

Dead Church Podcast Notes

Acts Initiative

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Ep. 21 – Spiritual Blessings: What Did Paul Mean?

Sometimes when we read things in the New Testament, it sounds cool, and it seems good, but we don't really understand it. For example, Paul said, "In Christ, God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."¹

When you read the words *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*, do you know what Paul was talking about? Do you know what those spiritual blessings are?

If you use this phrase (like many Christians do) when you're talking, praying, or singing worship songs, do you even understand what you're saying, or are you just using the words Paul used?

Was Paul just being artistic? Was he just being poetic? Are we supposed to know what Paul was talking about? Or was it something that Paul, as an apostle, understood, but we won't understand until Heaven?

Is this a verse that we should just be able to quote, or is this a verse we're supposed to fully understand?

So many times, Christians will read certain Bible verses and just assume that the author was using fluffy, flowery, artistic and poetic words to make what they're saying sound beautiful. Christians will hear these verses, and without even really understanding what was being said, they'll just say, "Amen! Yes! Amen! Yes!"

They do this because they read the Bible to be encouraged or feel good; they read it because they think reading it gives them life. They think that some of the verses we read are simply there to give praise to God, so all they get out of it is a warm feeling and they say, "Amen!"

But as we've already discussed, that's not the purpose of Scripture.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for showing people what is wrong in their lives, for correcting faults, and for training in righteousness. Using the Scriptures, the person who serves God will be capable, having all that is needed to do every good work."²

The purpose of all Scripture is for teaching, correction, and training in how we should live. It's not just for encouragement, it's not just for giving praise to God, and those verses aren't just being poetic. When people think a verse, a passage, or an entire book of the Bible is just poetic for the sake of being poetic, the answer is simple – you just don't understand it.

When Paul was writing to the Ephesians, he wasn't just telling them, "God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" just to tell them that! Paul wanted them to understand what he was talking about. He wanted them to understand what those spiritual blessings are. He wanted them to fully understand everything they have as a result of following Jesus.

A few verses later, he said, "I never cease giving thanks to God for you. I always remember you in my prayers, asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you spiritual wisdom and revelation so that you will know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you will comprehend the hope to which he has called us and that you will know the

¹ Ephesians 1:3

² 2 Timothy 3:16-17

riches of his glorious inheritance for his holy people. And you will know that God’s power is overwhelmingly great for us who believe.”³

So, here we see that Paul prayed that they would have...

- Spiritual wisdom and revelation so that they would know God better
- The eyes of their hearts enlightened so that...
 - They themselves would be able to comprehend the hope to which we are called
 - They themselves would know the riches of God’s glorious inheritance for his holy people
 - They themselves would know that God’s power is overwhelmingly great for those who believe

Paul didn’t want people to just become Christians. He didn’t want people to just believe in Jesus so they could go to heaven someday. No, Paul knew that God offers more. He offers so much more right now – in this life. God offers the ability for us to know him in a tangible way.

Today, most Christians seem to think that becoming a Christian is the end goal. They think this because they think it’s all about going to heaven someday. They don’t recognize what God is offering to us right now.

Paul didn’t want people to just become Christians. He wanted them to mature. He wanted them to understand. He wanted them to have spiritual wisdom. He wanted them to have revelation.

He said that if they have this spiritual wisdom and revelation, then they will know God better. He wanted their spiritual eyes to be opened so they could see and understand and comprehend and know all of what God freely gives to those who follow him. In short, he wanted them to understand, comprehend, and know what all those spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are!

He didn’t just want us to know that there *are* spiritual blessings. He wanted us to know *what* those spiritual blessings are. He wanted us to understand what God is giving us. He wanted us to know what the spiritual reality is, and everything that Jesus purchased for us through his death and resurrection.

Paul prayed again for them a few chapters later: “I ask the Father out of his glorious riches to give you the power to be strong in the inner person through his Spirit. I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts by faith and that your life will be rooted and grounded in love. And I pray that you and all God’s holy people will have the power to comprehend the greatness of Christ’s love – how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is. Christ’s love is beyond comprehension, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God.”⁴

Again, this is one of those verses that so many Christians read, quote, say “Amen!” to it, and write into fluffy, feel-good worship songs. But do they even understand what Paul was saying? Here he prayed that they would be able to comprehend the greatness of Christ’s love – even though it’s incomprehensible!

