

CHRIST AS GOD'S WISDOM IN A MYSTERY— THE DEPTHS OF GOD

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In the New Testament there is only one category of teaching that has its source in God and is recognized by God—the apostles' teaching. The thousands of new believers in Christ who were produced on the day of Pentecost through Peter's proclamation of the gospel concerning the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were added to the church, where they "continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles" (Acts 2:42). As "believers were...being added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (5:14), "every day,...and from house to house" the apostles "did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ" (v. 42). In this way the church in Jerusalem (8:1) was grounded and established in the divine revelation conveyed through the apostles' teaching. Later, Paul, "a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God" (1 Cor. 1:1), engaged in this unique teaching wherever he went. He taught the same things "everywhere in every church," and he trained Timothy, his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind the believers in Corinth of his (Paul's) ways and teaching (4:17). In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, written in Ephesus, Paul conveys many profound truths; he especially emphasizes the all-inclusive Christ, the church of God in Corinth as a local expression of the universal, organic Body of Christ, and the function of the Spirit in the lives of the children of God and in the meetings of the church of God. In 2:10 Paul says something truly amazing. Referring to "things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (v. 9), he expresses something marvelous: "To us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." In order to be enlightened regarding Paul's word about the depths of God and what can be called the epistemology of the Spirit realized through the Spirit's searching these deep things and making them known to the believers in their regenerated human spirit, we need to learn from the book of Acts how Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was gained by the Lord and appointed by Him to be a minister and a witness of the resurrected and ascended Christ and of the things in which he saw Him (26:16).

The Heavenly Vision and the Divine Commission

The life and ministry of the apostle Paul were governed by a heavenly vision—the vision of the resurrected and ascended Christ in His glory—and his teaching and preaching were directed by the Lord's speaking to him directly and indirectly through a member of the Body (v. 19). After Paul saw a great light flashing out of heaven beyond the brightness of the sun, fell to the ground, and heard the Lord's speaking (vv. 13-14), he asked two questions. In response to the first question—"Who are You, Lord?"—He said, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you persecute" (22:8). In response to the second question—"What shall I do, Lord?"—Jesus replied, "Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do" (v. 10).