

# Christ's Immeasurable Treasures

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 17 October 2010

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn then to Colossians chapter 2. And our text this evening is found in verse 3, talking about Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom.

And knowledge. Paul is talking here earlier on that their hearts may be encouraged being knit together in love and attaining to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God.

He's been talking about this mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ. And then he says, with reference to Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And our subject this evening from verse 3 is Christ's immeasurable treasures. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Now it's true about people in all the ages and all over the world that man has this quest to seek answers to the mysteries of life.

[ 1 : 37 ] And man's desire to resolve the great mysteries of life is intense and it is progressive. Man poses questions and he seeks to obtain answers about the universe, about the microcosm, about planet earth, about man's development on planet earth.

Man poses questions and he seeks to obtain answers to the mysteries of the universe. And he does that, as we know, by the popularized scientific method. He looks at the issues and asks questions and seeks to gain evidence to demonstrate his conclusions.

And this is done at different levels. It's done at what we call a scientific level, but it's done at a philosophical level too. And at a theological level.

And whichever way we look at it, man endeavors to climb the heights and to plumb the depths of human thought.

Wise men investigate the writings of the ancients. They even investigate what we call sacred scriptures.

[ 3 : 00 ] And we, of course, commend them especially to the Bible as the word of God. As they seek to obtain wisdom. The Bible tells us in the book of Proverbs, it's a true saying, the fear of the Lord is the beginning, the real beginning of wisdom.

Within the first century Christian church, there were those who fancied that they were capable of discovering the mysteries of life, the hidden things, of true knowledge, and of the divine.

And the letter of Paul to the Colossians in Asia Minor, now part of Turkey, this letter addresses a number of issues. And one of the issues is this whole notion that had crept into the church, that there were those experts who could tell the people what true wisdom was about.

And they could unlock the mysteries. So that people could have true knowledge and true wisdom. And they could know God through this process.

They were saying, in effect, that the secret things could be discovered. And the way they were to be discovered was to listen to them as the experts on the subject.

[ 4 : 37 ] Particularly there were those of the Jewish fold. Who said they had the key. They were closely aligned to the church. They were in the church in a kind of way.

And they were saying that the real key to unlocking the mysteries of the spiritual world lay with the angels.

And you find later on in the passage that the apostle refers to this angel worship.

And what they were basically saying was that you connect with the angels through worship. And you get into, sort of, you get onto their train of thought.

You connect with them and you discover the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge and of the divine. And you can see why, therefore, the apostles themselves talked about wisdom and knowledge with reference to Christ.

[ 5 : 47 ] They wanted to steer people back to the true wisdom and back to the true knowledge. And they wanted to show people that what they were groping after, what they imagined they could find through mere human experts, was not to be found through human self-styled experts, but through God himself.

God coming to us. And Paul tells us, as he wrote by the Holy Spirit, that the wisdom he had and the knowledge he had, he received from God.

It came to him. It was given to him. And you see, he wanted the Colossians, as it were, to get back on track, to see in their understanding that they were going off on a tangent, that they were being carried away from Christ, listening to these self-styled experts.

And he says, it is in Christ that you'll find all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And this is what we want to consider. Really just two points, and within them a number of concerns, considerations. First of all, treasures in Christ concealed.

[ 7 : 16 ] And then the second and final place, treasures in Christ revealed. First of all then, treasures in Christ concealed.

And he does say, you see, in whom are hidden all the treasures. So, in the first place they're hidden. And that's why we're thinking about treasures in Christ concealed.

An Anglican scholar of a bygone day of robust evangelical commitment, Handley Moonal, calls Jesus the Father's glorious casket.

And if you bear with a little bit of the imagery there, it pictures, it's a picture, it's a figure. Jesus like a golden casket, a chest, a treasure chest.

And inside that treasure chest are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I like that. That's why I'm passing it on. It's a helpful way of thinking.

[ 8 : 22 ] All these glorious gems of truth about God's wisdom and God's knowledge. They're all in that chest.

