

# Ephesians 3:10 Commentary

PREVIOUS

EPHESIANS - CHRIST AND THE CHURCH  
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NEXT

Ephesians 3:10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly [places]. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [hina gnoristhe \(3SAPS\) nun tais archais kai tais exousias en tois epouraniois dia tes ekklesias e polupoikilos sophia tou theou.](#)

**Amplified:** [The purpose is] that through the church the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** It was kept secret up till now in order that now the many-coloured wisdom of God should be made known through the Church to the rulers and powers in the heavenly places; ([Westminster Press](#))

**KJV:** To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

**NET:** The purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms. ([NET Bible](#))

**NLT:** The purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms. (NLT - Tyndale House)

**Phillips:** The purpose is that all the angelic powers should now see the complex wisdom of God's plan being worked out through the Church, (Phillips: Touchstone)

**Wuest:** in order that there might be made known now to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places through the intermediate agency of the Church the much-variegated wisdom of God, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly places, through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God,

**SO THAT THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD MIGHT NOW BE MADE KNOWN: hina gnoristhe (3SAPS) nun... e polupoikilos sophia tou theou:**

- **so that the manifold wisdom of God** Eph 1:8 Ps 104:24 Mt 11:25-27 Ro 11:33 1Co 1:24 2:7 1Ti 3:16 Rev 5:12
- **might now be made known through the church** Ex 25:17-22; Ps 103:20; Ps 148:1,2; Isa 6:2-4; Ezek 3:12; 1 Pe 1:12; Rev 5:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
- **to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places** Ep 1:8; Ps 104:24; Mt 11:25, 26, 27; Ro 11:33; 1 Cor 1:24; 2:7; 1 Ti 3:16; Rev 5:12
- Ephesians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 3:7-13 The Mystery Revealed, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:9-13 God's Eternal Purpose and You](#) - Steven Cole

## GOD'S VARIEGATED WISDOM SHINES IN HEAVENLY PLACES

So that the manifold ([polupoikilos](#)) wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places - So that ([hina](#)) introduces a purpose clause which begs the question "What purpose?" If we examine the context, we note that one aspect of the gift of God's grace (Eph 3:7+) to Paul was that he was given the privilege to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery (Eph 3:9+). It is as if Paul (and the holy apostles and prophets - Eph 3:5+) was allowed to "remove the lid" (so to speak) on God's "secret treasure chest" (so to speak), exposing and explaining the

mystery **which for ages had been hidden** (Eph 3:9+). Paul grasped that he was a highly privileged individual and he was faithful to carry out his stewardship (cf 1Co 4:1-2+) of this precious gift of God's grace. And so in this verse he elaborates on one of the grand purposes of this "now revealed mystery." The irony (so to speak) is that the revealing of the mystery (Jews and Gentiles in one body, the church) is it is the very entity revealed (the church) who in turn is given the holy privilege of communicating this holy truth to the heavenly **rulers and the authorities**. Do not think for a moment that what happens in the **church** on earth is not of intense interest to the angelic powers, both good and evil!. And since this is **the manifold wisdom of God** that "shines" into the **heavenly places** through His **church**, Who receives all of the glory? God of course!

**So that** (2443) ([hina](#)) expresses purpose (see importance of observing and querying [terms of purpose or result](#)). This is the purpose Paul sees in this new arrangement in the church of Christ.

**John MacArthur** asks "Why did He create **all things** (Eph 3:9b)? In order (**ED**: aka "so that" = [purpose](#)) that He might put on a display of manifold wisdom for all the angels of heaven to see and for which they would forever praise Him. He created to redeem, to display His glory to the holy angels.

**Vincent** connects the "**so that**" (in order that) with the subject matter of the preceding two verses (Eph 3:8-9+). He paraphrases this section as follows "Grace was given me to preach Christ and to enlighten men as to the long-hidden mystery of the admission of the Gentiles, **in order that now**, etc."

The phrase "wisdom of God" means that this is wisdom that belongs to God and comes from Him.

As **Vance Havner** once said "If you lack knowledge, go to school. If you lack wisdom, get on your knees! Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge."

**BKC** explains that "The "**manifold wisdom of God**" does not refer to redemption as such but rather to the new relationship between believing Jews and Gentiles in one body. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#)).

**Vincent** explains that "Through the Church God's **wisdom** in its infinite variety is to be displayed — the many-tinted wisdom of God — in different modes of power, different characters, methods of training, providences, forms of organization, etc ([Word Studies in the NT](#))

Wisdom, the wisdom of God, is not something that is acquired by man, but something that is bestowed by God upon his elect. It is a divine endowment and not a human acquisition.

**Henry Morris** rightly remarks that "This verse yields an amazing brief insight into God's purposes with respect to His angelic creation, both the holy angels and the fallen angels who have followed Satan in his age-long rebellion against God. **They are intently observing and learning about God, His nature and His purposes**, through His work of creating and redeeming men and women, whom He had created in His image (Job 1:3-2:10; 1Pe 1:12; Heb 12:1). Thus the **church**--the vast body of redeemed individuals, past and present--is serving as an **instructor of angels**, including the very angels who are currently assigned as our individual guardians and ministers. It is wonderful to contemplate being able to meet these angelic friends, person to person, in the age to come when Christ returns with all His holy angels (2 Thessalonians 1:7). We shall actually even judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3)."

