

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

The previous lesson opened the greater section that runs from 2:6 through 3:4 and took up its first verse. Three things were established.

First, wisdom is affirmed. After a chapter and a half of setting the wisdom of the world aside, the first word of 2:6 in the Greek order is wisdom: “wisdom, however, we speak.” The direct object is thrown to the head of the sentence for emphasis, and the word is then stated three times across verses 6 and 7 in three beats: wisdom affirmed (“yet we do speak wisdom”), wisdom fenced off from the age (“not of this age nor of the rulers of this age”), and wisdom assigned to God (“but we speak God’s wisdom”). Only the first beat was reached in class. The second and third are taken up below.

Second, the wisdom of God was gathered from the whole of Scripture under three statements: God possesses wisdom, God gives wisdom, and Christ became wisdom to those who are in Him.

Third, the first of the five questions was answered. Wisdom is spoken “among those who are mature,” and τέλειος *teleios*, tested across 1 Corinthians 14:20, Philippians 3:4-15, Hebrews 5:11-6:3, and Ephesians 4:11-14, names a manner of thinking, not a rank and not an inner circle. The mature of 2:6 are the grown as against the infant, the infants who will be named in 3:1. Paul had one content at Corinth, Christ crucified (2:2), and he spoke it to all. The wisdom is spoken “among the mature” because the mature are the ones thinking spiritually and maturely about that content and so receiving it as wisdom. What the Corinthians lacked was not the Spirit and not the message; it was the manner of thinking with which the message was received.

EXPOSITION

Verse 6b: “Not of This Age nor of the Rulers of This Age”

The second beat fences the wisdom off from the present order twice over: “not of this age (αἰών *aiōn*) nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.” Both the age and its rulers stand under the verb καταργέω *katargeō*, to render inoperative, to bring to nothing, to strip of standing and effect. The same doom rests on the age and on those who rule it.

“This age” reaches back to “the debater of this age” in 1:20, the recognized experts God has made foolish. The wisdom of 2:6 is set against the same doomed human establishment already dismantled across chapter 1 (1:20, 28). The continuity is deliberate: the σοφία *sophia* rejected here is the σοφία *sophia* rejected there, and what separates the two wisdoms is not the word but the source. The “rulers of this age” (ἄρχοντες *archontes*) are named again in verse 8, and it is there that the text settles who they are.

The fence lands on the point just made about maturity. To think by this age is the opposite of thinking maturely, because this age and its whole framework of evaluation are being brought to nothing. A believer who measures the message by the standards of the world is measuring by a ruler that is already being taken away.

Verse 7: “We Speak God’s Wisdom in a Mystery”

The third beat opens with the strong negative conjunction ἀλλά *alla*, “but,” and, again, the order carries emphasis. The Greek reads θεοῦ σοφίαν *theou sophian*, the possessive “God’s” placed before “wisdom.” Having twice said what the wisdom is not, the text now says whose it is.

The phrase “in a mystery” (ἐν μυστηρίῳ *en mustērīō*) needs care, because it can be attached in two places. It could be read as a descriptor of the wisdom, so that Paul speaks God’s mysterious wisdom. But the phrase is adverbial; it sits beside the verb and describes the manner of the speaking. Paul speaks God’s wisdom, and he speaks it in a mystery, in the form of a mystery. The wisdom of God is not in itself mysterious, obscure, or veiled in its content. It is spoken as a mystery because of what a mystery is.

The sense of μυστήριον *mustērion* was fixed at 2:1. In Pauline epistles, it does not mean the unintelligible or the permanently secret. It means what human reasoning cannot reach on its own, made known only as God reveals it through the prophets and apostles. The content of the mystery was named at 2:2—Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. So, the answer to the second question begins here. The mystery of 2:7 is not a different mystery from 2:1; it is the same one, God’s wisdom whose content is the crucified Christ, now set against the wisdom of the age that could not find it.

“The Hidden Wisdom”

The wisdom is then called “the hidden wisdom,” τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην *tēn apokekrummenēn*, a perfect passive participle: a wisdom standing in a condition of having been hidden. The participle does not name who did the hiding, and the text answers a different question first: hidden from whom. Verse 8 supplies it, “the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood.” The hiddenness is stated relative to the rulers and to the age whose framework they think by.

Precision is needed here, because this verse is easily overread. God did not withhold His plan of redemption from the world until Christ came. The redemptive program through the Messiah was revealed in the Old Testament, and the sacrifice itself was clear. “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities... But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief” (Isaiah 53:5, 10). The prophets “predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (1 Peter 1:11). The risen Lord rebuked His own disciples with exactly this: “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25-26). A suffering Savior was not a secret. What was hidden was hidden by the reader.