Think about that.

He wanted them to know the unknowable, to comprehend the incomprehensible. He wanted them to be able to wrap their minds around something that cannot be wrapped around. And he explained why – if they were strong in the inner person, if Christ made his home in their hearts, if they were rooted and grounded in love, and if they comprehended the incomprehensible love of Christ, then they could be filled with the fullness of God!

The fullness of God.

³ Ephesians 1:16-19

⁴ Ephesians 3:16-19

That means they could be filled with *all of God!* All of God living in them – just like Jesus. Remember, Jesus prayed that we would be one⁵ – not just one with each other (though that is part of it), but also one with him and one with the Father in the same way that he himself is one with the Father.

That’s what Paul was saying here: That kind of oneness with God is only possible when we are strong in the inner person, when Christ makes his home in our hearts, when we are rooted and grounded in love, and when we comprehend the incomprehensible love of Christ. It’s the kind of life we see in the early Church throughout the book of Acts. It’s the kind of life we’re supposed to have, and it’s only possible if we mature.

Paul recorded a similar prayer when he wrote to the Colossians: “Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we have not ceased praying for you, asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you will live the kind of life that is worthy of and pleases the Lord in every way. You will produce fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will have patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has made you able to have a share in the inheritance of the holy ones in the light. God has rescued us from the power of darkness, and he brought us into the kingdom of his dearly loved Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.”⁶

Here, Paul prayed that God would...

- Fill them with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...
 - so that they would live the kind of life God wants
 - so that they would produce fruit in good works
 - so that they would grow in the knowledge of God
 - so that they would be strengthened with all power
 - so that they would not give up when troubles come, but rather have patience with joy and thankfulness

Paul wanted them to know God’s will! We talked about this earlier when we were talking about prayer – a lot of Christians think God’s will is some secret thing that we can’t know. So, when they pray, they’re shooting in the dark, hoping what they’re praying is in line with God’s will. Then, if their prayer isn’t answered, they just say, “Well, I guess it wasn’t God’s will.”

But that’s not how it’s supposed to be!

Paul was saying here (and in other places) that we should know God’s will! The phrase “God’s will” simply means *what God wants*. And here Paul explained that we can be filled with the knowledge of what God wants by having spiritual wisdom and understanding – and, that it will lead to us living the kind of life God wants with good works, it will lead to us growing in the knowledge of God, and it will give us strength and perseverance.

In short, if we grow in knowing what God wants, then we will grow in living the life God wants. It makes sense!

Another thing Christians often don’t understand is that when Paul (and the other apostles) wrote about the knowledge of God, they were not talking about knowing the correct facts, the right information, and the correct doctrines and theologies. The word *knowledge* doesn’t mean *knowledge* like we often mean it today. The Greek word translated *knowledge* referred to a personal, experiential knowledge. In other words, Paul wasn’t saying he wanted us to grow in knowing *about* God – he wanted us to grow in *knowing God*.

⁵ Ref. John 17:20-23

⁶ Colossians 1:9-14

We should be people who know God, not just about God, in the same way that I know my wife, Tess. I know her personally. I know what she likes; I know what she doesn't like; I know what she cares about; I talk to her; I listen to her; she tells me her deepest secret thoughts; I know what she wants; I spend nearly every moment with her. I know her personally. I don't merely know *about* her as if I read about her in some book.

But that's often how we treat God today – it's more like we read about him in the Bible and learned things about him. We store up information, facts, doctrines, and theologies. But we don't know him. Paul wanted us to know God, not just about God. And Paul said that knowing God comes from spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Paul recorded one final prayer at the end of Colossians. This time, it's the prayer of a rather unknown person who was a friend of Paul: "Epaphras, a slave of Jesus Christ, from your city, also greets you. He always prays earnestly for you that you will grow to be spiritually mature and fully assured in all the will of God."⁷

This guy, Epaphras, who was from the city of Colossae, also prayed for the people in his city that they would grow to be spiritually mature and fully assured in all the will of God. Again – we are supposed to be people who know God's will – people who know what God wants. So, Paul and Epaphras, and many of the other apostles, all wrote about spiritual maturity. Throughout these prayers, we can see a glimpse of what spiritual maturity looks like.