Think about this for a moment. When Jesus was on the cross and He cried out to His Father and His Father turned His back on Him and darkness fell on the earth, the good angels must have wondered "What is going on?" And the fallen angels were rejoicing and saying, "**Ah ha, we have done it! We killed the Son**" The angels did not understand why would God the Father put Jesus His only begotten Son on a cross? Now the Church, the body of the Risen Christ, proclaims a message of victory and redemption for both Jew and Gentile. And then ponder that glorious future day when "**in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.**" (Rev 10:7+)

**MacArthur** adds "The church does not exist simply for the purpose of saving souls, though that is a marvelous and important work. The supreme purpose of the church, as Paul makes explicit here, is to glorify God by manifesting His **wisdom** before the angels, who can then offer greater praise to God. **The purpose of the universe is to give glory to God, and that will be its ultimate reality after all evil is conquered and destroyed.** Even now, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Ps. 19:1). The **church** is not an end in itself but a means to an end, the end of glorifying God. The real drama of redemption can only be understood when we realize that **the glory of God is the supreme goal of creation**. Holy angels are especially made and confirmed in purity and praise as creatures who will forever give God glory (Ps. 148:2; Heb. 1:6), and the redemption of fallen men enriches their praise. Redeemed people, then, are to enhance angelic praise and some day in heaven to join in it (Rev. 4:8–11; 5:8–14; 7:9–12; 14:1–3; 19:1–8). (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Wayne Barber** applies this truth (making known the mystery) to individual believers declaring that "When we start living obediently,

doing the things that God has told us to do, the angels look at us and say, "What has happened to him? Why, we were around here last year and acted like a sinner. Man, look at him now. He is living like a saint. What happened in his life? Look at him. Look at him. He just sinned against his wife and look, he is going to ask her forgiveness. What is going on here? What is this redemption?" They don't know. We are teaching them. When Jesus is Jesus in your life, friend, it is not only touching a lost world, it has opened the eyes of the angels who haven't got a clue. They are looking intently. The audience is an invisible audience, but we are an invincible teacher, folks, through the Church. (Ephesians 3:1-9 God's Divine Mystery - 2)

**Variegated** is often used of plants that exhibit different colors, especially as irregular patches or streaks. Figuratively in the context of God's wisdom, variegated means distinguished or characterized by variety and diversification. Peter uses the root word *poikilos* to describe **grace** in 1Pe 4:10 as "**manifold**" (variegated). God has just the right "size", "color" and "shade" (so to speak) of grace to meet every need His children might have in their life. "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the **manifold** (*poikilos*) grace of God."

Not only was the mystery of our redemption, of Jew and Gentile now in one body, the Body of Christ, the Church, preached to a visible audience on earth, but it is also being proclaimed to an invisible audience of angelic hosts in the heavenlies, both good and evil angels.

Keep the context in mind (one of the dangers of putting verse comments on separate pages!) -

Ephesians 3:8-9+ To me, the very least of all saints (HUMILITY - cf progressive Paul's increase in humility over 10+ years from an "apostle" in 1Co 15:9+, to a "saint" in Eph 3:8, to a "sinner" in 1Ti 1:15), this grace was given (GRACE IS ALWAYS A GIFT), to preach (DON'T TRY TO PREACH WITHOUT GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE!) to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in **God Who created all things** (See "Elohim-Creator of Heavens and Earth and Genesis 1 comments);

**MacDonald** explains that "Paul again uses the metaphor of a school. God is the Teacher. The universe is the classroom. Angelic dignitaries are the students. The lesson is on "The multi-faceted wisdom of God." The church is the object lesson. From heaven the angels are compelled to admire His unsearchable judgments and marvel at His ways past finding out. They see how God has triumphed over sin to His own glory. They see how He has sent heaven's Best for earth's worst. They see how He has redeemed His enemies at enormous cost, conquered them by love, and prepared them as a Bride for His Son. They see how He has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. And they see that through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, more glory has come to God and more blessing has come to believing Jews and Gentiles than if sin had never been allowed to enter. God has been vindicated; Christ has been exalted; Satan has been defeated; and the church has been enthroned in Christ to share His glory. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#));

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**G Campbell Morgan - (Eph. 3:10.) "... Now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God."**

This reveals another phase of vocation. The Church is to reveal to the unfallen intelligences, the principalities and powers of the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God. These shining ones whose glories so far exceed anything of which we have dreamed, whose powers of comprehension are so wondrous, will only know through the revelation of the Church, in all its fulness the manifold wisdom of God.

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**Steven Cole** explains that....

