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**CHRIST,  
THE WISDOM OF GOD**

***Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2***

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*“But we preach Christ crucified,  
Christ the power of God  
and the wisdom of God”.*

*1 Corinthians 1:23-24*

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# 1. THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S WISDOM

In First Corinthians 2 we find some remarkable teaching in connection with God's eternal purpose for His children, for "those who love God". This term is also used in Romans 8, and in that chapter we get a glimpse of God's eternal plan of salvation, as He purposed it in Himself for His own. They are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.

As Christians we have been brought into this particular relationship of love with God as His *children* and as *brethren* of the Lord Jesus, and so we are the special objects of His plans and purposes. God — in His love — takes care of us in a perfect way, assuring us that we shall reach the glorious goal. Our assurance is that God is *for* us, and that nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:28-31).

In First Corinthians 2, however, Paul does not treat the subject of God's eternal plans from the point of view of the divine care and certainty, but from that of the divine *wisdom*. Because of the poor spiritual state of the Corinthians and their reliance on worldly wisdom, he can, in fact, only touch upon these things. As part of his struggle against their worldly wisdom, he can only mention these things in passing. Moreover, *God's plans and counsels* are not his specific subject here, as for instance in the Epistle to the Ephesians. In First Corinthians, *man's responsibility* is emphasized, as well as his *failure* in his responsibility.

Yet in First Corinthians 2 the apostle speaks about God's eternal plans and thoughts in a very striking way. These plans are indeed the result of God's wisdom, they originate in a wisdom which far exceeds the wisdom of this world and its rulers. But there is more. These plans of God's wisdom spring

*from His heart.* They are the result of *God's love* for His children. They are eternal plans of love on behalf of the objects of His love, God's children who are so closely linked with Him that they are *those who love Him* (v. 9).

The character of these plans, of this intimate divine wisdom, is described here as follows:

- (1) It is a wisdom completely *unknown* to this world (vv. 6, 8).
- (2) Being God's wisdom, it is a *hidden* wisdom (v. 7a).
- (3) It is the hidden wisdom which God *ordained before the ages* for our glory (v. 7b).

Then we find what this wisdom embraces:

- (1) All the things which God has prepared for those who love Him (v. 9).
- (2) The deep things (or, depths) of God (v. 10).
- (3) The things (or, thoughts) of God (v. 11).
- (4) The things that have been freely given to us by God (v. 12).
- (5) Spiritual things (or, thoughts) communicated by spiritual words or means (v. 13).

## 2. THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

So here we have the depths of God's wisdom, the deepest thoughts of His heart, which could be made known only through revelation. While already existing before the ages, these deep things were hidden in God's heart — even in Old Testament times. They were the great secrets of God's heart concerning His own children, the special objects of His love. Originating before the foundation of the world, they are still hidden from this world and its rulers. God has especially prepared them for His children, and He has kept them hidden in His heart until He could reveal them in His own time.

We know that Paul's ministry in particular related to these secrets of God's wisdom, which God has revealed to His children, and not to the world. Altogether, the New Testament mentions a mystery or mysteries twenty-seven times: three times in the Gospels, four times in the book of Revelation and no less than twenty times in Paul's letters. It was particularly the mystery of *Christ and the Church* (that is, Christ in His special relationship with His people, His union with the Church) that had been confided to Paul. This mystery is extensively discussed by him in the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

There are mysteries in connection with God Himself, such as "the mystery of God", and "the mystery of His will". Others relate to Christ's Person, His incarnation and the results of His finished work, like "the mystery of godliness". There are also mysteries which deal with the Gospel, and with the Kingdom. Several mysteries have to do with man's responsibility and his failure to keep that which had been entrusted to him, such as "the mystery of lawlessness", and the mysteries connected with Babylon the great. For more details see the Appendix.

