

God Revealed through the Church

The Church - A Demonstration of God's Wisdom

“My boy,” said the store owner to his new employee, “wisdom and integrity are essential to the retail business. By ‘integrity’ I mean if you promise a customer something, you have got to keep that promise—even if it means we lose money.”

“And what,” asked the teenager, “is wisdom?”

“That,” answered the boss, “is not making any stupid promises.”

Ephesians 3: 1 - 13

1) The Mystery of God Revealed

- The mystery of God remains a mystery until He chooses to reveal it to us.
 - A revelation is religious doctrine viewed on its illuminated side; a mystery is the selfsame doctrine viewed on the side unilluminated.

Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–1890)
 - I have observed the power of the watermelon seed. It has the power of drawing from the ground and through itself 200,000 times its weight. When you can tell me how it takes this material and out of it colours an outside surface beyond the imitation of art, and then forms inside of it a white rind and within that again a red heart, thickly inlaid with black seeds, each one of which in turn is capable of drawing through itself 200,000 times its weight—when you can explain to me the mystery of a watermelon, you can ask me to explain the mystery of God.

William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925)
- Men and angels throughout the ages had been kept in the dark as to what the mystery of God was.
 - Ephesians 3: 4 – 5 “In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.”
- What is this mystery that Paul is talking about?
 - This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.
- God’s ultimate purpose is to unite all things in heaven and earth under the headship of Christ.
 - Ephesians 1: 9 – 10 “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”
- Why is this mystery?
 - We didn’t know that God wanted to rule our lives.
 - The Jews thought that God only considered them and not the Gentiles. It was a mystery to them that God would reach out His hand of salvation and grant them to be heirs of the promises along with the Jews.
 - The people of the world are unaware of the purposes of God and go on with life without Christ ignorantly blissful.
 - The church often reveals their lack of understanding of this mystery by continuing to neglect to reach out to certain social and religious communities and keeps the Gospel to herself and to particular “chosen communities” i.e. chosen by herself and not by God.
- All this until God opens up the eyes of our understanding to see His purposes and understand what was previously a mystery to us – the meaning of life

2) Making plain the administration of the mystery

- Paul was given grace to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. (vs. 8 – 9)
- The Gentiles – that includes all of us – were going about life according to their own understanding of what life is all about and did not even consider the possibility of worshiping the true God.

- Romans 3: 10 – 11 "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.
- Grace is given to make the mystery of God known to a people who couldn't care less about it because they were quite content living the lives that they always knew and enjoyed.
- It is through the Gospel that our eyes are opened to see what we are and gives us the reason and desire to change.
- It is our job to make plain – open up the Gospel; communicate the Gospel in a way that others will clearly understand it – so that the responsibility of change is transferred to the recipient of the Gospel.
- The Gospel is this – Christ died on the cross to forgive us our sins and to reconcile us to God. He broke down the wall of hostility that divides people that we may forgive one another and be reconciled to each other that together we may come under the headship of Christ.

3) God's Wisdom Demonstrated through the Church

- 1 Corinthians 2: 6 – 8 "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 speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."
- Colossians 2: 15 "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"
- God's wisdom is revealed at the cross in that God allowed the powers of darkness (Satan) to crucify Jesus because God, in all His wisdom, knew that Satan didn't understand His mystery and that it would be accomplished through the cross.
 - In His infinite wisdom the all powerful God chose the way of weakness to accomplish His greatest victory.
- The church demonstrates the wisdom of God by going the way of the cross and not the way of strength to attain victory.
 - When persecuted we bless
 - When harmed we turn the other cheek rather than retaliate
 - When hurt we forgive
 - We serve to become great
 - 1 Corinthians 1: 20 – 29 "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.
- The wisdom of God has to do with wise living in relationship with others.
 - James 3: 13 – 18 "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.
- God's wisdom is demonstrated through the church when we live in line with the purposes of God in bring all things in heaven and earth together under the headship of Christ
 - It is primarily about relationships lived out in humility in Christ