Most of us don't often think about the angels, but Paul brings them into the center of God's eternal purpose! We know that the holy angels are in God's very presence (Isa. 6:1, 2, 3). They are at war with the fallen angels (Dan. 10:13). The holy angels were especially involved in praising God at the birth of the Savior (Luke 2:13, 14; Heb. 1:6). They have a special interest in the church, so that Paul tells the Corinthian women to wear long hair (or a head covering) in the assembly because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10). They rejoice at the salvation of sinners (Luke 15:10). Throughout eternity, we will join the angels in heaven, singing praises to God because of the salvation that the Lamb secured for us (Rev. 7:9, 10, 11, 12).

Some scholars think that Ephesians 3:10 refers only to the holy angels, some think it refers to the fallen angels, and some to both. I think it probably refers to both. (The fallen angels are referred to by the same terms in Ep 6:12; in Ep 1:21, it probably includes both.) To the fallen angels, the church, which exists because of Christ's triumph at the cross, displays God's wisdom and reminds them of their impending doom. The fallen angels thought that they had triumphed at the cross, but God displayed His wisdom by using that very means to gain ultimate and final victory (Col. 2:15). As for the holy angels, through the cross they "see a great and wonderful manifestation of the glory of God" (Edwards, p. 147). Edwards points out that the happiness of angels, as well as of people, consists very much in seeing the glory of God. And, he says (*ibid.*),

"Perhaps all God's attributes are more gloriously manifested in this work, than in any other that ever the angels saw."

God's mercy, grace, love, justice, and power are all magnified in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Peter tells us that the angels long to look into the matter of our salvation (1Pe 1:12).

God's purpose is to make His wisdom known through the church.

**F. F. Bruce** (The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians [Eerdmans], pp. 321- 22) says,

The church thus appears to be God's pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future, the mystery of God's will 'to be administered in the fullness of the times,' when 'the things in heaven and the things on earth' are to be brought together in Christ (Eph. 1:9, 10)."

He adds that the church, created by God's reconciling the Jews and Gentiles into one body, is God's agency to help bring about the final reconciliation.

**John MacArthur** explains (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Ephesians [Moody Press], p. 97),

Every sinner who repents and turns to Christ adds another spiritual stone to God's temple, another member to His Body, and becomes another forgiven and cleansed sinner who is made eternally one with every other forgiven and cleansed sinner. ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

We show this wisdom of God to the principalities and powers by being the church that God created.

**John Piper** says ([Ephesians 3:10 The Cosmic Church](#)) "We don't usually hit targets that we are not aiming at. And the target for the church is to demonstrate to the evil powers of the cosmos that God has been wise in sending his Son to die that we might have hope and be unified in one body, the church. Therefore, when we fail to live in hope and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we send this signal through the galaxies: God's purpose is failing; he was not wise, he was foolish.

Again, the overall point that Paul is driving home is to elevate our understanding of the importance of the church in God's eternal purpose, so that we will give it the proper priority in our lives. He wants us to understand what a great privilege it is that God has chosen us to be the agents of carrying out His eternal purpose through the church. The church is not just a nice place to drop by on Sundays if you're not doing anything more interesting! The church is God's vehicle for making known His **manifold wisdom**, not only on earth, but also **to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places**. So we must see how our lives count for eternity. ([God's Eternal Purpose and You Ephesians 3:9-13](#))

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**Manifold** (4182) ([polupoikilos](#) from **polús** = much + **poikilos** = diverse, various, multi-colored) is literally much varied and means many sided, variegated, greatly diversified, abounding in variety. It means marked with a great variety of colors, as in a cloth or a painting. It means manifesting itself in a great variety of forms. It is multi-faceted wisdom. "Wisdom in its rich variety". It pertains to that which is different in a number of ways. Greeks used this word to describe pictures, flowers, garments (e.g. the root word **poikilos** is used in the Septuagint to describe Joseph's **varicolored coat**, Genesis 37:3, 23, 32).

Paul's point is that the **wisdom of God** has shown itself in Christ to be varied beyond measure and in a way which surpasses all previous knowledge thereof. It is "infinitely diversified" and from whichever way you view God's wisdom, new flashes of truth blaze forth. His wisdom is inexhaustible. God's eternal plan is more complex and multifaceted than OT saints had imagined. As a corollary finite human beings, even the best of systematic theologians, should be careful not to try and fit God's complex and much varied purposes in specific theological pigeonholes!

**J D Watson** comments on the Greek word [polupoikilos](#) as it relates to God's Wisdom - "**Wisdom** (sophia) speaks of the "knowledge of the most precious things," knowledge of the things that really matter. That's why preaching is a "big deal." The word manifold is a marvelous word. The Greek polupoikilos <G4182> is found only here in the NT. The literal meaning is "multi-colored," that is, marked with a great variety of colors, as in a painting. So, in our text, the word means "many-faceted" or "most varied." It's also important to note that the simple form of the word is poikilos, meaning "various" (e.g., 1 Pet. 4:10). But Paul makes a compound verb by adding the prefix poluso (English poly), "many." So, again, the idea conveyed is "multi-faceted" or "most varied." It's designed to make known God's understanding of the things that matter most. And no other method of ministry will do that. But, as if this word were not enough, Paul adds an adjective. Think of it! God's knowledge and understanding are the most varied, the most multi-faceted. It's not just that God's knowledge and understanding are deep, which of course they are, but that these take on many forms and possess infinite diversity. We can never understand anything of God unless He reveals Himself. And He does that only in His Word. That is why we preach! Only preaching explores the depths of God; only preaching delves into who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will ultimately accomplish. It is the absolute height of arrogance to say, as many do today,

