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How Did This Man Get Such Learning?

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Series: The Mind of Christ

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The moment of truth had come and gone, though even those who were part of the “inner circle” were not aware of the significance of what had happened. God had come to earth to start a church: *His* church. He was going to do it *His* way. His way was not man’s way. It still isn’t.

He did not come in the manner man expected. Man expected the grandeur of royalty; God came as a servant instead. Man expected the assertiveness of an emperor; God came clothed in utter humility. Man expected fire and brimstone, accompanied by judgment; God came bearing a message of love, accompanied by forgiveness. Man expected an exclusive gospel, limiting His salvation to His chosen Jewish race. God came and removed the barriers between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, and whispered, “Whosoever will may come”.

Nothing about this man Jesus was typical of man’s expectations. He was meek and lowly in heart. He spoke with authority, yet not the authority of one who was trying to impress you with His knowledge; in fact, when asked, He admitted that *He had no knowledge apart from His Father*.

From the moment of His baptism at the hands of His cousin John, it was obvious that His life was going to be one of total servitude. His first miracle took place quietly at a wedding at the request of His own mother. He let His Father choose His team, direct His steps, and even put every word in His mouth He was to speak. He came not to build a following, but to build a kingdom, and that kingdom would be made up of men and women who knew they were nothing apart from divine intervention. To do that, He had to demonstrate that. *So He did*. God inhabited an empty vessel, so man could see how God inhabits empty vessels. He came in meekness and weakness, lest the mind of man superimpose the satanic concepts of self-righteousness upon man’s relationship with his God.

He came to live *on* this earth while demonstrating to fallen

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man that this earth was *not* what we were to live *for*. Having allowed His Father to choose His team of apparent rejects, He began to go about touching lives, using physical illustrations of spiritual truths to capture their attention and turn their hearts heavenward. But, of course, man without God's indwelling Spirit simply tried to apply those truths in the same physical realm in which they were occurring. Hence, "living water" and "bread come down from heaven" made no sense to them.

They wanted more miracles, more loaves-and-fishes tricks. Another round of manna from heaven would be nice. They wanted to be able to see and feel and touch God by having Him come down to their level of consciousness, rather than allowing Him to draw them up to His.

The moment of truth we described in the opening moments of this study was the point in His ministry in which Jesus finally drew a line in the sands of Judea and asked them to step across if they really wanted *their hearts changed*. That isn't what they were after. The cost he was describing was monumental. The commitment He was calling for was total and unwavering. The rewards would be wonderful, but they were *too intangible for them to accept*.

So the Scripture records that, "the Jews began to grumble about Him." They began to murmur. Jesus simply drew the line a little deeper. He clearly articulated that He was God and that as God living in man, He was totally dependent upon His Father, and if they were to become part of His Kingdom, they must become just as dependent on Him. The result is found in John 6:

On hearing it, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard teaching, who can accept it?"
(John 6:60 NIV)

Jesus' response, in the next verse, defines His reaction to watering down the gospel to attract the minds of carnal men. He replied:

Does this offend you?

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.

(John 6:61b,63 NIV)

Verse 66 then reminds us of that moment of truth. It says,

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.
(John 6:66 NIV)

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They went home to watch television. They went back to their little league games and their weekends at the beach and all the other things that had occupied their hearts before this man Jesus had passed by. He simply wasn't what they wanted. They wanted a king who would overthrow the oppression of Rome and exalt the Jew to his rightful place in the scheme of nations. They wanted a God who would bring down fire from heaven and destroy His enemies, while performing miracles for the sake of His chosen elect.

They, like their predecessors years before, *simply wanted an earthly king with earthly objectives and earthly power*. That was not why God had come to earth. So the moment of truth passed, and the bulk of the Master's following passed on to "life as usual", leaving only a remnant to start over and try to form this thing called the "church" out of seemingly nothing. That, incidentally, is God's kind of raw material.

We take up reading there in John, chapter seven. Peter has affirmed that the twelve have nowhere else to go. He responds:

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.
(John 6:68b NIV)

The Scripture continues with this statement:

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.

No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."

For even his own brothers did not believe in him.
(John 7:1-5 NIV)

Now mind you, *this was God* occupying the body of a man. He possessed the power that spoke the universe into being. He it was who was holding the entirety of creation together by the breath of His power. He only had to say a word, *one tiny syllable*, and all of mankind would be hopelessly crushed in an avalanche of divine judgment. He had but to nod His precious head and His Father would reach down and destroy all mankind and create in

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its place a race of men and women whose hearts would have no choice but to obey. This was not His only option. This was *His choice*. And it was the crucial choice that Philippians, chapter two, describes for us when it tells us to “let this mind be in you.”