Here in First Corinthians 2 the apostle speaks in general terms about “the wisdom of God *in a mystery*” (v. 7). The subject of this passage is the wisdom of God, which was marked by the communication of mysteries. In First Corinthians 4:1 Paul calls himself a steward of the mysteries of God. He was entrusted with the stewardship of these treasures of God’s wisdom. His task, as well as that of the other apostles, was to handle with care the divine riches of wisdom and knowledge that had been confided to them. In Luke 12:42 the Lord speaks about the responsibility of the faithful and wise steward. Such a steward is not only responsible for his master’s possessions; he also has to take care of the other servants. They receive a certain portion of their lord’s goods. They eat from his table.

The same principle holds good for the house of God. God has established a dwelling place on earth, in which He dwells by His Spirit. For the Church is the temple of the living God. He has also appointed stewards to handle the spiritual goods of His house. These stewards bear a special responsibility for the well-being of the other members of the household, “those who are of the household of faith”, “those who are members of the household of God” (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19).

This ensures that the members of God’s family have their share in the spiritual goods of His house. For they are not only God’s *servants*, but also His beloved *children*. They are entitled to the possessions of God’s house, since these are the legitimate portion of the saints. The task of the stewards is to take care of their spiritual well-being, to feed them with the goods of God’s house and to inform them of the riches that God has reserved for His own.

### **3. SPIRITUAL MATURITY REQUIRED TO KNOW GOD'S WISDOM**

Now the members of God's household have to meet a practical requirement to be able to take this food. They need to be spiritually mature to digest the solid food that God has prepared for His children. In the case of the Corinthian Christians the apostle Paul was unable to exercise His stewardship properly. He could not give them the portion that was to be theirs — the solid food of the knowledge of God's mysteries. From a spiritual point of view they were still babies, and had to be fed with milk (1 Cor. 3:1,2). The Corinthians were blind to the riches that were piled up in the house of God, the treasures of knowledge and wisdom that until then had remained hidden in God's heart, but that He now wished to share with the members of His household, through the service of His stewards. They could not yet digest this food for their souls, as they were so impressed by the wisdom of this world — all the riches of human wisdom and philosophy. They were lending their ears to this world rather than having them tuned to the things of God. Since their attention was focused too much on the world and on themselves, they were not yet mature enough to hear what God had prepared for them.

So Paul was a steward or caretaker of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God's house, but he could not display all these riches to the Corinthians; since they could not bear that yet. Still being babies in Christ, they had to be fed with milk and not with solid food. They had not yet grown up to mature young men, who have overcome the world and for whom the wisdom of this world has lost its charm; let alone to mature fathers in the family of God's children, to whom Christ and the wisdom that is found in Him are everything (cf. 1 John 2).

Paul spoke wisdom among those who were mature (1 Cor. 2:6), that is, among those who were *spiritually* mature; who had grown up in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same word can be found in First Corinthians 14:20 (“in understanding be mature”), Ephesians 4:13 (“to a perfect man”), Philippians 3:15 (“as many as are mature”), Colossians 1:28 (“that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”), Colossians 4:12 (“perfect and complete in all the will of God”), and Hebrews 5:14 (“solid food belongs to those who are of full age”).

So because of the spiritual food that they take, the members of God’s household will grow spiritually. The goal of this is that Christ will be formed in them, that they will grow up to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that Christ will be everything to them, and that His image will be clearly seen in them. The solid food of the riches of Christ and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Him belong to this spiritual maturity. Such is the right food for mature people. For in Christ all God’s wisdom is displayed, and Christ is the Centre of all God’s mysteries.

## 4. DIVINE WISDOM VERSUS WORLDLY WISDOM

These riches of God's wisdom are intended for those who love Him, for the children of God. They are not intended for the world, which has alienated itself from God, but rather for those who have been brought near to Him. As Christians we have been brought to God, and it is God Himself who enables us to understand the secrets of His heart.

True enough, the world too has its wisdom, but this wisdom is foolishness in the sight of God. Compared to God's wisdom it is just nothing. The wisdom of this world is idle and useless, because it does not originate in God's heart but in a creation which was subjected to futility because of man's fall. Moreover, it is not only the wisdom of the created *cosmos*, a groaning creation, which is subject to transiency. It is also the wisdom of this present evil age, i.e. the world in its present order under the dominion of Satan, God's adversary, the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4).