"Preaching is not relevant; we've found a better method." What arrogance it is to say they we can improve on what God ordained—the preaching of the manifold wisdom of God. (A Word for the Day)

**Hoehner** elaborates on the meaning of manifold ([polupoikilos](#)) - The two adjectives (polus and poikilos) combined serve to heighten the idea of multiplicity. On those rare occasional uses outside the NT, it refers to intricate embroidery or flowers of many colors.<sup>4</sup> This is the only occurrence in the NT and it has the idea of "most varied," or "(very) many sided."<sup>6</sup> It alludes to the variegated facets of God's wisdom, not with reference to redemption <sup>8</sup> but to the unification of Jews and Gentiles into one new person in Christ. In past history God, in his wisdom, has dealt with humankind in a variety of ways. For example, his dealings with people before Abraham differed from his dealings after he made a covenant with Abraham. Likewise, there was another change when Israel became a nation under Moses. Accordingly, in this NT era the unification of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body is another change. Therefore, the manifold wisdom of God must refer to this mystery which Paul has been explaining from Eph 2:11 to the present verse. In conclusion, Paul declares that the multisided or intricate **wisdom of God** is made known to angelic leaders through the instrumentality of the church. Throughout the ages good angels have tried to decipher God's plan (1 Pet 1:12) but were unable to do so. No doubt, evil angels also had wanted to know God's plans in advance in order to frustrate them. In fact, the animosity between Jews and Gentiles may well have been encouraged by the evil angels. However, this animosity was also a natural one, for in the past God had allowed Gentiles to come to him by becoming Jews, as already mentioned in Eph 3:6. The Jews had considered themselves superior to the Gentiles because of the covenants God had made with them and because much of God's revelation was directed to them. Equality between Jews and Gentiles was beyond the comprehension of any human being and any angelic being. Nevertheless, contrary to all prior thought, Paul has been showing that the mystery is the church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles united into one body. They are "fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow participants of the promise in Christ" (3:6). This was a revolutionary new concept. Through the church, the angelic leaders, both good and evil, gain knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God. It is a defeat for evil angels who would like to continue to engender animosity between Jews and Gentiles in order to frustrate the plan of God. The formation of the church is tangible evidence that the evil angelic leaders' power has been broken, demonstrating that even the most diverse elements of creation are subject to Christ. As mentioned above, it must be emphasized that the church does not preach to the "**powers**" as suggested by Wink but that the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body must be acknowledged by the "powers" to be a display of the multifaceted wisdom of God. This union is an evidence of the grace of God. (Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary)

**Larry Richards** adds that "God's plan seems so straightforward when we read the Old Testament. He chose a people, promised them redemption, a Saviour King, and ultimate triumph. And history moved toward this fulfillment. Then, suddenly, the Son of God appeared as the promised King, was rejected by His people, crucified, and resurrected, and we realize that all along God intended far more for humankind than was previously revealed. Don't put God in a box, or try to squeeze Him into limiting categories. God's plans and purposes are multifaceted, and each facet reflects His complex wisdom and love. The more we glimpse of that complexity, the more we should be moved to worship and to praise." (The 365 Day Devotional Commentary. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books)

**THOUGHT** - From a practical standpoint **manifold** or "**multi-colored**" points out that the wisdom of God is sufficient for any circumstance we might encounter in life (Beloved you may need to pause and ponder and even read that statement asking the Spirit to rivet that truth firmly into your heart and mind. Then when the winds of affliction blow in your life -- which of course they will as 1 Peter 1:6 promises! -- the Spirit will remind you of this truth. Hold fast to the truth about your Father, so that when the "wind blows" His truth will HOLD YOU!). Nothing catches God's wisdom "off guard". There is nothing of light or of dark, of sunshine or of shadow, for which God's wisdom is not triumphantly adequate. It follows that we would all do well to follow the advise of James who wrote in the [context of trials](#) that "**if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**" (James 1:5+)

**Wisdom** ([4678](#)) (**sophia**) is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. Wisdom refers to the true insight into known facts. "The best wisdom is that which has been revealed by God, for this is the means by which one gains insight into the true nature of God's plan." (Hoehner)

Quotes on **Wisdom** from John Blanchard's excellent, recommended resource [Complete Gathered Gold](#):

- Knowledge leads us from the simple to the complex; wisdom leads us from the complex to the simple. Anon.
- True wisdom is a divine revelation. George Barlow
- Wisdom has never made a bigot, but learning has. Josh Billings
- Wisdom gives a balance to character. John Blanchard
- Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. John Calvin
- This is our wisdom, to be learners to the end. John Calvin