That chest, the lid is on it, if you like, and inside it, hidden there, are the glorious mysteries and treasures of God's grace and so on.

And you see, God planned it that way. God worked out the things that he determined from everlasting and he locked these things up in his own sin.

And they are entirely inaccessible to the human mind except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

You remember Peter as an interesting reference concerning the Spirit of Christ who was in them.

They were really urgent and eager to know what time Christ would come and what he would be doing when he came.

[ 9 : 35 ] You find it there in 1 Peter 1. The Spirit of Christ was in them and he was working and they were really studying the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible to find out more.

In other words, to get a bit more light on God's wisdom in the Messiah whom they were looking forward to. To get a bit more knowledge of his coming and so on.

And these things only came to them little by little because they were revealed. But there was far more to come and it's this far moreness that had to wait until the Son of God became man and did his work and returned to glory.

And so, Paul is saying here that man cannot attain to these mysteries.

Man cannot get a grip of them and understand them. Man cannot understand truly the wisdom of God and the knowledge of God by his own native capacities.

[ 10 : 51 ] However strong these capacities may be. Whenever we talk about the mysteries of God we are talking about something that we cannot access ourselves.

But it's true of course that whenever we talk about mysteries in matters of religion the human mind is as it were charmed. It wants to know.

It wants to investigate. And it will often look in fact it will practically always look to those who claim to be experts.

Who have something interesting and intriguing to say. Who claim a special insight and a special wisdom regarding these mysteries.

mysteries. And particularly the mysteries of the eternal of the divine. And the sad fact of the matter is that many have gone astray far astray they've made shipwreck of their lives they've wrecked their lives because they have become absorbed with this.

[ 12 : 09 ] They've listened as it were to the lure of self-styled experts in the things of the divine. You can take your pick on the religions of the world on the mystery religions on the eastern religions it's

all about it's all about looking to this great teacher or that great teacher to lead you on endlessly into these mysteries.

in Greek philosophy and Greek mythology you had the siren lure of mysteries leading people astray leading them onto the rocks as it were leading them into destruction.

And that is true too when you think about the various schools of philosophies that lead people not towards Christ but away from Christ.

And Paul tells us himself that he came to know the foolishness of man's wisdom at his best.

And he came to know what it was to have God revealed to him the wisdom and the knowledge that had been locked up and hidden in what we call the father's casket of wisdom and knowledge.

[13:50] In whom Christ firstly in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And you see Paul emphasized again and again that what he had received he received from God he received as a gift from God in sovereign grace.

In fact you remember how Paul the apostle distinguished himself from the other apostles. He calls himself one who was born out of time he was late in arriving and he was taught directly if you turn to Galatians in chapter 1 verse 12 he tells us not only did Christ appear and instruct him in Damascus in Syria but he took him eastward and south into Arabia and there he taught him for three years I did not receive the gospel the good news from man but through revelation of Jesus Christ.

Christ. And that's why he said to the Corinthians who were also getting tangled up in the wisdom of this world and they were getting pulled away from Christ into worldly wisdom into anti-Christian thought he tells them that the wisdom of God is wiser than the wisdom of men we speak he says 1 Corinthians 2:7 we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory this hidden and mysterious wisdom was something that was locked up in Christ but was to be revealed in Christ and he even goes as far as to say if the rulers of this world who authorized and who effected the death of Christ if they had known the wisdom of God they wouldn't have crucified

Jesus but because the world in its wisdom didn't know God's wisdom they crucified the Lord of glory that's the way he argues in 1 Corinthians 2 turning for a moment to Jesus his own teaching about the treasures of wisdom concealed in Christ Jesus actually thanked his father on one occasion you'll find it in Matthew's gospel chapter 11 and verse 25 he thanked his father that he had hidden these things these things about God himself about God's plan of salvation about the place of Christ in that the place of the spirit in that

I thank you father lord of heaven earth that you have hidden these things from the so-called wise and intelligent and you've revealed them to babies and it's clear that what Jesus is saying there is that these mysteries of God's saving purpose were hidden from those who fancied they could work it all out for themselves the so-called wise of this world and the intelligent of this world now let's be clear on this Paul says the world by wisdom by philosophy knew not God God's wisdom is wiser than the wisdom of man if men had naturally the wisdom of God they would not have crucified