So it is not surprising to find a huge contrast between divine and worldly wisdom. The wisdom of this world and its rulers is marked by the thinking of *the* ruler of this world. This was highlighted at the cross, when the rulers of this world — under the influence of Satan — abused their God-given authority by crucifying the Lord of glory. At that moment it became perfectly clear that the world and its ruler were in overt rebellion against God and His Christ. Within the framework of the wisdom of this world it was justifiable to nail Christ, in whom all God's wisdom was revealed, to the cross of shame. But in doing so it was really disgracing itself. God — in His wisdom — used the cross to triumph over the world and its ruler, and to set aside the wisdom of this world completely.

Here in First Corinthians 2 we find several important contrasts between divine and worldly wisdom. First of all, we see how these forms of wisdom differ in character:

- (1) The wisdom of this world is transient: it belongs to the present age, and will come to nothing like the rulers of this age (v. 6; cf. 1:19).
- (2) The wisdom of God, however, dating from before the ages, has as its object an eternal, incorruptible glory for the objects of God's love: it originates in His eternal will and finds its consummation in His eternal glory (v. 7).

So worldly wisdom is limited by time and transience, whereas divine wisdom is from eternity and will last for all eternity. The wisdom of this world will disappear, but God's counsel will stand. In verse 7 God's wisdom is related to His election. It is a wisdom "which God ordained before the ages for our glory", a wisdom which God, so to speak, especially devised for His elect.

In Romans 8:29 we see that the saints themselves are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Here in First Corinthians 2:7 we see that not only *persons* are predestined, but that there is also a predestined *wisdom* with regard to them. Therefore this wisdom too, is eternal in its character. It is based on God's eternal purpose.

Now what is the goal of this eternal wisdom? It aims at "our glory". Its objective is to bring the objects of God's love to the glory for which He has predestined them. It grants the objects of God's love a place in the eternal glory of God's Son. Therefore Paul calls Him the "Lord of glory" (v. 8). He is the second Man from heaven. Having come down from glory He has, as Man, acquired this glory in order to share it with men. He has been glorified in heaven in virtue of His finished work. It is His legitimate portion (John 17:1-5). But He does not want to be alone in the glory, His desire is to have His companions with

Him. This is also the purpose of God the Father, who grants His children a place in the glory of His Son.

The next major difference between divine and worldly wisdom is the method of observation, the way in which wisdom is obtained. Verse 9 first of all mentions the three main fields of human knowledge:

- (1) Things that the eye sees: this refers to the major part of the wisdom of this world, which is acquired through sensory perception, notably that of the eye.
- (2) Things that the ear hears: the field of history, those things that we know from oral or written tradition.
- (3) Things that enter into the heart of man: the field of philosophy, of man's thinking about things visible and invisible.

Divine wisdom, however, is the opposite of this worldly wisdom, for it embraces the things which eye has *not* seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man; the things which *God* has prepared for those who love Him. That which *man* was unable to observe with the eye or the ear, or to grasp with his limited mind, *God* has prepared for those who love Him.

The wisdom of God far exceeds human wisdom. It is immeasurably *higher* than human wisdom, because it grants the new man in Christ a place in God's glory. It is infinitely *older* than all human knowledge, because it is based on God's eternal purpose with regard to the objects of His love. Dating from eternity, it will last eternally. It is the lasting, unchanging wisdom of God, which surpasses all human thinking — true wisdom from above, which does not originate in this world but in the heart of *God*.

God has prepared this wisdom for those who love Him. He has laid out the mysteries of His wisdom for those who, in and through Christ, have been brought into a special relationship of love with Him.

## 5. CHRIST AS THE PREACHER OF GOD'S WISDOM

But how can we become partakers of this divine wisdom, which surpasses human thinking? How can we ever come to know this eternal wisdom of God, if it is incomprehensible and imperceptible to man? This obvious question is dealt with in the following verses (v. 10ff.).

