

Lesson 7: “God’s Hidden Wisdom”

1 Corinthians 2:6-9

Craig Crawshaw

1 Corinthians 2:6-9 *Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

THE HIDDEN WISDOM (Introduction)

So God has a hidden wisdom – not available to all. It is a wisdom He predestined long ago and which extends into the glorious future His followers will enjoy forever. In that sense, it is not a wisdom for this age alone, but for the ages.

The rulers of Jesus’ day did not understand it, or else they would never have allowed the Lord of glory to be crucified. And I dare say the rulers of this day do not understand it either, or else each of the world’s nations would be ruled as “one nation under God,” honoring the Christ of salvation.

This “hidden wisdom,” says Paul, is however spoken among the followers of Christ who are mature – that is, “perfect” (which is the Authorized Version rendering). To clarify, this wisdom is spoken to and understood by those more advanced in their understanding of the Lordship of Jesus. Thereby, this passage speaks of a distinction between instruction given to the unbeliever and instruction given to the believer. And furthermore, it makes distinction between that which a “baby” or immature believer can understand, and that which a more mature believer can understand.

In this sense, this wisdom is a “mystery” or “hidden” to those yet unbelieving and also to those not yet “mature” in their faith. God is not withholding this wisdom, nor using it as a “carrot” to entice – it is available to all. There are simply some hearers who are not yet ready to understand.

Furthermore, verse 9 tells us that this is not a wisdom that is seen by the eye, nor heard by the ear, nor felt by the heart. It is not a physical or emotional wisdom, but a special wisdom that “God has prepared for those who love Him.” It does not require a “secret knock” nor a “special password.” It does not require going through an elaborate ceremony or achieving a certain status. It can’t be bought with bribes nor stolen by thievery (though some stories of the early church tell us that some have tried). Nor can this wisdom be earned by deeds of charity or even by graduating from seminary with honors.

It is a wisdom from God that is specifically spiritual in nature, and only understood through the believer’s spirit bearing witness with the Holy Spirit of God within that believer. With that, let us launch into our investigation into this “hidden wisdom.”

KERYGMA vs. DIDACHE

Paul here makes a distinction between two different kinds of instruction. “Kerygma” (care-ig-ma) is a king’s herald announcement, giving the basic facts of a communication. From the recent context of 1 Corinthians this would be “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” This would be John 3:16 or Romans 10:9. This would be the basics of our Christian faith: (1) the matchless love of God for all mankind, (2) the supreme authority of the Holy Bible, (3) the Trinitarian deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, (4) the death of Christ for sin upon the cross verified by His resurrection, and (5) salvation by grace alone on God’s part and faith alone on man’s part. This is the essential good news (gospel). If we wanted to break this “herald announcement” down into its simplest form, we might recall the opening statement recorded by Mark of Jesus when He first entered His ministry: “repent and believe” (Mark 1:15)

This kerygma is the preaching to the masses to help them to come to Jesus. And likewise, it is the teaching to the newer believers who are not yet ready to digest deeper concepts. It is the “old, old story” that all believers love to hear and hear again – of Jesus and His love. It is the teaching that was the centerpiece of Rev. Billy Graham’s sermons, as he reached out to stadiums full of people who needed to come to Jesus. And it is this kerygma teaching of the cross of Calvary that is “foolishness” to those who are

perishing, but is “the power of God” to those who are being saved. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Dideche (**did**-uh-key), on the other hand means “teaching” – the explanation and significance of the facts already announced. It is the “going deeper” into the basic tenants of our faith. It is the “graduate study” that follows the obtaining of the “basic degree.” It is a second stage for those who have received and understood kerygma. It is the “meat” rather than just the “milk” of God’s revelation. (And Paul will use this very illustration as he gets into chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians). Or perhaps we could specifically say it is the study of Hebrews as opposed to the reading of the gospel of John.

Now having said this, we all love John. And we all need repeated reminders of the simple gospel and can learn much about this gospel from many angles of observation. Truth is, good teaching and preaching includes BOTH kerygma and didache – that is, both repeating of the gospel basics and going deeper into the meaning and significance for our lives. We might see it as basic doctrine vs. application. And we need both, and both are critical. You can’t well apply a doctrine until you know and understand that doctrine. And yet a doctrine alone means little unless you can learn to apply it with the many facets of its practical implications.

THE MYSTERY

What Paul here calls a “mystery” (v. 7 – Greek: “musterion”) is not the mystery ending of a “whodunit.” He is not here referring to something that has yet to be revealed, such as the details of what awaits us in heaven. Rather, he is referring to a wisdom that is a mystery to those who are not prepared or accepting to receive it.

This “mystery” of the saving and redeeming Messiah was made known through the Biblical prophets of old, but few were ready to receive it. And this “mystery” of Jesus as the Son of God and King of kings was available to be known at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, but only some 120 disciples grasped it. And for those who rejected it, they shouted “crucify” and as Paul writes here, “crucified the Lord of glory.”