[18:12] Christ that's how he argues so man's wisdom at its very best at its most sophisticated is way off target Jesus says I thank you father that you've hidden these things from those who deem themselves experts in wisdom and super intelligence now we'll come back to this later on when we're looking briefly at the mysteries the treasures revealed in Christ but let's be clear on this the mysteries of God and his saving purpose are hidden in Christ as precious jewels are hidden in a golden casket and that casket cannot be opened by man but by the Lord himself let's be settled on it and that then brings us naturally to the second and final point treasures in

Christ revealed Paul says in whom all the treasures of wisdom are hidden wisdom and knowledge they're hidden in him but they're hidden in him in order that we may recognize our dependence upon the Lord in giving us this wisdom and this knowledge it's only when Christ the glorious casket of the father is opened by himself and the spirit allows us to see to apprehend that Christ is both the wisdom and the power of God it's only as we have this made known to us revealed to us it's only as the truth comes home to our understanding empowered as it is by the Lord himself that we really get a grip of it and we see what it's all about and we rest on that truth we see

Jesus as our living saviour and our dearest friend as our Lord and as our God and you see we are in this way led into a treasure storehouse that is surpassingly wonderful and immeasurably rich and varied we'll never really stop enjoying getting to grips with the treasures that are found in Christ that are revealed in Christ what does it mean exactly what are we saying here if Christ is the treasure store what do we obtain from him if he is a casket what do we obtain from him

I want to return to that passage in Matthew's gospel to answer that Matthew 11 25 to 27 because Jesus says there that as to the truth about God about the eternal the almighty no one can know him as to the Lord Jesus Christ himself no one can know him he's unknowable unless he makes himself know go back to that passage and you read there that Jesus not only says I thank you father that you've hidden these things from the self styled wise men the philosophers and from the super intelligent and you've revealed them to babes he says this because it seemed good to you it seemed good to you that you've hidden it from these and revealed these things to others you've revealed truths about the living and true

God about his saving purpose about judgment to come and these things that are only really accessed and experienced in the human heart by divine enabling now wait a minute it isn't this is not about the question are all babies who die in infancy saved and are all intelligent people consigned to a lost eternity these these are not the issues these are different things no what Jesus is saying in using the babes is the childlike attitude over against the superior attitude of the learned and of the philosopher now get me here I'm not saying it's wrong to be learned stupid

[ 23 : 59 ] I'm not saying it's wrong to know something about philosophy to know a lot about philosophy I'm not saying these things are wrong it's the attitude of hurt that we have when we use these things if we use them to take us away from Christ something is seriously wrong and we know that there are those who have known the gospel and who have departed far away from the Christ of the gospel because they fancied that they were cleverer than God and cleverer than those who follow Jesus no the point is that God has deliberately determined to benefit people by revealing these eternal mysteries the mysteries of his being of his saving purpose only by his son that's the point and in verse 27 of

Matthew 11 if you're looking at it he says my father has handed over everything to me to reveal will and the result of it is that no one can know the father or the son except the son of God wills to reveal him the point is we're entirely dependent for that wisdom and that knowledge as from the son of God we're entirely dependent upon him to make these things known to us so that we really and truly know the eternal God the living and true God and although it's not apparent in this passage and it's not apparent in the passage in

Matthew's gospel I'm referring to from chapter 11 25 to 27 that there is a ministry of the spirit that is indispensable Jesus makes it clear elsewhere that the ministry of the spirit is the spirit of Christ it's his ministry and it is his ministry to make known these things just it's only a few weeks ago we had a sermon on the subject of the spirit John 14 26 I think and John 15 26 and John 16 13 the spirit is the teacher the spirit bears witness and the spirit guides us in the truth as it is in Jesus the only way therefore to experience the mysteries revealed the hidden things opened up is by divine revelation that's why

