

Intro: One of the most often heard complaints against faith in Christ is that religion has been used to oppress and divide and even to kill in the name of God. From the humorous *Saturday Night Live's* "Church Lady" to the horrific reality of the great Inquisition, Christianity is labeled as exclusive, judgmental, and holier-than-thou. While mourning the sad truth that people have done horrific things in the name of Christ, what we find in the truth of Christianity is the only faith that actually leads us to love those not like us. In every other religion of the world, even the irreligious faiths of naturalism and individualism, we find a system that belittles and diminishes the actual value of people who do not "follow the rules." In Christianity, however, because salvation is not based upon one's innate ability or wisdom to "follow the rules" perfectly, but rather upon a God who graciously stooped down to follow the rules perfectly for us and to die for our injustices, we have a faith that does not allow room for arrogance or diminishing the value of all people, no matter their past, current, or future state. It is Christ alone that brings us into God's presence, through His sacrifice and resurrection alone, so Christianity (biblical and true) has the *only* means of taking vastly different peoples and by the power of the Holy Spirit's regeneration of hearts, making them into the One New Humanity. For it is only in Christ that injustices are paid up and love is expended down.

In this passage, we see how God mysteriously reveals His wisdom to the angelic realm by taking peoples from among all the nations and making them one. In this radically inclusive faith, God uses the Church as the "pilot scheme for the complete redemption of the entire Universe." As the angels see God bringing all things together under Christ in the Church, they see His wise plan in restoring all that is broken throughout all of Creation. So let us look closely at this mysterious truth together, where God reveals His multi-faceted wisdom to the angels through the Church.

## 1. The Church, Created in Christ, Reveals God's Beautiful Multi-Faceted Wisdom to Angels.

- a. God's wisdom is multi-faceted.
  - i. "manifold", comes from the compound word, "many rich various colors" and is used of Joseph's coat, flowers, embroidery
    1. Think of it as a faceted stone through which the Light shines, each facet being a different people group
      - a. The Light is not inherent or sourced in the stone, neither is our glory inherent or sourced from within us, but rather from the objective source of Jesus
      - b. As the Light shines through the multi-faceted stone, it splits into various colors and intensities, revealing it's true but previously unseen glory
    2. Every culture which the gospel is transforming has different strengths of which to reveal Christ and different weaknesses of which to combat with Truth
      - a. Tribal emphasis on community, but weakness on life's value
      - b. American emphasis on freedom, but weakness on materialism and individualism
      - c. Every culture has truths which the Gospel embraces, and every culture has error which the Gospel rejects and transforms
  - ii. Intensifies the idea of the multiplicity and enormity of God's wisdom
    1. Diverse and Complex
    2. Rich and Exquisite
  - iii. God is not simple, even in one of His mysteries (Psalm 104), let alone the many different mysteries of His eternal will
    1. This diversity of cultures within the unity of faith in Jesus Christ is powerful to effect change in any culture.
      - a. Forgiveness speaks volumes, and humility breaks down resistance.
      - b. Truth combats error while love conquers all things.
    2. Though our culture rails against the inadequacies, maybe even evils, of Christianity, let us never forget the true power of the gospel in its purity:

“The Gospel of Christ has transformed communities, rebuilt societies, toppled tyrannies, liberated captives, inspired reformers, established justice, restored dignity, fathered integrity, promoted purity, renewed marriages, united families, reconciled enemies, stimulated enquiry, awakened creativity; brought liberation to the afflicted, peace to the anxious, hope to the despairing, comfort to the dying, love to the lonely, forgiveness to the guilty, and salvation to the lost”  
~Bruce Milne

- b. God's wisdom is revealed through the church.
  - i. The grace of God in Christ shown to the church, bringing people from every culture to Himself *the same way*, reveals His wisdom
    - 1. The church is the agent of revelation in showing this particular mystery (the Jew and the Gentile are one in Christ)
  - ii. God could have proclaimed directly to angelic beings the extent and purpose of His wisdom, but He graciously chooses to use the church
    - 1. 1 Corinthians 2:6-10
    - 2. The existence of the Church, and the reconciliation of former enemies through humble dependence, reveals how God is bringing all things together under Christ (1:10).
      - a. Jesus is the “stone cut out without human hands” that topples the kingdoms of the world (see Daniel 2)
      - b. The Church is His kingdom that is growing to fill the entire earth
  - iii. God's love is revealed in splendor as a church full of sinners, saved by His grace and power, made saints, and unified in the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ
    - 1. The grace of God shown to the church, who is hidden in Christ and placed in His presence based upon Jesus' faithfulness, is the wisdom of God
- c. The church reveals His wisdom to the angels.
  - i. The rulers and authorities are in the heavens.
  - ii. Phrase commonly used to refer to angelic beings, either good or bad
  - iii. No reference to the morality of these beings (demons or angels), but merely their role (rulers and authorities) and their sphere of existence (in the heavenly places)
  - iv. Obviously not human rulers and authorities
  - v. 1 Pet 1:12, angels long to look into the mystery of God, for they cannot understand them without the church
    - 1. Angels also need the mysteries of God's wisdom revealed to them.
    - 2. All beings are completely dependent upon God for the true revelation of the real nature of things
  - vi. Why to angelic beings?
    - 1. This story is primarily about God. His eternal reputation among ALL that exists. His work in our redemption and His praise from creation.
    - 2. Possible hope for angels of God's ultimate reconciliation of all of creation, bring all things together under Jesus. It's begun in the Church's reconciliation of human enemies by God's gracious and powerful transformation of hearts to His glory.