- To search for wisdom apart from Christ means not simply foolhardiness but utter insanity. John Calvin
- True wisdom consists in being wise according to the law of God. John Calvin
- Wisdom is not the growth of human genius. It must be sought from above. John Calvin
- The only way to know is to will to do God's will. Oswald Chambers
- Knowledge is the fountain of wisdom. Stephen Charnock
- Wisdom must be from God, because it can be found only in relation to him. Edmund P. Clowney
- Humility is the hallmark of wisdom. Jeremy Collier
- There is no solid wisdom but in true piety. John Evelyn
- Wisdom and the will of God are intimately related ... Nothing is more vital for practical knowledge of the purpose of God than wisdom. Sinclair Ferguson
- True wisdom is always humble. Richard Fuller
- No man is really wise unless he lives in the will and for the glory of God. Geoffrey Grogan
- If you lack knowledge, go to school. If you lack wisdom, get on your knees! Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge. Vance Havner
- Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Matthew Henry
- It is better to get wisdom than gold. Gold is another's, wisdom is our own; gold is for the body and time, wisdom for the soul and eternity. Matthew Henry
- Modesty is the badge of wisdom. Matthew Henry
- Such is the degeneracy of human nature that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those who are born again and who, through grace, partake of the divine nature. Matthew Henry
- He who has a constant longing for wisdom will persistently pray for it. D. Edmond Hiebert
- Unaided wisdom, with its strongest wing, can only flutter in the vale of vanity. No earth-born eye can catch a glimpse of God. Henry Law
- The next best thing to being wise is to live in a circle of those who are. C. S. Lewis
- Surely the essence of wisdom is that before we begin to act at all, or attempt to please God, we should discover what it is that God has to say about the matter. D. Martyn Lloyd Jones
- Wisdom opens the eyes both to the glories of heaven and to the hollowness of earth. J. A. Motyer
- Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty ... acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours. J. I. Packer
- The kind of wisdom that God waits to give to those who ask him is a wisdom that will bind us to himself. J. I. Packer
- Wisdom is God-centred. Michael Parsons
- Wisdom is always an overmatch for strength. Phaedrus (**Ed: Especially if it is God's "manifold wisdom!"**)
- The greatest wisdom on this earth is holiness. William S. Plumer
- Wisdom is the knowledge which sees into the heart of things, which knows them as they really are. J. Armitage Robinson
- The desire of appearing to be wise often prevents our becoming so. Francois Rochefoucauld
- Wisdom is to the mind what health is to the body. Francois Rochefoucauld
- The wisest mind has something yet to learn. George Santanaya
- If ... our wisdom has been acquired without any of that eagerness and painful diligence with which the covetous man desires and seeks for his riches, it is a shrewd conjecture that it is not of the genuine sort. Thomas Scott
- Wisdom in ruling is justice; wisdom in speech is discretion; wisdom in conduct is prudence; wisdom in evaluation is discernment. George SeEVERS
- Wisdom is easy to him that will understand. Richard Sibbes
- To know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is the highest principle and perfection of man. This attainment, infinitely above all others, constitutes true wisdom. Charles Simeon
- Wisdom outweighs any wealth. Sophocles
- We can be certain that God wants us to be wise, just as we are sure that he wants us not to sin. R. C. Sproul
- Conviction of ignorance is the doorstep to the temple of wisdom. C. H. Spurgeon
- The sublimity of wisdom is to do those things living which are to be desired when dying. Jeremy Taylor
- The wisest person in the world is the person who knows the most about God. A. W. Tozer
- The true test of wisdom is works, not words. Curtis Vaughan
- It is a fact that those whose lives are daily being conformed to the Word and purposes of God will be given the ability to see issues more plainly. Malcolm Watts

- If the Lord Jesus Christ is a stranger to you, the best you can hope for is to become a philosopher, like Socrates of old. But apart from Christ there is no wisdom. Spiros Zodhiates
- The one who has wisdom in his head and heart does not need to shout at others. Spiros Zodhiates

**Might be made known** (1107) (**gnorizo** from **ginosko** = acquire information by whatever means but often with the implication of personal involvement or experience ~ "experiential knowledge") means to cause information to be known by someone. Paul's point is that the rulers and authorities simply would not know about the mystery unless God taught them through the church. This great spiritual truth has to be taught or communicated by the visible church to its invisible audience, so that they understand God's eternal plan for the redemption of mankind.

**Now** (3568) (**nun**) at the present time in contrast with "**for ages**" in Ephesians 3:9.

**THROUGH THE CHURCH TO THE RULERS AND THE AUTHORITIES IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES: dia tes ekklesias tais archais kai tais exousias en tois epouraniois:**

- **To the rulers and authorities** - Eph 1:21; Ro 8:38; Col 1:16; 1Pe 3:22
- Ephesians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 3:7-13 The Mystery Revealed, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:9-13 God's Eternal Purpose and You](#) - Steven Cole

#### Related Passages:

Ephesians 1:21 far above all **rule** and **authority** and **power** and **dominion**, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor **angels**, nor **principalities**, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or **rulers** or **authorities**—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

1 Peter 3:22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after **angels** and **authorities** and **powers** had been subjected to Him.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **powers**, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

### **THE CHURCH - A "PRISM" TO REVEAL GOD'S WISDOM AND GLORY**

**Through the church to the rules and authorities in the heavenly places** - Through (**dia**) indicates means or agency by which the wisdom is made known to the angelic forces (good and bad). God's instrument for His demonstration of the drama of redemption is the **church**.