We should have spiritual wisdom. We should be receiving revelations from God; in other words, God opening our eyes to reveal something to us – something new, or something that we previously didn't understand. We should be people who comprehend (that is, fully understand) the hope we've been called to. We should be people who know and understand the riches of our inheritance. We should experientially know that God's power is overwhelmingly great for us. We should fully understand and comprehend the incomprehensible love of Jesus. We should be filled with the fullness of God; in other words, all of God living in us. We should be filled with the experiential knowledge of God's will – knowing what God wants in all times, in all circumstances. We should have all understanding – knowing more than just the facts and the verses, but understanding what they mean and understanding what the spiritual reality is, and what all of our blessings are in the heavenly places.

And all of this should result in us living the kind of life God wants, producing the kind of fruit God wants, growing in knowing God personally, being strengthened with all power, and persevering through troubles with patience, joy, and thankfulness. As people who are born again – born of the Spirit, not born of the flesh – we should be spiritual people with spiritual wisdom, spiritual understanding, and spiritual maturity.

We should not be people who just quote Bible verses.

A lot of Christians quote Bible verses without understanding what those verses are saying. A lot of Christians take verses from the Bible out of context, they use them to remind themselves of God's promises, but they themselves don't even understand what those promises are or what those verses are saying!

Christians today talk in fluffy, non-sensical "Christianese" where they toss around words and phrases from the Bible, and act as if saying the right words is all that matters. But they don't actually understand what those words mean, and they don't comprehend the depth of what those verses are talking about. Christians today are comfortable not understanding the spiritual things the Bible says we should understand. Christians today are too comfortable quoting Bible verses and sounding spiritual when really, they have no idea what they're even saying. They use words that have no real tangible meaning to them. They don't understand what Paul was saying, and they don't understand

⁷ Colossians 4:12

what they're talking about when they use those same phrases.

Christians will say long, drawn-out, feel-good, poetic things that really have no substance to them at all. They use words that don't make sense. They use phrases that don't make sense. They don't really know what they're saying, and no one really gets any substantial help from it because it really doesn't have any meaning at all. But it feels good, it sounds good, and it uses words and phrases from the Bible, so it must be good... right?

Do you understand that when the apostles wrote these things, they did not intend it to be a feel-good, poetic, fluffy encouragement with no real tangible substance? They weren't trying to be poetic! They were trying to communicate something to you that you're supposed to understand and fully comprehend!

Building others up doesn't mean telling them non-sensical things that sound good and feel right. Building others up means telling them something that they can understand and comprehend. It has substance, and the truth being communicated helps that person. But if the person doesn't understand any type of communicated thought, then you're just a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal!⁸ You're benefiting no one.

If you have to use "Christianese" and fluffy poetic words from the Bible, and you can't put it into your own words in modern English and communicate a real thought in which the other person will understand the substance of what you're saying, then you don't actually know what you're talking about! Furthermore, you haven't built that person up, you haven't communicated truth, and you haven't helped anyone!

We're not supposed to be people who merely say, "God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places!" We're not supposed to be people who merely vomit up all the Bible verses we've read and say those words as if the words have some sort of magical power in them.

We're supposed to be people who know what those spiritual blessings are. We're supposed to be people who fully understand the hope we have and the inheritance we're receiving from God as his children. We're supposed to be people who are filled with the fullness of God, just like Jesus. In other words, we're supposed to be people who know what we're talking about. We're supposed to have spiritual wisdom. We're supposed to be people who understand – who understand what we're saying and thinking. And we're supposed to understand what the Bible is saying.

So, the question is: How do we get spiritual wisdom?

How do we come to know all our spiritual blessings? How do we comprehend the hope we're called to? How do we learn what our inheritance is? Or in other words, how do we understand the secret things of God that Paul said we're supposed to understand?