## 2. The Church Was Designed by God from Eternity to be Built on Jesus our Lord.

- a. God's wise purpose is eternal.
  - i. This is not Plan B.

- ii. God's desire was always to use the church as the teaching tool for angels, for all that exists, really.
    - iii. Before the world was made, God had planned and desired to reveal Himself through His Son and those whom He redeemed from all the nations
      - 1. 1 Pet 1:17-21
      - 2. Acts 2:23ff
      - 3. Revelation 13:8
  - b. Jesus Christ carried out God's purpose
    - i. Jesus obeyed, even to death
    - ii. Jesus' death reconciled both groups into one new community
      - 1. by grace alone through faith alone
      - 2. Nothing within us gains us an advantage before God
      - 3. Only in Jesus Christ are we accepted
  - c. God achieved His plan in Jesus the Christ (aorist tense *ποίηω*).
    - i. He has "achieved" or "carried out" the purpose of God to build a community based upon grace alone, made up of all peoples, nations, languages, etc.
    - ii. Jesus, the Christ, achieved God's purpose of building the community of God's redeemed when He died on the cross and rose from the grave to live forever and keep His church.
      - 1. Christ, Messiah, the Savior
    - iii. The church has been created and founded on Jesus Christ, there is no "new" church
  - d. Jesus Christ is our Lord.
    - i. We always remember that we are not a club, we are a community of son-servant-citizens who have a Father-Master-King who rules us perfectly.
    - ii. Jesus has won our personal Lordship when He fulfilled this wondrous plan of God by purchased us for God with His own life.
    - iii. This title puts the achievement of God's plan into history: Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and our Lord.

### 3. The Faithfulness of Jesus Gives us Confident Access into the Presence of God.

- a. In Christ we have bold access to God.
  - i. Eph 2:18, we have access through Him in the Spirit
  - ii. Rom 8:1, in Christ there is no condemnation
    - 1. We do not fear the condemnation of God if we are trusting in Christ to redeem us
    - 2. This faith is shown by walking in the Spirit: that is, repenting always and trusting Jesus Christ to make us holy
  - iii. Hebrews 4:16, we can draw near to God with confidence because Jesus Christ understands and intercedes for us.
  - iv. Hebrews 9:24, Jesus stands in the presence of God *for us*
- b. We enter into God's presence hidden in the obedience and purifying presence of Jesus Christ
  - i. Christ paid for our injustice, so we do not fear condemnation
  - ii. Jesus lived perfectly trusting His Father, so we trust and obey the Father, too
- c. Jesus' faithfulness makes our acceptance before God possible and eternal.
  - i. NOT "our faith in Him"
  - ii. The literal reading is: "through the faith (or faithfulness) of him"
    - 1. Faithfulness of God using the same word

- a. Romans 3:3
2. Faithfulness of others
  - a. Titus 2:10
  - b. Matt 23:23
- iii. The question in translating this is: Is our confidence and boldness in coming into the presence of God based upon our faith or Christ's faithfulness?
  1. Romans 3:3
  2. This entire passage is about the grace of God shown to us in Jesus Christ as the foundation for our position before God.
- iv. It is Jesus' faithfulness to His Father and to the eternal plan that made our salvation not only possible, but definite as the redeemed and chosen ones of God. This is what it means to be "in Him." (Colossians 3:3-4; Romans 3:27; 1 Cor 1:29-31)
  1. We have no room to boast, for it is by grace.
  2. We have no place for fear, for we are greatly loved
  3. This truth of the wisdom of God incites a great love for Jesus Christ when we believe it. In fact, the deeper we appreciate and seize onto this truth, the deeper our love for Christ, the more time we spend with Him, the better we know Him, the more we appreciate Him, the more we love Him, etc.

#### Conclusion:

From before the foundations of the world God planned to send Jesus to die in our place. His wisdom is to bring all things together under the Christ and to create for Himself One New Humanity out of many different cultures. Our calling, as the One New Humanity, is not for people to be like us, but rather for peoples from all cultures to repent of trusting their own functional gods (like materialism, wealth, career success, ancestors, nature, individualism, etc.) and to turn to trusting in Jesus Christ alone. We call people to repent of these gods and to believe in Jesus Christ as we repent of our functional gods and turn to trust Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our injustice and His resurrection for our life. It is His faithfulness that holds us secure before God. It is His work that created this New Humanity. And so it is to His glory and reputation and praise that we stand here today in the presence of God. Behold Your God!

#### COMMUNION