In Isaiah 29, the very chapter quoted at 1:19, the people “draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote” (29:13), and therefore the wisdom of their wise men perishes (29:14). Israel blinded herself to the plan, purpose, and way of God, and the blindness is described

1 Corinthians Lesson 13

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

as self-inflicted: “they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart” (Matthew 13:15, from Isaiah 6:10). “A veil lies over their heart” whenever Moses is read (2 Corinthians 3:15). And the same is true beyond Israel, stated in the identity language of 1:18: “if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The Gentile ignored the revelation given; the Jew was willingly blind and deaf to it. Neither could see a crucified Messiah as wisdom, because each measured Him by a framework that had already ruled Him out (1:22-23).

So “hidden” describes the standing condition of God’s wisdom relative to a world thinking by its own system, Jew and Greek alike. The content was declared beforehand; its accomplishment in history, and its full announcement now (“the things which now have been announced to you,” 1 Peter 1:12), waited for the cross and the apostolic word; and its reception has always required a mind that does not judge God’s plan by the age. This is why God’s wisdom is spoken “in a mystery”: not because God whispers, but because what He publishes openly cannot be received by the framework the world brings to it. Verse 8 will show that framework at work in the men who crucified the Lord.

“Which God Predestined Before the Ages to Our Glory”

The relative clause tells us what God did with this wisdom and when. The verb is προορίζω *proorizō*, to mark out beforehand, to determine in advance, and its object is the relative pronoun ἣν *hēn*, “which,” whose antecedent is the wisdom. What is predestined in this verse is the wisdom, the plan; it is not persons. The verse is not a statement about the election of individuals, it is a statement that God’s saving wisdom, whose content is Christ crucified, was fixed by God “before the ages” (πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων *pro tōn aiōnōn*), before the age that is passing away and before any age at all. The wisdom of this age is a latecomer; the wisdom of God is prior to time.

The rest of Scripture confers. God “made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him... having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:9, 11). Grace “was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2 Timothy 1:9). Eternal life was “promised long ages ago” by the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Christ “was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Peter 1:20). And the cross itself, the content of the mystery, was carried out “by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23, 4:28). None of this was improvised. The crucified Christ whom the rulers did not recognize was the substance of a wisdom settled before the ages began.

The clause closes on its purpose: “to our glory” (εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν *eis doxan hēmōn*). The wisdom planned before the ages terminates in the glory of the people it saves, “these whom He justified,

He also glorified” (Romans 8:30). Read against 1:26-31 the phrase has an edge. The people this wisdom was planned to glorify are the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, the things that are not. God fixed before the ages a wisdom that would carry nobodies to glory, and He fixed it so that no flesh could boast of getting there.

With this phrase a second thread enters the paragraph beside wisdom, and it runs through the two verses that follow. The wisdom is fixed “to our glory” (verse 7); the rulers crucified “the Lord of glory” (verse 8); and what God has prepared for those who love Him is what no eye, ear, or heart has reached (verse 9). Glory is the end of the wisdom, and it is the thing the age cannot see.

Verse 8: “Which None of the Rulers of This Age Has Understood”

The verse opens with another relative pronoun, ἣν hēn, and its antecedent is the same as in verse 7—the wisdom. What the rulers failed to know is not some general body of truth but the very wisdom just called hidden and predestined. The clause is the text’s own answer to the question the participle “hidden” left open: hidden from whom.

The verb is γινώσκω ginōskō, rendered “understood” in the NASB. The perfect tense marks a settled state: the rulers stand in a condition of not having known. And the choice of verb is not incidental. γινώσκω ginōskō is the word of experiential knowing, knowing by acquaintance, and it is the first link in a chain that runs to the end of the chapter. In verse 11, “the thoughts of God no one knows (γινώσκω ginōskō) except the Spirit of God.” In verse 14, the natural man “cannot understand” (γινώσκω ginōskō) the things of the Spirit. In verse 16, “who has known (γινώσκω ginōskō) the mind of the Lord.” The knowing that the rulers lacked is the knowing the whole passage is about, and the reason they lacked it will be the reason the natural man lacks it in verse 14.

“For if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” The conditional is second class, contrary to fact: εἰ ei with the aorist indicative in the protasis, ἄν an with the aorist indicative in the apodosis. The grammar itself asserts the ignorance as fact. They did not know, and the result is what they did. The crucifixion stands as the evidence of the not-knowing, and the not-knowing is the reason the wisdom is called hidden.