God has revealed the mysteries of His wisdom and the secrets of His heart *through His Spirit*. These things have been communicated to us by divine revelation. But before saying more about this, we should like to point out that, in the first place, God's wisdom has been revealed *in Christ*. This has to do with the first chapter of the letter to the Corinthians, which portrays Christ as the incarnation of the wisdom of God.

Without Christ it was entirely impossible for us to come to know the wisdom of God. Man has alienated himself from God, he has turned his back upon God. Being in such a state, how could he ever be able to acquire God's wisdom? Man needed a Messenger from God to give him a clear insight into God's wisdom, a Person coming from God to preach this wisdom to him. This is hinted at in the book of Job, where Elihu speaks about the need of a Messenger, a Mediator, to mediate between God and man and to pay the ransom that is required to reconcile fallen man with God (Job 33:23,24).

Now who could act as God's Messenger to redeem man's sin and to open his eyes for the riches of the wisdom of God? It had to be Somebody who was with God and who knew all the mysteries of God's wisdom and who, at the same time, was able to meet man's needs. He had to represent God in the right way, and to have acceptance with man.

It could not be an angel, for how could angels (ministering spirits) gain an insight into the secrets of God's heart? Angels obey God's commandments, but the secrets of God's love are hidden from them. Angels cannot come down to fallen man's level in order to provide for man's greatest needs and to deliver him from sin. Having been created by God, angels have to keep their proper domain, their own original state. They are unable to pay a ransom for any of God's other creatures, just as man himself is unable to pay a ransom for his brother (Ps. 49:7,8). Therefore no angel could lower himself to man's level in order to lift him up, so that he would be able to understand the riches of God's wisdom.

Scripture teaches us that the right Messenger from God could be none other than the Son of God, the beloved One in whom God is well pleased. Christ is the perfect expression of God's thoughts, and the full revelation of God's nature. He is the eternal Word, and He was in the beginning with God. He is God the Son, and all things were made through Him. All things were created by Him: the angels, the cosmos, as well as man. He alone could reconcile all things to God, whether things on earth or things in heaven. For the whole creation had been alienated from God by the fall of Satan and of man himself.

So Christ was the only One who was able to pay the ransom for fallen man and bring him back to God — redeemed. Only He was able to come down to man's level, without losing His Godhead because of this, in order to lift man out of the misery into which he had sunk. Only the Son could explain the Father to us and reveal the secrets of the Father's heart. Only the Word could become flesh in order to suffer for us and to unite us with Himself as redeemed children of God in the glorious results of His work (John 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1).

And God sent forth His Son, when the fullness of the time had come (Gal. 4:4), after the 'trial period' of the first man was over. Then the time had come to put aside the first man and all his wisdom, and to replace him by the second Man and the wisdom of God as displayed in Him. Divine wisdom can be

known only in and through Him. Christ is both the power and the wisdom of God, and He became for us wisdom from God (1 Cor. 1:24,30).

## 6. WISDOM IS HIS NAME

The fact that Christ is the wisdom of God is also indicated in the book of Proverbs. There wisdom is sometimes personified, and then we easily recognize in it the eternal Word, the Wisdom of God (Prov. 8:22-31). Christ is presented in a threefold relationship there:

- (1) The relationship with God the Father: He was with God and He was the Father's joy and delight from eternity, before the beginning of creation.
- (2) The relationship with the universe: He was present when everything was created, and He was the master workman or craftsman — which is another translation of little child or nursling (JND) — by whom creation came about (see also Prov. 3:19). He was the wise Master Builder who rejoiced in His creation.
- (3) The relationship with mankind: He, who was Himself the delight of the Father's heart, had His delight in the sons of men. The result of Wisdom being well pleased with the sons of men was its incarnation. Eternal Wisdom personally descended to the earth.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Christ has declared the Father and He has glorified Him on the earth (John 1:14,18; 17:4). He came down to save the sons of men in whom He delighted. His coming in the flesh proved His genuine and intense interest in man as the crown of His creation.