Paul told us! Paul told us where we can get this kind of wisdom and understanding:

"However, we speak wisdom to those who are mature. But this wisdom is not from this world or from the rulers of this world, who are passing away. We speak God's secret wisdom, which he has kept hidden. Before the world began, God planned this wisdom for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood it. If they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written in the Scriptures: 'No eye has ever seen this, and no ear has ever heard about it. No human heart has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.' But God has revealed to us these things through the Spirit. The Spirit searches out all things, even the deep secrets of God. Who knows the thoughts that another person has? Only a person's spirit that lives within him knows his thoughts. It is the same with God. No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we did not receive the spirit of the world, but we received the Spirit that is from God so that we can know all that God has freely given us.

⁸ Ref. 1 Corinthians 13:1

“And we speak about these things, not with words taught us by human wisdom but with words taught us by the Spirit, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*. A natural person does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. That person thinks they are foolish and cannot understand them, because they can only be discerned by the Spirit. The spiritual person is able to discern all things, but no one can discern him. The Scripture says: ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been able to advise him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”⁹

Paul was saying in this passage that those who are spiritual receive spiritual wisdom directly from the Spirit. That spiritual wisdom is God’s secret wisdom – his secret thoughts, his secret plans, things he has never told anyone about, things the spiritual rulers of this age didn’t understand, because if they had understood, they would never have crucified Jesus. No eye has seen these secret things, no ear has heard these secret things, but God reveals them to us through the Spirit.

So, Paul was saying we receive this wisdom and understanding through the Spirit because the Spirit knows the secret thoughts of God. Just like you can’t read my thoughts – no other person, not even my wife who knows me better than anyone else, can read my thoughts and know what I’m thinking. The only one who knows what I’m thinking is the spirit inside of me. Paul said it’s the same way with God – no one knows God’s secret thoughts, secret plans, and secret desires. No one knows the things that God has hidden deep inside his own mind.

But, God gave us his Spirit – that same Spirit that *does* know his secret thoughts, his secret plans, and his secret desires! So now, through the Spirit, we can know his secret thoughts, his secret plans, and his secret desires, and as Paul said, *we can know all that God has freely given us!* In other words, we can know all those spiritual blessings in the heavenly places! We can know what our inheritance is! We can know what God is giving us!

Paul continued, explaining that, because we learn these secret thoughts of God through the Spirit, we have an understanding and comprehension of things that no natural person can understand and comprehend. In other words, people who aren’t true Christians, who don’t have the true Spirit of God – they think it’s foolish; they think it’s stupid. They’re not able to understand it, and they will refuse to accept it. Only a spiritual person – someone born of the Spirit, who has died with Jesus and risen with him into a new life – is able to understand it. And only a spiritual person can accept it.

He then summarized by quoting Isaiah – “Who has known the mind of the Lord?”¹⁰ But then Paul gave an incredible answer: we have the mind of Christ. And because we have the mind of Christ, we *can* know the mind of the Lord.

In this section, Paul was providing the answer for how Christians are supposed to understand what it means to have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He was explaining how we receive all those things we mentioned earlier – how we can have spiritual wisdom, how we receive revelations from God, how we comprehend the hope we’ve been called to, how we know and understand the riches of our inheritance, how we experientially know that God’s power is overwhelmingly great for us, how we fully understand and comprehend the incomprehensible love of Jesus, how we are filled with the fullness of God, how we are filled with the knowledge of God’s will, and how we can have all understanding.

It all comes through knowing the secret thoughts of God – the thoughts that only the Spirit within him can know! It comes because, as we become one with Jesus and one with the Father, we receive the mind of Christ! If we receive the mind of Christ, then we can know his thoughts. We gain his perspective. We understand his secrets. We know what he is giving us!

The Spirit of God knows all the depths of the secrets of God, and he makes those secrets available to us! The Spirit causes us to understand things. He reveals our inheritance to us in a way

⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 (EXB; italics NKJV)

¹⁰ Ref. Isaiah 40:13

that we can comprehend it – not just talk about it. He opens our eyes to fathom the depths of what God is offering us.