Think about it! God has to stay in Galilee because someone wants to kill Him. And He owns the keys to the whole universe. Why would He allow fallen man to threaten Him? To limit His freedom? To rain on His parade? Why not exercise the power that is His and remove those people who do not grasp who He is and are attempting to end His life? He is God! He is eternal! Why allow a group of religious hypocrites to stand between Him and what appears to be a chance to promote His ministry? How dare they?

Notice these things about this passage:

1- He purposed to stay away from Judea because the Jews were waiting to take His life (verse 1). It was a deliberate decision on God’s part not to go right away. He could have. And of course He could have gone and been unharmed. He could have placed an invisible shield between His body and theirs. He could have paralyzed instantly those who sought to take His life. He could have allowed armies of angels from on high to sweep down and crush the entire legion of antagonists who threatened His kingdom. He could have. But that was not His plan. And this was not His time. So He chose to stay away. What an awesome thought. Was He afraid? That’s blasphemy. And we will see in a moment that when His Father said, “Go,” He walked right into their midst without an ounce of fear. “God hath not given us a spirit of fear”.

No, Jesus stayed away *because His Loving Father said, “not yet”*. How many times we miss the will of God because we will not listen to the still, small voice of God saying, “Wait.” To us, right is right, and now is now. We want instant victories. We want instant revenge, but “vengeance is mine”, says the Lord. You say, “but it’s taking so long”. How long has it been since the powers of Satan thrust Jesus upon that cross? Will God vindicate His name? Of course. We know He will, and we know how. We just don’t know when. Why is He waiting? *Because what He is doing while He is waiting is eternal in nature. So His infinite patience is fueled by His infinite love to wait.* If it were up to us, we would have rained judgment upon this earth long

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ago. But God is "...longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."¹ Oh, Beloved, listen carefully for the timing of God. Don't run ahead of Him and demand results before His clock strikes the hour of "now". Because it was not yet His Father's time, Jesus *purposed to stay away*. To His brothers, it was an act of cowardice or foolishness. To His Father, it was an act of obedience.

2- Jesus' brothers taunted Him. As of now, they were not believers. We know that from verse 5. What a humiliating experience. You say, "My family doesn't appreciate my Christian convictions. They make fun of me." So? Here was the living God inhabiting the "earth suit" of a human, and His half-brothers couldn't believe that this humble, faithful, older brother had suddenly become the deliverer of the Jews. They weren't, however, unwilling to capitalize on His fame. They were willing to be His public relations agents, *but only if He would stop His "Harry Humble" routine and use His power to generate a following again*. To them, He had the masses in the palm of His hands and let them get away. People were following Him everywhere. The church was packed. A building committee had been formed to double the sanctuary size and build a new educational complex. "Israel's fastest-growing flock" could be written over the door. Then He went and gave His "take-up-your-cross" message, and the crowds thinned to a handful. Jesus' brothers had a plan and we read,

Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.

No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."
(John 7:3b,4 NIV)

They, too, had missed it. They thought His ministry was miracles, and His problem was public relations. He just hadn't healed the right folks at the right time, and He had to stop talking about such unpopular topics as "the Father drawing men" and "the flesh profiting nothing". Any good politician knows there are things you discuss and things you don't. But Jesus wasn't a politician. Jesus was God. And He was not going to change His message or His purpose one iota to please the multitudes, the disciples, or even His own family. The Master understood

¹ II Peter 3:9

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what it meant to be rejected, even by His own. But to be rejected *because of your message* was an honor. It still is.

So the Master, totally misunderstood even by those closest to Him, simply continued to do His Father's will. Here is what happened next:

Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.

The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.

You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come."

Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. (John 7:6-9)

Jesus was trying to impress upon them the difference between one who was inhabited by God and one who was not. For the unbeliever, time is not the issue. He is his own boss, the captain of his own fate. He can determine when and if he will go to a certain place or say a certain thing. Not so with one whose life is in the hands of a sovereign God. To please the Father, Jesus could not go until the Father said to go. To the believer who wants to be totally yielded, *every decision is vital, and the timing of every decision is vital*. God had a plan for Jesus. For Him to have gone up to the feast *one minute before His Father said to, would have been to miss the Father's best*. We forget that. We think that God does not have specific people for us to meet, specific ministries for us to perform, specific words for us to say, and we forget that *unless we stay in harmony with His plan, we may well rush ahead and miss those people and those opportunities*.

The second difference between the committed believer and the unbeliever is that one of the two is certain to be hated. And guess who? Jesus said: "*There's no reason for them to hate you. You stand for the same things they do. They will hate me because I bear testimony that what they do is wrong.*" Jesus took the persecution and rejection as a necessary part of living in a foreign country. His citizenship was in heaven. His language was spiritual. His objectives did not match with the goals of those who worshiped this world. He lived for another kingdom, another day, another life. Make that commitment, and you will run at cross-purposes with society. Your life, your testimony, and your convictions will *necessitate rejection*. The rejection you

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hate is, in effect, a sign of your success.