The identity of the rulers was settled in the overview and is confirmed here from the clause itself. These rulers “crucified the Lord of glory.” The crucifixion was carried out by human hands, a Roman sentence executed at the instigation of the council; whatever powers stood behind the act, the actors named in the clause are men. The logic points the same way: a real human misjudgment of who Jesus was fits “if they had understood it, they would not have crucified.” It sits poorly on the adversary, who is shown in the Gospels not ignorant of Jesus but actively driving His death (Luke 22:3). And the rulers of this age pair naturally with the wise man, the scribe, and the debater of this age in 1:20, the human establishment, intellectual and governing, that the cross exposed. The

ἄρχοντες archontes stay human, with the spiritual powers of a passing order acknowledged behind them as onlookers to a wisdom they had not grasped (Ephesians 3:10).

“The Lord of Glory”

The title is τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης ton kurion tēs doxēs, and it appears in Paul only here. James uses it of Jesus, “our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” (James 2:1), and it stands in the line of “the King of glory” of Psalm 24:7-10 and “the God of glory” of Acts 7:2. The Lord to whom glory belongs, the Lord characterized by glory. Two things ride on the title.

The first is Christology. The man the rulers executed as a criminal is the Lord to whom glory belongs. The title is not given to the risen Christ after the fact; it is given to the crucified One as the description of who He was when they crucified Him. The verb is σταυρόω stauroō, the same verb whose perfect participle in 1:23 and 2:2 named Christ the crucified as His permanent identity. The rulers crucified the Lord of glory, and the Lord of glory remains the crucified One.

The second is the thread just named. Verse 7 fixed the wisdom “to our glory,” and verse 8 says the rulers crucified “the Lord of glory.” The same crucifixion that carries nobodies to glory was carried out by men blind to the Lord of glory. That is the irony of 1:25 restated as history: what the world filed under weakness and foolishness, a Savior nailed up in public defeat, was the act by which the wisdom of God reached its end. The rulers were instruments of the very glory they could not see.

The Ignorance of the Rulers

The contrary-to-fact conditional can be misheard as an excuse: they did not know, and so they could not help it. The text does not say that, and the Lesson 12 ruling on hiddenness governs here. The wisdom was on the page, read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath, and the rulers did not know it. The narrative of Acts confirms both halves of that. “For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him” (Acts 13:27). They did not recognize Him, and they did not recognize the Scriptures they heard weekly, and their not-recognizing is set beside their condemning.

Acts 3:17-18 says the same from the other side. “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance (ἄγνοια agnoia), just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.” The ignorance is named, and in the same breath the thing they were ignorant of is named as something God had announced beforehand through all the prophets. Ignorance was not an excuse; the next verse calls on them to reconsider (μετανοέω metanoēō, to think again, to have an afterthought) and to return. A man is told to think again about what was in front of him all along. That is precisely what the framework of the age does not do, and it is precisely what verse 8 says

the rulers did not do. They measured the Lord of glory by the standard of the age, and by that standard a Jesus was a scandal (1:23), so they crucified Him.

The rulers' ignorance and the wisdom's hiddenness are therefore one fact seen from two sides. The wisdom is hidden because the reader is blind; the rulers did not know because they would not think again. And their blindness did not derail the plan. The wisdom predestined before the ages was accomplished by men who did not know it.

Verse 9: "But Just As It Is Written"

The verse opens with ἀλλὰ *alla*, "but," answering the rulers' not-knowing of verse 8, and then something unusual happens to the grammar. Two relative clauses follow, "things which eye has not seen... things which God has prepared," and no main verb ever arrives. Verse 9 is left hanging. Its predicate does not come until verse 10, "to us God revealed them through the Spirit." The sentence that begins with what the rulers did not know is completed by what God has revealed, and the completion is verse 10.

The Citation

"Just as it is written" (καθὼς γέγραπται *kathōs gegraptai*) introduces the words, and yet no verse of the Old Testament reads exactly this way. The formula does not always mark a word-for-word quotation; it can gather the sense of a passage, or of more than one, into a single statement of what Scripture says. That is what happens here. The nearest text is Isaiah 64:4: "For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him." The ear that has not heard and the eye that has not seen are both there. The third member, "have not entered the heart of man," is not in Isaiah 64 but matches the language of Isaiah 65:17 in the Greek Old Testament, where the former things "will not come up upon the heart." The citation is a free gathering of Isaiah 64:4 with the idiom of 65:17, the sense of both set down as one saying.

Eye, Ear, and Heart

The three organs are not three poetic synonyms. Eye and ear are the routes of sense perception, what a man sees and hears for himself. "Entered the heart" renders ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνέβη *epi kardian anebē*, literally "came up upon the heart," a Hebrew idiom for a thought occurring to the mind (Jeremiah 3:16; Isaiah 65:17). The heart in Scripture is the seat of thinking and conceiving, not of feeling. So, the third member names the route of conception, what a man reasons or imagines his way to. Sense perception and conception together: every human route to knowing is named, and each one is closed. Observation did not reach it; hearing did not reach it; it never so much as occurred to anyone.