We read the letters of Paul, and we see that he clearly had a deep understanding of spiritual things that we still don't understand – even though we have his letters. He understood what God was doing with Israel.¹¹ He understood what God was doing with the Gentiles.¹² He understood what was coming in the future.¹³ He understood what it means to be the bride of Christ.¹⁴ He understood our inheritance – he understood what God is offering us.¹⁵ He understood what's going to happen when Jesus returns, and what kind of bodies we will have in heaven.¹⁶

He understood it. It made sense to him.

In 1 Corinthians 2, he explained how he understood all this. And he was telling us that this kind of understanding is available to us, too! It wasn't just something Paul experienced as an apostle. It's something God offers to everyone who has his Spirit. We can only know what our spiritual blessings are if we have the Holy Spirit revealing these things to us.

This is what Paul called *spiritual wisdom*.

Paul said no eye has seen it, and no ear has heard it. That means no Christian book will teach you these things. No sermon is going to explain this to you. No pastor will help you understand. It's not something you can be taught by a person. It's not something you can learn through studying. It's something you can only have if the Spirit opens your eyes and gives it to you. The secret things of God are only available to us through the Spirit.

But so many Christians take the wrong approach.

Here's an example:

What is the most confusing book in the Bible that it seems like no one understands?

Isn't it the book of Revelation?

Revelation is this crazy roller-coaster story of a vision the apostle John had. He described scrolls being opened, horses being sent out on the earth, the sun becoming black, the moon turning to blood, earthquakes, locusts from the abyss, wars in heaven, trumpets and plagues, bowls and plagues, signs appearing in heaven, a beast rising from the sea, a beast rising from the earth, an image that can talk, the mark of the beast, a woman called the Whore of Babylon, and a beast she's riding. He described a rider on a white horse, a judgment day, a lake of fire, a second death, a new Jerusalem, and rivers of life. And so many other things.

It doesn't matter how many books you read about Revelation. It doesn't matter how many sermons you listen to. It doesn't matter how much research you do online. It seems like no one really understands what Revelation is talking about. Yet, at the end of the book it says, "Blessed is the one who obeys the words of prophecy in this book."¹⁷

You're expected to obey the book of Revelation! But, how are we supposed to obey the words of the book of Revelation when no one even *understands* the book of Revelation?

Scattered throughout the book of Revelation, John provided the answer. But most Christians don't understand what it means. Throughout the first few chapters of Revelation, John repeated a phrase over and over:

¹¹ Ref. Romans 9-11

¹² Ref. Ephesians 2:11-22, 3:1-12

¹³ Ref. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 4:1-4

¹⁴ Ref. Ephesians 5:31-32

¹⁵ Ref. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Ephesians 1:14

¹⁶ Ref. 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2

¹⁷ Revelation 22:7

“Everyone who has ears should hear and obey what the Spirit says to the churches.”¹⁸

This is a phrase similar to what Jesus said when he told parables: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”¹⁹

John said it again later in Revelation: “If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”²⁰

It’s a phrase that Jesus and John both used to say the same thing – “you need to pay close attention and understand what I’m saying.” In other words, it’s not supposed to be such a huge mystery. We’re expected to obey the book of Revelation because we’re expected to understand the book of Revelation.

John said some similar things elsewhere in Revelation...

We’ve all heard of the mark of the beast. We know that it says that everyone who accepts the mark of the beast will be thrown into the lake of fire. And countless Christian books, videos, movies, blogs, and sermons speculate and try to figure out what the mark of the beast could possibly be. But John said something so simple, and so often overlooked or misunderstood: “This calls for wisdom. Let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, which is the number of a man. Its number is 666.”²¹

Did you catch it? He said something similar about the beast that the prostitute is riding. He said, “You need a wise mind to understand this...”²²

If you want to understand the book of Revelation, you need wisdom.