Since the children partake of blood and flesh, He took part in the same on our behalf to deliver us from the power of death and of Satan, and to bring us to glory (Heb. 2:10-15). Small wonder that when the Son of Man was born the angels rejoiced:

“(…) good will toward men!” (Luke 2:14). He who was the Father’s delight became Man in order to redeem the sons of men and to show them the Father’s heart. He who was the Wisdom of God found ways and means to deliver the objects of His delight, and to show them the secrets of God’s love.

## 7. CHRIST CRUCIFIED

So God's wisdom came to us in *the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Christ has not only *preached* the wisdom of God to us, but He *is* God's Wisdom. Nor did He only *reveal* the Word of God to us, but He *is* the Word of God. This is a very important point indeed. In Him, God's wisdom took shape: in the One who became Man, who was crucified, raised and exalted at the right hand of God. In Him God's wisdom was revealed, in the One who descended into the deepest depths and who was subsequently exalted by God to the highest heights.

So Christ *is* the wisdom of God. That is how the apostle Paul presents Him in First Corinthians 1: first as the crucified One, then as the risen and glorified Lord. Paul did not speak only about the cross of Christ. He preached *Jesus Christ* and Him crucified. So he spoke about the *Person* of the Lord Jesus Christ, but because of the spiritual state of the Corinthians he had to emphasize *the meaning of His cross*.

The Corinthians boasted in the first man and in man's wisdom. But the cross of Christ has judged and removed the first man, and his wisdom too. It proclaims this world and its wisdom to be dead. It has rendered this wisdom foolishness, so there is no reason whatsoever to boast in worldly wisdom. A *new* kind of wisdom has been brought to light, not man's wisdom but God's. God has revealed this wisdom in the Second Man, who descended from heaven and ascended into heaven again. Thus Christ, in His great accomplished work, is the revelation of the wisdom of God. He is the personal manifestation of this wisdom.

Now how can we become partakers of this wisdom? We are partakers of it because we are linked with Christ, the wisdom of God. We know God's wisdom because we know

*Him*. To us Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). God purposed to link us with this Person in whom divine wisdom is manifested: “But of Him (i.e. God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God” (1 Cor. 1:30).

In accordance with God’s purpose we are now in Christ Jesus, the One who was crucified by the world, but then exalted to the right hand of God in heaven. What does this mean, being *in Him*? It means that we are united with Christ. Rather than viewing us as natural people, as sinful descendants of the first Adam, God now sees us in Christ. God has established us “in Christ” (2 Cor. 1:21). He has united us with Him who is the Head of a new generation.

The position of Christ is *our* position, and the life of Christ is *our* life. The place where Christ is now before God indicates what *our* place is. With Him we died, and with Him we were buried, raised and placed in the heavenlies. Thus God has linked us with the One who is Himself the wisdom of God, so that we are now partakers of this wisdom, as revealed in Him. We are in Christ, who became for us wisdom from God. Between Christ, the wisdom of God, and His people unbreakable ties have been established. While we are His, we may also call Him ours.

Therefore the wisdom of God can be seen *in the saints* as well. For the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the Church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10). The angels are amazed at the Church and its wonderful union with its Head in heaven. To them this proves the riches of God’s wisdom. They saw the wisdom of God already, as expressed in Christ. They watched His incarnation, His humiliation to the death of the cross and His exaltation at the right hand of God. But now they are amazed at the fact that the Church, a company of children of men, is linked with this glorified Man. This offers them surprisingly new aspects of God’s wisdom. The *manifold* wisdom of God is revealed in this new creation, which is the fruit of Christ’s finished work.

## 8. THE SPIRIT AS THE PREACHER OF GOD'S WISDOM

Now God has sent yet another Messenger from heaven to proclaim His wisdom to us. While First Corinthians 1 shows us *Christ* as the wisdom of God in person, First Corinthians 2 presents us the *Spirit* as the One who makes the secrets of God's wisdom known to us. The treasures of God's wisdom, which God has prepared for those who love Him, are now revealed by the Spirit of God.