**S Lewis Johnson** explains that "**church**"...is a term that refers, first of all, to the believers, the body of believers, who've been, by the baptism of the Spirit through faith, brought to this relationship to all other believers (see 1Cor 12:13). It's an organism, a body, a universal body. That's the church. And then of course there is the local church, the group of believers who meet at a particular place regularly and there observe the ordinances, listen to the word of God, practice baptism, observe the Lord's supper, listen to the word of God under the oversight of elders and their helpers, the deacons. Now when we say that the Apostle laid great stress upon the church, we must be careful to point out that when he said the church is this important and is at the center of the purpose of God, we're talking about the universal church and its local manifestation. We're not talking about a denomination. We're not talking about an institutional body. But we're talking about the true believers. Now these true believers are the object of the concern of the triune God in this age: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we cannot really be in harmony with the Lord if we're not concerned about the body of believers. All the body of believers that make up the church, and not simply in Believers' Chapel, but the whole body of believers, it is the concern of the triune God. It is his purpose to accomplish this task of building this one new man and brining this one new man to maturity. Let me sum it up by saying, the church is the body of believers, Jews and Gentiles, they themselves are fellow partakers of the promise, fellow members of the body, fellow heirs of the great promises. They stand on the same basis, Jew and Gentile. They are the concern of our triune God, and through the church, God is accomplishing, as one of his great tasks, the

display of his manifold wisdom: his wisdom in creation, his wisdom in providence, his wisdom in redemption, his wisdom in his total plan, which will ultimately lead up to a kingdom and finally the new heavens and a new earth. As believers, it is important that we find our place in that body, perform our tasks, and under God, by his grace, fulfill his purpose for us. ([Ephesians 3:1-13 Dispensation of Grace Audio/Pdf](#))

## HOLY AND UNHOLY "WATCHERS"

**To the rules and authorities in the heavenly places** - This speaks of the angels, good and bad. In context Paul is saying there is an invisible audience of princes or chiefs among angels, including the fallen angels (Ep 6:12+) who are watching the unfolding of the drama of this mystery of redemption of Jew and Gentile in one body. The point is that even in the invisible angelic world there is a stratification of authority. When good angels behold the church, God's miraculous union of redeemed Jews and Gentiles in one body they will give glorify God. As an aside unfortunately some modern commentators have incorrectly interpreted the terms rulers and authorities as the political and economic structures of our society. This is just another good reason to allow the Scripture to speak for itself and to interpret it literally and not allegorically or spiritually.

In short, when comparing Scripture with Scripture, there is no question that "**rulers and authorities**" refers to angelic hosts. So what Paul is saying here is that God is "educating" the angels by means of the church! What they learn is the "manifold wisdom of God". They knew God's wisdom in creation but the truth of salvation of Jew and Gentile in one body was a mystery hidden from them.

**Peter** also alludes to the angelic host's interest in the salvation of man writing that "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look (literally to bend beside and then to lean over or stoop down so as to look carefully into our salvation! This same verb parakupto describes John "stooping" to look into the empty tomb to see the linen wrappings of our resurrected Lord in John 20:5!). (1Pe 1:12+) It is amazing to realize that even God's holy angels and probably also Satan and the fallen angels are observing, with great interest, the unfolding of God's great plan of salvation, both in individual human beings and for the whole creation. See these other allusions to the relationship of angels to salvation in Heb 1:1+; Psalm 34:7; Matthew 18:10; 1Cor 11:10+

We see a similar declaration by **Paul** in his first letter to the Corinthians "For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a **spectacle** to the world, both to angels and to men." (1Cor 4:9+) "**Spectacle**" is the Greek word "theatron" and literally means a theater, referring either to gladiator contests or to a triumphal procession of a Roman general bringing captured soldiers to the arena. Likewise, the apostles in the arena of this world were fighting to the death on a stage, as it were, being carefully watched by an audience that even includes the angels. Paul probably wrote 1Corinthians from Ephesus which had a great stadium where they had various contest. The remains of the victims who were torn to pieces by wild beasts were sometimes exposed at the end of the combat which gives great vividness to the apostle's reference in this passage