When he wrote about the prostitute herself, John said, “On her forehead a name was written that was a mystery...”²³

When John said the name on her forehead is a *mystery*, he used the same word Paul used, which is translated as *secret*: “We speak God’s secret wisdom.”²⁴ That word *mystery* or *secret* is a word Paul used repeatedly throughout his letters whenever he would explain something that the Spirit had revealed to him. For example, in Romans, he revealed a mystery about how God allowed Israel to become hardened in order for him to be able to rescue the Gentiles.²⁵ In Ephesians, Paul revealed a mystery about how the Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews, belonging to the same body, and sharing together in the promise.²⁶

Also in Ephesians, Paul revealed another mystery. He revealed that marriage is about Christ and the Church ²⁷ – and when Paul said that, he meant it in a much deeper way than just, “The Church is the Bride of Christ.” He was saying there’s a profound secret there that you need to understand. And in Colossians, Paul revealed yet another mystery. He said this is the mystery that was hidden from ages and generations, but now is made known to God’s holy people. He said this mystery is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”²⁸ We can expect to receive glory because we have Christ in us.

These are just a few examples. Paul used the word *mystery* or *secret* over and over again. Every time he used the word, he was telling his readers that what he was explaining is a deep secret of God that was revealed to him through the Spirit. It’s something that, even when Paul told us the mysteries, we won’t be able to understand it without the Spirit showing it to us as well. In other words, it’s not

¹⁸ Revelation 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6,13,22

¹⁹ Matthew 13:9,43; Mark 4:9 (ESV)

²⁰ Revelation 13:9

²¹ Revelation 13:18

²² Revelation 17:9

²³ Revelation 17:5

²⁴ Ref. 1 Corinthians 2:7

²⁵ Ref. Romans 11:25-36

²⁶ Ref. Ephesians 3:4-6

²⁷ Ref. Ephesians 5:25-33

²⁸ Ref. Colossians 1:25-29

“surface-level.” They’re not just Bible verses we’re supposed to quote. It’s easy for us to say, “The Church is the Bride of Christ.” But do you understand what that means? That means the two become one flesh.²⁹ That means when he died, the Church died. When he rose, the Church rose. His blood pumps through our veins. His life is the life we’re living; it’s no longer us who live, it’s Christ living in us.³⁰ We became one with Jesus in the same way that he is one with the Father.³¹ Yet all Paul said is, “This is a mystery. I’m talking about Christ and the Church.” And then he continued without further explanation. And so many Christians read it and they just see the surface-level, but they don’t see the depth of what Paul said.

These mysteries are things that we’re supposed to understand. We’re supposed to really get it. We’re supposed to comprehend the significance of what Paul was saying. That’s what a *mystery* is in the Bible. It’s something that requires spiritual wisdom – the kind of wisdom Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 2 – the kind of wisdom where we understand things through the Spirit that no natural person can understand or accept.

So, back to Revelation: When John said the name of the prostitute is a mystery, he was saying the same thing Paul was saying: this is a hidden thing that requires spiritual wisdom – not the world’s wisdom, but spiritual wisdom, where the Spirit tells us God’s secrets – his mysteries. The key to understanding the book of Revelation (and obeying it) is in having true spiritual wisdom, spiritual understanding, and knowing God’s secret thoughts. When John said, “This calls for wisdom” or “you need a wise mind to understand this,” he was referring to *spiritual wisdom*. He was referring to *spiritual understanding*. He was talking about the kind of wisdom and understanding we receive from the Spirit when we mature and become spiritual people.

The book of Revelation isn’t supposed to be so confusing! John was saying you’re supposed to understand it. If you have ears to hear, you will reach the point where you understand it. But you must have wisdom to understand it.

The book of Revelation is supposed to make sense. But we’re supposed to have spiritual wisdom. Essentially, John was saying, “You won’t understand this unless you are a mature, spiritual person – someone who thinks and acts like Jesus.” Unfortunately, this is not the approach most Christians take. Instead of recognizing this, most Christians try to solve the riddles using their own human intellect. They come up with different math equations, they try to convert letters to numbers, they look at different symbology, they speculate about some future micro-chip... the list goes on and on and on.

Most Christians seem to mistake *wisdom* or *understanding* with *intellect*. This is not the kind of wisdom John was telling us to have.

Part of the problem in the Church today is that Christianity has been hijacked by intellectual scholars who tell us that we can only grow in understanding by following their intellectual scholarly methods. Christians have begun to believe that if they want to understand the Bible, they have to go to seminary, they have to take Bible classes, they have to read Christian books, and they have to be taught by people who know the ancient languages in which the Bible was written. Instead of learning the will of God (that is, what God wants) like Paul said we should be doing, Christians are learning human traditions, human doctrines, and human theology.