The Spirit thus continues the revelation of God's wisdom in the Person of Christ. This is the divine order. Christ had to come first and to finish the work which God had given Him to do. Because of this He Himself was exalted at God's right hand in heaven, whereupon the Holy Spirit was sent to this earth as the Witness of Christ's finished work. Now the Spirit takes of that which belongs to the exalted Christ, and discloses it to us. As the Lord told His disciples: "He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-15).

The Holy Spirit shows us all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Him. He acts like Abraham's servant, who took a bride for Isaac and adorned her with his riches (see Gen. 24). Thus the Holy Spirit speaks of the heavenly things of which Christ Himself had already borne witness (John 3:11-16, 27-36). He adorns the bride of Christ with the riches of heaven. Here in First Corinthians 2 these heavenly things are called, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (v. 9), "the deep things of God" (v. 10), and "the things that have been freely given to us by God" (v. 12). The Holy Spirit knows all these things perfectly. He searches them and He came to this earth especially to disclose them to us (vv. 9-12).

So in First Corinthians 2 *the Spirit* is the Bearer of the wisdom of God. The secrets of God's wisdom and the hidden depths of God's heart have been revealed to us through the Spirit (v. 10a). The apostle then compares this with our human spirit: only the spirit of a man himself knows his deepest thoughts. Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (vv. 10b-11). But since we have received the Spirit who is from God, we also know the things that have been freely given to us by God (v. 12).

Having the Spirit of God is the key to understanding the wisdom of God. We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God. The spirit of the world gives an understanding of the wisdom of this world, but the Spirit of God teaches us what divine wisdom is. We have already mentioned the contrast between the two forms of wisdom. The world is full of the things that are not from God. An unbridgeable gap exists between the Father and the world, between divine and worldly wisdom. For all that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:16).

It is only by the Spirit "who is from God" that we can understand the things of God. The Holy Spirit was sent to this world by the Father and the Son to tell us heavenly things, the things which God has prepared for His own. The Spirit enlightens the eyes of our understanding, that we may know these things — the depths of God's wisdom. This is the purpose of the mission of the Spirit: to communicate to God's children in this world which does not know God, the things that God has given us in Christ even before the world was.

## 9. THE WISDOM OF GOD DISCLOSED BY THE SPIRIT

How can we obtain this divine wisdom? Is it something mystical? Does one need to descend into the depths of one's own heart in order to reach this divine wisdom? No, the Spirit of God has descended from on high, and has revealed the secrets of God's heart by means of the written Word. The wisdom of God has been imparted to us by the Spirit-breathed Scriptures.

Here in First Corinthians 2 the apostle Paul discerns several steps in the communication of the hidden wisdom of God. These steps could be summed up in three words: *revelation*, *inspiration*, and *enlightenment*. So we see the following stages in the disclosure of the hidden wisdom of God:

- (1) The Spirit revealed the deep things of God to the apostles and the prophets of the New Testament (vv. 10-12).
- (2) Inspired by the Spirit, the apostles spread them through the spoken and the written word (v. 13; cf. 1 Thess. 2:13).
- (3) The same Spirit enlightens those who are spiritual to receive these things (vv. 14-16). Paul emphasizes that taking part in God's wisdom is a matter of the Spirit of God, who plays a decisive role in each of the three steps of the communication of God's wisdom. Its revelation and proclamation, as well as its reception, are all the work of the Spirit.

First of all, the Spirit worked in the apostles in order to initiate them into the wisdom of God. He not only brought to their remembrance all things that the Lord said to them during His life here on earth, but He taught them all things and guided them into all truth. And He told them things to come (John

14:26; 16:13). The Spirit showed them the glories of the heavenly Head and the results of His redemptive work, by which the redeemed become partakers of heavenly things.