And today this “hidden mystery” of the gospel has been proclaimed (almost) worldwide, with virtually no end to its free access by book, internet, video, tract, church, preacher or Bible. It has been ignored or rejected by billions, yet has been accepted and believed on by some two billion who claim to be Christ-followers.

PREDESTINED

In verse 7, Paul says that this hidden wisdom was “predestined.” That is, it wasn’t decided by God only after He had experimented with the garden of Eden, endured wicked mankind before the flood, established a chosen nation of rebellious people and allowed earthly kingdoms that fell by their own undoing. These were not “failures” of God that required a new wisdom. Rather they were failures by man’s sinfulness and rebellion.

The “hidden wisdom” was “predestined” – meaning it was established by God as His plan even before time began. Jesus was to be the “Lamb of God” from the “foundations of the earth.” (Revelation 13:8)

Even before God created man, He knew that man would fall into sin and need a Savior. This gospel plan of death on a cross by the Son to pay for the sins of all mankind was not an afterthought, but a “fore-thought” – a “predestined” thought. Thus, it is not a “new” wisdom, but a very “ancient” wisdom that predates Adam and even the creation of the angels.

But it is also a wisdom that will last into the eternity of glory to come, because Paul goes on to say that God predestined this wisdom “before the ages to our glory” – meaning, this wisdom will propel us into the glory of our future in heaven forever. We will forever be celebrating the slain Lamb of Calvary and rejoicing in the resurrected King of glory! The book of Revelation hides most of its teaching in shadows of imagery, but the truth of our eternal praise for the wisdom of the gospel is not hidden at all.

EYE, EAR AND HEART

Science is all about what can be perceived by the senses; what can be known and felt. It is the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment. What the eye can see, and the ear hear, and the heart can feel is the essence of reality in which we live.

And for this discipline of science we are so very grateful. We are the benefactors of machines that allow us to fly, machines that can transport us around the globe as we sit at our desk, and machines that let us hear and see the voices and faces of people on the other side of the city or the planet. With telescopes we can see light years into our universe, and with microscopes we can explore the atomic structure of a microbe. With scientific discoveries we can unlock our past ancestry, as well as unlock the potential of our future. Through science we can prevent previously fatal diseases with medications and avoid previously disastrous calamity with early warning systems. We can walk on the moon and explore the deepest sea. And the discoveries and wonders of science multiply exponentially every day.

But Paul pulls from an ancient passage from the prophet Isaiah – Isaiah 64:4 – to make a point about how the “hidden wisdom” of God transcends the discoveries of science and human reckoning.

1 Corinthians 6:9 (quoting Isaiah 64:4) *Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.*

Science and faith were never meant to be at odds. Our Bible is scientifically and historically accurate and more and more discoveries are made each year that verify the facts, numbers and places of the Bible. As we as believers should let science teach us about our universe in ways the Bible was never meant to do. And yet, Paul make the point here that there are things that science can not teach us, and that can only be discovered and known by “the hidden wisdom” of God – both the kerygma and the didache.

Science does not consider our universe beginning by the creation of a greater being as being consistent with what they observe. Science ‘laughs’ at the concept that all human life came from one man and one woman in a specific garden somewhere in Asia. That there was once a worldwide flood of Biblical proportions is rejected by most as making no scientific sense. Walking on water, feeding a multitude with a few bits of fish and bread and healing a man born blind with mud and a prayer is rejected by science that has no place for such occurrences in their playbook. And having the earth stand still for a day to make the sun appear to “stand still” defines scientific folly.

Eye, Ear, Heart and Science can only go so far in teaching us truth, says God through Paul. There is a truth that “God has prepared for those who love Him.” Those of you who have had your being “taken over” by an alien force called God, are an anomaly. We who claim to have been “born again” and are “new creatures” in Christ are rejected as deceived and fools, for our experience does not fit into the scientific method of systematic observation and experiment.

What followers of Christ have discovered is not observed primarily by eye, ear or even heart. As a Christians I don’t look, sound or am perceived as being much different than the rest of the world – but oh what a difference we enjoy that they cannot fathom. What a different perspective on God! What a different perspective on my purpose for existing! What a different perspective on death and life beyond death!

THE HIDDEN RECEPTOR

It is not until next weeks passage, taught by pastor David, that Paul tells us how this hidden wisdom is perceived, if it is not by eye, ear or heart. He has already hinted at it in 2:4, when he revealed that his preaching was not in words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. And in the remainder of chapter 2 we will discover the amazing, astounding, mind-blowing truth behind the believer’s reception of the “hidden wisdom” of both the basics of the gospel (kerygma) and the deeper truths of the gospel (didache). **SPOILER ALERT – we have been given the Mind of Christ through the indwelling Spirit of God!**

But for now, for today – rejoice that as a follower of Jesus you have been allowed to perceive and know what most of the world cannot know because of their rejection of and immaturity to the ways of God.

DEVOUR the wisdom of God your Bible gives. APPLY it! and LIVE it! to the glory of God!