The intellectual educators in the world have hijacked Christianity to amass for themselves a large following of people.

For example, John Calvin was an intellectual, educated, secular scholar who then “became a Christian” and taught people that they need to read the Bible using the same methods that he used to

²⁹ Ref. Genesis 2:24

³⁰ Ref. Colossians 2:20

³¹ Ref. John 17:20-23

study secular, non-spiritual literature. He made uneducated people dependent on him by telling them that he had the key to knowledge. He convinced people that his education made him capable of understanding things they couldn't understand. He deceived the masses. And people still assume he was right and follow his methods to this day.

He is merely one example.

The result of this is that the Church is now filled with Christians who think that to understand the Bible, grow in wisdom, grow in understanding, and know God better, they have to learn and follow the intellectual methods of well-educated, scholarly men. This is the exact opposite of what Jesus said.

“In that same hour Jesus was full of joy in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the people who are wise and learned. But you have revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, because this is what you really wanted.’”³²

Do you see what Jesus said? Do you realize that what Jesus just said is a direct contradiction of some of the theology and doctrine that those well-educated men teach? Jesus didn't just say, “I praise you, Father, because you have revealed the truth to little children.” Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, because *you have hidden the truth from the people who are wise and learned.*” Jesus said that God the Father is actively hiding the truth from people who try to find it using worldly, scholarly, intellectual methods.

God himself is hiding the truth from them.

Let that sink in for a second.

Most Christians would have a problem with anyone saying that God would hide the truth from someone. They think that God would never do that! But Jesus himself said that God is the one hiding it!

This is the same thing Jesus said about why he spoke in parables. The Church tells us that Jesus spoke in parables as a method of helping people understand. But Jesus said the opposite:

“Jesus said, ...I tell everything by using parables so that: ‘They will look and look but they will not learn. They will listen and listen, but they will not understand. Otherwise, they might return to me and be forgiven.’”³³

Jesus spoke in parables specifically so that people *wouldn't* understand!

Where does that verse fit in with the theology the Church teaches?

Jesus wants people who are all in. He wants people who are ready to drop everything and follow him completely – like his disciples did.³⁴ He wants loyalty. He wants faithfulness. He wants people who will obey his radical commands out of a deep love for him. He wants people who are reliable. That's why he spoke in parables and then said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” He didn't want everyone to understand! He only wanted those who would truly listen – those who would obey.

Jesus isn't looking for people who are just trying to avoid Hell. Jesus isn't looking for people who are just trying to get all their facts straight. Jesus isn't looking to reward the intellectuals for being smarter than everyone else. Those with a high IQ and a PhD are not going to be the only ones who are capable of calculating the mark of the beast, understanding all our spiritual blessings, comprehending the love of Christ, knowing our inheritance as saints, and unraveling the secrets of God.

Their wisdom is not what God values. When Paul wrote about the wisdom we receive through the Spirit, he also said, “It is written in the Scriptures: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; And I

³² Luke 10:21

³³ Mark 4:11-12

³⁴ Ref. Matthew 4:20, 4:22, 9:9; Mark 1:18, 1:20, 2:14

will bring to nothing the intelligence of the intelligent.’ Where is the wise person? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this world? God has made the wisdom of the world foolish. God wisely determined that the world would not know God through its own wisdom... Brothers and sisters, look at what you were when God called you. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many of you had great influence. Not many of you were of high social status. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and he chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. God did this so that no one can brag in his presence. Because of God you are united with Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God.”³⁵

According to Jesus, and according to Paul, God did not create a spiritual reality in which the truth can be found through intelligence, education, scholarship, seminaries, or anything else that the world considers important. God hides the truth from those who try to find the truth through those means. Jesus didn’t come to call the wise and intelligent, he came to destroy the wisdom of the wise and the intelligence of the intelligent. The wisdom of this world is foolishness.

Why have we allowed the intellectual educated men to hijack Christianity?