This is the σύνεσις sunesis of 1:19 stated again from the side of the faculties. There God set aside the framework by which the world assembles its understanding; here the instruments that feed that framework, eye, ear, and heart, are declared to have had no access. And it sets up the natural man of verse 14, the ψυχικός psuchikos, whose faculties are exactly these. The natural man has eyes, ears, and a heart, and the text says that those are precisely the instruments that never reached what God prepared.

“All That God Has Prepared for Those Who Love Him”

The second relative clause shifts from what man has not done to what God has done. The verb is ἐτοιμάζω hetoimazō, to prepare, to make ready, in the aorist: a completed act. It stands beside προορίζω proorizō of verse 7. God predestined the wisdom before the ages; God prepared what that wisdom produces for a people. Both verbs have God as subject, and both were done before anyone loved Him or knew Him.

What was prepared is named only as “things,” and the thread already traced supplies the referent. The wisdom was fixed “to our glory” (verse 7); the rulers crucified “the Lord of glory” (verse 8); and what God prepared is what no eye, ear, or heart has reached (verse 9). The things prepared are the glory to which the wisdom leads, the end of the plan settled before the ages. The wisdom of this age could not conceive it and cannot comprehend it. It never came up upon the heart of man that the road to glory ran through a crucified Lord of glory.

The people for whom it was prepared are “those who love Him,” τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν tois agapōsin auton, an articular participle. This is the fourth name in the identity thread that has run since 1:18: the ones being saved (1:18), the ones believing (1:21), the called (1:24), and now the ones loving Him (2:9). As with the first three, the participle names an identity, not an activity. God, naming believers as those who love Him, states what He has established them to be. An articular participle assigned from God’s perspective is a description of who a person is, not a report on what he happens to be doing. Romans 8:28 pairs the same two names in one verse, “those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose,” and the purpose (πρόθεσις prothesis) is the same plan that verse 7 calls predestined. This letter will say it again at 8:3: “but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him,” with the same γινώσκω ginōskō of verse 8. The rulers did not know the wisdom; the ones who love God are known by God.

A Misreading to Correct

Verse 9 is among the most quoted verses in the letter, and it is almost always quoted to say that no one can imagine what heaven is like. In context the verse says nearly the reverse. It does not declare the things prepared to be unknowable. It declares them unreachable by eye, ear, and heart, and then the sentence finishes in verse 10 by declaring them revealed: “for to us God

1 Corinthians Lesson 13

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

revealed them through the Spirit.” The things are “the things freely given to us by God” (2:12), and they have been given. Popular use keeps the first half of the sentence and drops the second.

The corrected reading is this. The world cannot comprehend the glory God has prepared; it never entered the world’s mind, and by the framework of the age it never could. To us it has been revealed, not because we saw it or reasoned to it, but because God made it known through the Spirit and set it down in His word. We understand it because it was revealed, and we hold it by believing God at His word. The verse is not a statement of what cannot be known but of how the only knowing there comes about.

Verse 10: The Capstone

“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit.” The full treatment of this verse, and of the Spirit who searches even the depths of God, belongs to the next lesson. Three observations are made now, because they finish the sentence begun in verse 9 and close the paragraph.

- The pronoun stands first. ἡμῖν hēmin, “to us,” is thrown to the head of the clause, and it answers verse 8 directly: none of the rulers knew; to us God revealed.
- The verb is to unveil, to reveal, in the aorist: a completed act. Three verbs now line up across the paragraph with God as subject and the wisdom as object. God predestined it (verse 7), God prepared it (verse 9), God revealed it (verse 10). Human knowing enters the chain nowhere.
- The agent is God and the means is the Spirit. The “us” in the first instance are the apostles receiving revelation, as verses 12 and 13 will state (“which things we also speak... in those taught by the Spirit”), and it reaches every believer through the word they spoke.

God’s wisdom is known only because God revealed it. Verse 8 removes the rulers, verse 9 removes every human faculty, and verse 10 names the one route that remains.

SUMMARY

The three beats of verses 6 and 7 are now complete. Wisdom is affirmed, fenced off from a passing age and its rulers, and assigned to God. It is spoken in a mystery, not because its content is obscure but because a world measuring by its own framework cannot receive what God has revealed openly. Its content, Christ crucified, was declared by the prophets and fixed by God before the ages, and its end is the glory of those who were nothing. That answers the second question: the mystery of 2:7 is the mystery of 2:1, God’s wisdom whose content is the crucified Christ, hidden to the framework of the age and revealed to the called.

Do we realize the opportunity that is set before us? Will we take advantage of knowing the deep things of God?