Comparing Ephesians 3:10 to 1Corinthians 4:9+ **S Lewis Johnson** reasons that "the Apostle's figure is we have a theater. What's the theater? Well the theater is human history. That's God's theater. What's the stage? Well the stage is the world. Who are the actors? Well the actors are the members of the body of Christ. Who's the author of the play, the director of the play, and the producer of the play? Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are the authors of the play, the directors of the play, the producers of the play. And who is the audience? Well from Ephesians the audience is the angelic host. And what are they learning? The manifold wisdom of God. There are great things of course that the angelic world will perhaps ultimately see. Some things they may never be able to completely understand. I think it's probably true in the light of Paul's statement to broaden it out a little bit and say we are learning some things, too. But what we have is this great production by the Lord God in order that the angelic hosts might come to understand his manifold wisdom. And it's through the church. We are the instrumentality. Think of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Think of the work of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says angels desire to look into that redemption. The national program of the gathering together of Jews and Gentiles into this one body, into this great new international community, and all of the things that he is going to do, now and in the future, is designed to be instructive for the angels. That has some relationship to that state over in 1Corinthians 11 when Paul is talking about head coverings, and he says that women, under certain circumstances, ought to wear head coverings on account of the angels (see 1Cor 11:10). Why? Well, the angels are interested in things that are happening in the church of Jesus Christ. **What are they learning through you, if anything?** Of course, they can learn things negative as well as positive. But isn't that a magnificent plan to the intent that now "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known through the church the manifold wisdom of God according to the purpose of the ages which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"? ([Ephesians 3:1-13 Dispensation of Grace Audio/Pdf](#)) (Bolding added)

**S Lewis Johnson** explains that "this great work of building up this one new man of Jew and Greek, so that they're equal in one body of Christ, has as one of its major purposes the manifestation or the making known of the manifold wisdom of God to the



angelic hosts about us. In other words, we (the body of Jewish and Gentile believers) are the means by which God is instructing the angels in His wisdom. Now isn't that something to think about? ([Ephesians 3:1-13 Dispensation of Grace Audio/Pdf](#))

**Kenneth Wuest** explains that "The Church thus becomes the *"university"* for angels, and each saint a *"professor"* (**ED: BUT ONLY THOSE THE SAINT WHO IS A TRUE "POSSESSOR" OF CHRIST!**). Only in the Church can the angels come to an adequate comprehension of the **grace of God**. They look at the Church to investigate the mysteries of redemption. 1Pe 1:12 (see note) speaks of the things which the angels have a passionate desire to stoop down and look into, like the golden cherubim that overshadow the Mercy Seat, ever gazing upon the sprinkled blood that is upon it. The preposition *para*, "beside," is prefixed to the verb "stoop down," which speaks of the angels as spectators viewing the great plan of redemption from the side lines, not being participants in it. ([Wuest Word Studies - Erdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Henry Morris** comments that in this verse Paul provides "an amazing brief insight into God's purposes with respect to His angelic creation, both the holy angels and the fallen angels who have followed Satan in his age-long rebellion against God. They are intently observing and learning about God, His nature and His purposes, through His work of creating and redeeming men and women, whom He had created in His image (Job 1:3-2:10; 1Pe 1:12 - note). Thus the church--the vast body of redeemed individuals, past and present--is serving as an instructor of angels, including the very angels who are currently assigned as our individual guardians and ministers (see He 1:1+; Ps 34:7; Mt 18:10). It is wonderful to contemplate being able to meet these angelic friends, person to person, in the age to come when Christ returns with all His holy angels (2Th 1:7). We shall actually even judge the angels (1 Cor 6:3). ([KJV New Defenders Study Bible](#))

**John Eadie** notes that "the wisdom of God in creation is made known to the heavenly hierarchy, apart altogether from the church, and has been revealed to them, not simply now and for the first time, but ever since "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7) Why then, too, should the **church** be selected as the medium of manifestation? And why should wisdom be singled out as the only attribute which creation exhibits by the church to the higher intelligences? But when we look at the contents of the paragraph, the meaning is apparent. The apostle speaks of a **mystery**—a mystery long hid, and at length disclosed—a mystery connected with the enlargement and glory of the church—and he adds, this long concealment from other ages, yea, from the beginning of the world, and this present revelation, have for their object to instruct the celestial ranks in God's multiform wisdom. It is the attribute of wisdom which binds itself up with the hiding and the opening of a mystery, and as that wisdom concerns the organization and extension of the church, the church naturally becomes the scene of instruction to celestial spectators. On the connection of Divine wisdom with the disclosure of a mystery, some remarks may be seen under Eph 1:8, 9—"God in all wisdom and prudence made known to us the mystery of His will." That mystery being now disclosed, the principedoms and powers were instructed. In itself, in its concealment, and in the time, place, method, and results of its disclosure, it now exhibited the Divine wisdom in a novel and striking light—"to the principalities and the powers in heavenly places"—the article being prefixed to each noun, and giving prominence to each in the statement. These terms have been explained under 1:21, and the following phrase—in the heavenlies, which designates abode or locality, has been considered under 1:3, 20, 2:6. And the lesson is given—"by the church"—the community of the faithful in Christ being the instructress of angels in heaven. That lesson is—"the manifold wisdom of God." The adjective, one of the very numerous compounds of *polus*, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. But it occurs in a fragment of Eubulus... applied to the manifold hues of a garland of flowers; and in Euripides... it describes the variegated colours of a robe... The term, as Chrysostom notes, is not simply "varied," but "much varied." **The wisdom described by the remarkable epithet is not merely deep or great wisdom, but wisdom illustrious for its very numerous forms, and for the strange diversity yet perfect harmony of its myriads of aspects and methods of operation.** ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

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**Church** (1577) ([ekklesia](#) from [ekkaléo](#) = call out in turn from [ek](#) = out + [kaleo](#) = call) literally "called-out ones". The Greeks used [ekklesia](#) for assembly of citizens called out to transact city business. The church is a living organism, composed of living members joined together; through which Christ works, carries out His purposes and He lives.