Jesus changed the entire world with a group of fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots. When Peter and John stood on trial, the leaders were amazed because they realized that Peter and John were just common, uneducated men.³⁶ True spiritual wisdom is not something we receive through education, intelligence, or hermeneutics. If that is how you’re searching for understanding, Jesus and Paul both said that God himself will hide the truth from you.

If you’re doing something that is making God hide the truth from you, you can be sure that you will never find the truth unless you change!

No one will ever understand the mark of the beast, the Whore of Babylon, what the beast is, or how to obey the book of Revelation by trying to solve it like some human puzzle. No one will ever understand our spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, the hope we’re called to, our inheritance, God’s power, or God’s will by taking classes, reading books, listening to sermons, going to seminary, or studying theology.

True spiritual wisdom only comes through knowing the secret thoughts of God. True understanding only comes through the Spirit. Unless God shows you, you will never figure it out – even if you think you did.

It’s possible to understand our spiritual blessings. It’s possible to fully comprehend the hope we’re called to. It’s possible to know what our inheritance is. It’s possible to understand the book of Revelation and know what the mark of the beast is and who the prostitute is. All this understanding, and all this wisdom is available to us through the Spirit of God. But we need to know how to learn from the Spirit. We need to know how to become people who receive this kind of wisdom and understanding from God’s Spirit.

Not everyone who thinks they’re a Christian is going to receive it. It’s only for those who are spiritual. And right after Paul told the Corinthians about receiving spiritual wisdom through the Spirit, he told them that they were not spiritual.³⁷ So, even though the Corinthians were Christians, they were not receiving this spiritual wisdom. The entire book of 1 Corinthians was telling them how they should change so they could start receiving that kind of wisdom.

If we want to receive spiritual wisdom, we need to know what the Bible says about how to

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:19-30

³⁶ Ref. Acts 4:13

³⁷ Ref. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

begin receiving spiritual wisdom. We'll look at what the Bible says about that in the next video.

For now, go back to Paul's prayers that we read at the beginning of the video.³⁸ Look at what Paul prayed for the Ephesians, the Colossians, and the other prayers recorded throughout the New Testament. He prayed that they would grow in the knowledge of God. He prayed that they would know God's will. He prayed that they would have all spiritual wisdom and all spiritual understanding. He prayed that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened. He prayed that they would know all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

He prayed that they would mature.

Make these your prayers.

Look at what Paul prayed in these passages (and others) and begin to pray the same thing. Pray for yourself, but not just for yourself – that's not love. Pray for others. Pray for other brothers and sisters. Pray for anyone you know. Pray that the Body of Christ would grow into this kind of maturity. Make this your daily prayer. Ask and keep asking.³⁹

Let this become the prayer that the entire Body of Christ begins to ask God. And may his Body grow!

Father, I ask for anyone watching this video, for anyone who truly wants to follow you, for anyone who is your child, I ask that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened, that you would give them spiritual wisdom and understanding. I ask that your Body would grow... that your Body would grow out of the slumber it's been in for so many years, and that it would step into maturity. That she would mature into the image of Christ and begin to look like him, and act like him, and think like him. Father, let your children begin to see and understand the truth. Give spiritual wisdom and understanding to your children. Teach them the way they should walk so they will know this spiritual wisdom. Show them the way to live. Show them what they must do to live in it, and teach them things that no natural person would accept. Let your Body grow and mature into the image of Christ so that it's no longer tossed around by all these false teachers, all these educated men, so that it can stand firm, not tossed about by every new wave of teaching. Let your Body begin to look like Jesus. Let your Body begin to live like Jesus and act like Jesus so that it is you living in us. Your blood in our veins; your life in us. Us joined to you as the Bride of Christ, becoming one flesh with you – one with you the way that you are one with the Father. Part of your family. Let this happen. Let us see it happen in our generation. Let your Kingdom come on earth, and let what you want be done on earth just like it is in heaven. Let us see your Kingdom, Father. Send your Spirit. Teach us through your Spirit. And grow your Body into what you intended, and not some religion. In Jesus' name I ask.

³⁸ Ref. Ephesians 1:16-19, 3:16-19; Colossians 1:9-14, 4:12

³⁹ Ref. Luke 11:9-13