John in particular says the spirit and the word the spirit and the word the spirit takes the word of God the truth that we have in the Bible and he takes it and applies it to us so that we see in our understanding there's light that wasn't there before and the spiritual gems if you like of saving truth are opened up to us from Christ the casket and it is the Holy Spirit's delight to open up these spiritual gems of truth and if you think about it that's why down through the generations uneducated and educated and highly educated

Christians have a great understanding of the doctrines of the gospel of the good news they all have that that's why the old chaps and the old I mean people of old I don't mean old as old but that's why Christians of a bygone day men and women alike had a great grip they'd never been to college or university but had a great grip of the truth who taught them who revealed these things who opened the casket and who let them get in there and get a grip of the spirit of God the spirit takes the and reveals the things of Christ did not our hearts burn within us said the disciples on the road to Emmaus they didn't know it was Jesus that stranger but it was Jesus their eyes were kept from seeing him but their hearts were burning because this stranger was opening up the truth the spirit was working and the truth that they ought to have seen but didn't see came home to their understanding and their hearts burned within as he talked with them in the way as he opened to them there's the word opened to them the scriptures that he opened to them the scriptures that were talking about himself so so that the mysteries were being unlocked and

[ 30 : 12 ] I'm saying to you that it's good to remind ourselves and an encouragement to us that whatever level we're at academically the spirit can give us a great understanding of the mysteries he unlocks the treasure chest and opens these gems to us again and again and that ability we have

to get a grasp of the truth to know true wisdom to know the Lord it's all heaven sent and settled and the promises of God concerning Jesus the Messiah come home to us with a soul refreshing view of Jesus himself in the word bear with me as we bring this to a close one of the great messianic promises or the promises concerning the messianic age is found in Jeremiah 31 and 31 down to 34 and in that passage actually the writer of the Hebrews in chapter 8 quotes it they shall all be taught of God in that messianic age from the least see that to the greatest they'll all be taught they'll all be taught from the least able to the most able they'll all be taught and my dear friends we have to lay that to heart because the wonderful thing is this that to us who believe Christ by his spirit reveals the hidden things to our hearts so the deep things are understood and they're understood progressively we know what it is to have fellowship with the living and true God we know what John meant when he wrote in his first letter we write these things to you that you may have fellowship with us with the father and with his son Jesus Christ this is a living thing we're writing so that you will enjoy what we have come to enjoy Paul prays that the church would know would notice the word would know the height the depth the length the breadth of the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of the knowledge experience knowledge of God and so we can at least say here that as to the core truths the saving truths of the good news in Jesus the uneducated as well as the highly educated are all on the same level they have this in common they are taught of God the hidden things come out into the open in Christ we receive wisdom and knowledge and righteousness and redemption in Christ remember how Paul argues in Corinthians Christ is made over to us the wisdom and the knowledge and the righteousness and the redemption of God and all that is key all that is key to knowing God and to going on with him day by day in true fellowship is given to us in Christ it's made known and experienced in whom are hidden yes all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge but as surely as they're hidden in him they're hidden in order that they are revealed to us by Christ by his word and spirit and you see as we leave this we remind ourselves that whenever we are tempted to go away into speculation we are to remind ourselves that there's nothing that we need to know for our eternal blessedness that we'll not find in [ 35 : 43 ] Christ whatever we may have to do by way of learning and advancement in our studies in philosophy in gaining knowledge let's keep before us this great truth that as to unlocking the hidden knowledge of the eternal God we have that knowledge unlocked for us in Christ and through Christ by his word and spirit we can trust him with all our heart we can lean not on our own understanding we can in all our ways acknowledge him and he will bless be his name he will direct our path and that's why we can be settled and steadied when the winds of change of thought come at us we can rest assured that we have wisdom and knowledge from God in Christ revealed that will answer anything we have to face when we appear at the judgment seat of God Christ is made all in all to us Lord grant us such wisdom and knowledge from your golden casket that will keep us happy and rejoicing all our days of Christ he says in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and we may add this as Paul does later and you are complete in him amen