Secondly, the Spirit used the apostles for the proclamation of God's wisdom. They spoke these things, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing or combining spiritual things with spiritual words (v. 13). God being a Spirit, the things of God are *spiritual things*, for they refer to spiritual blessings and spiritual realities. Therefore, these things had to be made known too by *spiritual words*. Just as the words of Christ Himself were *spirit*, and were *life*, so the words of the Spirit are of a *spiritual* character, marked as they are by the breath of life of the Spirit of God (John 6:63; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

Thirdly, the reception of these inspired words is also the result of the Spirit's work. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; only the spiritual man can, because the Spirit dwells and works in him. Having been born of the Spirit, the believer possesses a new nature which is *spirit* (John 3:6). He has received a new spiritual life, a resurrection life, which is ruled by a new principle, namely the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). Besides, he is indwelt by the Spirit Himself, who bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

So the believer is made a spiritual man by these two blessings: the life of the risen Lord and the indwelling of the Spirit Himself. Thereby we obtain insight into the things of God and are capable of assessing the words of the Spirit — the words of Scripture. We ponder them in our hearts, and understand the mind of God. Because we have the mind of Christ, i.e. the feelings, and the thoughts of Christ, we have insight into the thoughts of God and His eternal purposes, all the riches of His grace. So we know the wisdom of God for these two reasons:

- (1) Because we are partakers of Christ, who is Himself the incarnation of this wisdom.
- (2) Because we are enlightened by the Spirit and because the Spirit, who knows and searches the depths of God's wisdom, governs our lives.

## 10. APPENDIX: THE MYSTERIES OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### **Matthew, Mark, Luke**

*Matthew 13:11*

“Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”.

*Mark 4:11*

“To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God”.

*Luke 8:10*

“To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God”.

### **Romans**

*Romans 11:25-26*

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written”.

*Romans 16:25-27*

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the

faith — to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen”.

## **1 Corinthians**

### *1 Corinthians 2:7*

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory”.

### *1 Corinthians 4:1*

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God”.

### *1 Corinthians 13:2*

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge”.

### *1 Corinthians 14:2*

“For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries”.

### *1 Corinthians 15:50-52*

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”.

## **Ephesians**

### *Ephesians 1:9-10*

“Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ”.

*Ephesians 3:3-5*

“How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”.

*Ephesians 3:8-10*

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all people see what is the fellowship (or, administration) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the Church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places”.

*Ephesians 5:30-32*

“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church”.

*Ephesians 6:19-20*

“(…) that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains”.

## **Colossians**

*Colossians 1:25-27*

“(…) of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”.

*Colossians 2:2-3*

“(…) that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”.

*Colossians 4:3-4*

“(…) meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak”.

## **2 Thessalonians**

*2 Thessalonians 2:7-8*

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed”.

## **1 Timothy**

*1 Timothy 3:9*

“(…) holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience”.

*1 Timothy 3:16*

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the

Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory”.

## **Revelation**

### *Revelation 1:20*

“The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches”.

### *Revelation 10:6-7*

“(…) and swore (…) that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets”.

### *Revelation 17:5-7*

“And on her forehead a name was written: Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement. But the angel said to me, ‘Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns’”.

**Ere God had built the mountains**

Ere God had built the mountains,  
Or raised the fruitful hills,  
Before He filled the fountains  
That feed the running rills,  
In Thee from everlasting,  
The wonderful I AM  
Found pleasures never wasting,  
And Wisdom is Thy name.

When like a tent to dwell in,  
He spread the skies abroad,  
And swathed about the swelling  
Of ocean's mighty flood,  
He wrought by weight and measure;  
And Thou wast with Him then,  
Thyself the Father's pleasure,  
And Thine, the sons of men.

And couldst Thou be delighted  
With creatures such as we,  
Who, when we saw Thee, slighted,  
And nailed Thee to the tree?  
Unfathomable wonder,  
And mystery divine!  
The voice that speaks in thunder,  
Says, "Sinner I am thine".

And art Thou, Lord, delighted  
To call us now Thine own-  
The love no longer slighted  
Which Thou to us hast shown?  
Oh, way of purposed blessing  
In death told out to man!  
The fruit we're now possessing,  
Of Wisdom's wondrous plan.

