. The coming of Christ and our inheritance is ready to be revealed (I Pet 1:3-5).
- L. Jesus Christ the Lord and His incarnation is the great mystery of godliness (I Tim 3:16).
 - 1. God was manifest in the flesh (Is 7:14; 9:6; Matt 1:23; John 1:1,14,18; Col 2:9).
 - 2. Justified in the Spirit (John 1:29-34; 3:34; Luke 5:17; Matt 11:4-6; Romans 1:4).
 - 3. Seen of angels (Luke 2:8-17; 22:43; Matt 4:11; 28:1-9; Acts 1:9-11; Heb 1:6).
 - 4. Preached unto the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Eph 3:1-8; Rom 15:15-21).
 - 5. Believed on in the world (Acts 1:8; Rom 1:8; 10:18; 15:17-21; Colossians 1:6).
 - 6. Received up into glory (Lu 24:50-53; Ac 1:9-11; Heb 4:14; 8:1; 9:24; Rev 12:5).
- M. The elect do not have much glory now, but look out (Rom 8:17-23; II Cor 4:17 – 5:8).
- N. The wrath of God against wicked men is told by the gospel (Rom 1:18; Acts 17:30-31).

VI. HOW DOES GOD REVEAL THE MYSTERIES?

- A. Time reveals God's mysteries by events, which shall eventually reveal all (II Sam 12:21-23; Daniel 3:17-18; Luke 17:30; Revelation 10:7).
- B. Judgment will reveal the humanistic content and methods of ministries (I Cor 3:11-15).
- C. God can testify within a man (Daniel 10:1; Matthew 16:17; I Samuel 3:1,21).
- D. Though revealing things by visions in the past (Luke 2:26), we have the more sure word of prophecy in the Scriptures (II Peter 1:19; I Cor 13:8-12; Rom 16:25-27; Ps 119:130).
- E. Preaching the gospel is the revelation of the mysteries of God's power and wisdom in Jesus Christ to the faithful (Rom 1:16-17; 16:25-27; I Cor 1:18,24; 14:1-5).
- F. The gospel brings life and immortality to light (II Ti 1:9-10; II Cor 5:20; I Pet 1:10-12).
- G. God's ministers are the stewards of these mysteries and dispense them to God's people (Amos 3:7; I Corinthians 4:1; Matthew 13:52; Titus 1:1-5).
- H. God chose fishermen and inferior men to confound the doctors, lawyers, and otherwise superior men who had greater knowledge and understanding (Mat 11:25-27; Acts 4:13).
- I. How beautiful are the feet of them with news of good things (Rom 10:18; Gal 4:13-15)!
- J. Spiritual regeneration gives internal ability for faith and truth (Rom 1:12,15-17; 10:6-8).
- K. Eternal life is to know God, and it gives us an understanding (John 17:2-3; I John 5:20).
- L. He must open our minds to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45; Ps 119:18; Pr 20:12; Matt 13:9).
- M. God must open our hearts and command the light to shine (II Cor 4:6; Acts 16:14).
- N. The Spirit of God teaches us to know Jesus and truth (I Jn 2:20-27; Ep 1:17-19; 3:18).

VII. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- A. We must remember we are as others (Rom 3:9-19; Eph 2:1-3; Tit 3:3), for pride will cause Him to blind us again (Rom 11:18-25; Ps 25:9; Is 66:2; I Cor 10:12; Re 3:17-18).
- B. We must give thanks for eternal life, God's gift (II Cor 9:15; Ro 7:24-25; I Cor 15:57).
- C. We must give thanks for the gospel news and our understanding of it (II Thess 2:13-15; Romans 10:15; Nehemiah 8:8-12; Psalm 119:14,111,162; Jeremiah 15:16; Ps 89:15).
- D. We must not despise sound doctrine and sober preaching (II Tim 4:2-4; Jer 23:25-32; Acts 17:11; Isaiah 30:8-14).
- E. We must obey what we hear and learn to keep it (John 7:17; 8:31-32; Luke 8:15,18; Isaiah 29:9-14; Job 29:1-5).
- F. We must pray for further enlightenment (Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:18; Proverbs 2:1-9; Psalm 119:18, 131; Colossians 4:2-4).
- G. We should give God all the glory for saving and enlightening wretches (I Cor 1:26-31).
- H. We should walk as children of God and light (Eph 5:1-11; I Thess 5:4-11; Tit 2:11-14).
- I. Deacons, as exemplary saints, are to hold the mystery in a pure conscience (I Tim 3:9).
- J. The mysteries of God are still hidden wisdom, for the form of godliness here today is not true Christianity at all, but a latter attempt of Satan to destroy truth (II Tim 3:1-7).

Conclusion:

1. Rather than living, working, and dying in hopelessness, we have eternal mysteries ordained for our glory; and the great God has revealed them to us for our comfort, encouragement, and thankful service.
2. Reading, meditating, and praying should reflect our desire and appreciation to know God's mysteries.
3. The Bible, preaching, assembling, and our church should take on new significance, as we realize and consider that our faith and worship are based on learning and remembering the mysteries revealed to us.
4. Defending the faith is more than just being loyal to a creed – it is holding fast the secret wisdom of God.
5. How can the little things of this life disturb us so much, when we have and know such great things!