**Rulers** (746) ([arche](#)) means first, chief or beginning. Here [arche](#) is a **metonym** (a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated) that stands for those having the position of priority and preeminence.

**Authorities** (1849) ([exousia](#) from [exesti](#) = it is permissible or allowed) means permission, authority, right, liberty, power to act. The idea in [exousia](#) can be summed up as the right and the might. Here [exousia](#) is a **metonym** that stands for those invested with the "right and the might". As in Ephesians 1:21 (see **note**) the context of the book indicates that those invested with power are the hosts of heaven, the angelic forces of God, including the host of fallen angels ruled by Satan (the ruler - [arche](#)) who are inextricably arrayed against God and His eternal purpose. As the angelic hosts witness the church universal, they must admit that having Jews and Gentiles in one body is evidence of God's wisdom. [Exousia](#) denotes the executive power whereas [arche](#) represents authority granting the power. The [arche](#) is the one who has the power to delegate authority, and the word [exousia](#), is the one who carries it out and executes that authority or power. [Arche](#) is the authority granting the power, and [exousia](#) is the one who executes the power

which pictures a divine order or an invisible rank.

**Heavenly** (2032) (**epouranios** from **epi** = upon + **ouranos** = heaven) means celestial, what pertains to or is in heaven, that is, upon heaven or existing in heaven (RWP), not the heavenly body of human beings or angels

**BDAG** - 1. pert. to being in the sky or heavens as an astronomical phenomenon, celestial, heavenly sw,mata ev. (opp. evpi,geia) celestial bodies 1 Cor 15:40 (acc. to vs. 41 the sun, moon, and stars are thought of, and are represented fig., as living beings clothed in light; 2. pert. to being associated with a locale for transcendent things and beings, heavenly, in heaven

**Gilbrant - Classical Greek** The adjective **epouranios** means “heavenly” (from **epi** , “at,” and **ouranios**, “heavenly”), or in a substantive usage either “the gods above” (**hoi epouranioi**) or the “things (i.e., phenomena) of heaven” (neuter, **ta epourania**). The emphasis of the term is on the location—not in the sense of “sky” but as the dwelling place of the divine. **Epouranios** is relatively rare in the Septuagint, being found only at Psalm 68:14 (LXX 67:14) in the canonical Scriptures in reference to “the Almighty” (RSV; Hebrew **shadday**). Theodotion (Codex Alexandrinus) reads **epouranios** at Daniel 4:26 (4:23 Masoretic Text) instead of **ouranios**. Second Maccabees writes of God “dwelling in heaven” (RSV; **ho tēn katoikian epouranion**, 3:39; cf. 3 Maccabees 6:28; 7:6). **Epouranios** is descriptive of God only in a variant reading in Matthew 18:35. Modern critical versions read **ho ouranios**. The Gospel of John records the only other Gospel text with **epouranios** (Jn 3:12). There Jesus contrasted “heavenly things” (**ta epourania**) with “earthly things” (**ta epigeia**). A similar contrast occurs in Paul’s writings (1 Corinthians 15:40; cf. 15:48,49; Philippians 2:10). **Ephesians** has the repeated formula **en tois epouraniois**, “in the heavenly (places)” (Eph 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). This should not be considered as solely the residence of God, for in “the heavenlies” (“high places” KJV) there is warfare against “spiritual wickedness,” evil of a supernatural order (Ephesians 6:12). **En tois epouraniois** is the cosmic level at which the effects of salvation are realized (Ephesians 2:6; cf. 2 Timothy 4:18) and at which the battle is both fought and won (Ephesians 6:12). Hebrews considers “heavenly” as descriptive of the present effects of the sacrifice of Christ (3:1), especially as over against the former “shadow.” Thus the “heavenly,” which is far superior to the former, is realized in the present by faith. Moreover, it will be realized in actuality in the future (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23; 11:26; 12:22).

**Epouranios** - 19x - heaven(1), heavenly(14), heavenly one(1), heavenly things(3). Jn. 3:12; 1 Co. 15:40; 1 Co. 15:48; 1 Co. 15:49; Eph. 1:3; Eph. 1:20; Eph. 2:6; Eph. 3:10; Eph. 6:12; Phil. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 3:1; Heb. 6:4; Heb. 8:5; Heb. 9:23; Heb. 11:16; Heb. 12:22. One time in Ps 68:14.