The church today has lost that concept. It is trying to attract the world by buying into its culture. To study them to reach them is noble. *To imitate them to set them at ease is blasphemy.* Oh, dear God, teach us the difference. What happened next?

However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.

Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?"

Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people."

But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

(John 7:10-13 NIV)

Compare that phrase "He went not publicly, but in secret" with verse 4. Remember? It said, "No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret." His brothers were trying to force God into the mold of man. They wanted Him to publicize His ministry in order to glorify His ministry. Jesus went in secret in order to glorify His Father. His ministry was not to be the object of glory. His Father was. Oh, that we could learn that today. The world is not impressed with our ministries. They are only impressed when they see God. Our ministries are only vehicles God uses to spread the seed of the word of God. When we point to them, we take men's eyes off of the source of the seed, *God Himself*. What a danger we all face, as individuals and as Christians collectively. We get so enamored with how God blesses *what we do*, we forget that it is because of *who He is*, *not because of what we do* that glory ensues. What we do is an evidence of grace and the fact that the likes of us are allowed to be involved is simply proof that grace is undeserved!

Now when Jesus reached the feast, He found no surprises. They were waiting to entrap Him, and the crowds were arguing among themselves as to whether or not He was real. True to form, no one would argue openly about Him because they did not want to incur the wrath of the Jewish leaders; but behind closed doors, this carpenter turned miracle worker was *the* subject on everyone's lips.

The feast was nearing its midway point when Jesus surfaced. The passage continues:

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Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach.

The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?”

Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.

If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

(John 7:14-18 NIV)

Here is the crux of this passage. The Master has quietly slipped into the festivities unnoticed, and suddenly appears in the temple courts amidst all of the religious leaders who had vowed to take His life. You see, it wasn’t *His life*. So, if the Father wanted to send Him into the front lines of the enemy fire, that was fine with Him. He only wanted to be there *at the exact moment the Father prescribed*.

Look what He did when He got there. *He began to teach*. His goal was not to prove His deity by astounding them with more miracles. They had seen enough miracles to know He was different. Now it was time for them to understand that He was God. So He began to break open the Scriptures for them. He took the truths of the Word and made them come alive. This was not the dull, dry legalism the Pharisees and Scribes had made so famous. This was life! He talked of things they understood, and made the law and the prophets apply to their anger, their adultery, their fears, their faithlessness. The crowds were silenced in awe. They did not all like the message. But *something about this man was different*. He had a kind of knowledge none of their seminary professors had, yet *He had not the formal schooling they had*.

“How did this man get such learning without having studied?” they asked. Literally, they were asking, “*How did this man gain such wisdom without a formal education?*” In other words, “Where did His insights come from?” The passage says “*they were amazed*.” That same phrase was used in Matthew 7 where we read:

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The multitudes were amazed at His teaching;

for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not
as their scribes. (Matthew 7:28b,29 NASB77)

They couldn't quite put their finger on it, but something about His teaching was demonstrably different. This wasn't a course on Jewish history. This was a word from God, and there was a kind of power behind it that brought conviction, repentance, comfort, and love all at the same time. When He spoke, Heaven came down and touched earth. They didn't understand, but they were amazed.

Their logical question was "who taught this guy?" How could a simple carpenter who had never been to their rabbinical schools have an understanding of the Scriptures that literally tore away the shield of religiosity from their hearts as they listened, and confronted them with the Living God? Where did He get His learning? Where indeed.

Down through the ages, men and women have asked that question again and again. Not of Jesus. Of men and women who have so submerged their lives in God's word and so responded in obedience to that word and so humbled themselves before the God of that word that from their lips come words of wisdom so far beyond their education or their station in life that those who have ears to hear are stunned.

Most all of us have come upon people who seem to have had virtually no formal education, no religious training, no serious preparation for the ministry. Yet when they speak, wisdom flows from their hearts to yours. I can think of four or five people in particular, who literally amaze me with their sensitivity to God's word and their ability to communicate truth, not in a polished form, but in the form of deep, abiding wisdom. I have often wished to be that kind of man.

Perhaps some of you have as well. I believe that Jesus was exhibiting here the fruits of a life so characterized by that abiding relationship that those who are the recipients of contact with that life are never the same again. Often, we are led to ask: "Where did they get such wisdom?" The answer, I believe, lies in some common denominators. If we are rightly understanding what is being said in this passage, I believe it means that the most limited of intellects, the most uneducated, the most unlikely prospects to be teachers, may well become the spiritual

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giants of our generation as well, so long as they heed certain basic Scriptural principles.

I believe three things must be present for a man or woman to become genuinely wise. They are:

1- You must literally be saturated with the Word of God.

Jesus said, “My teaching is not my own.” He did not seek to interpret the Word through the grid of His experience, He rather interpreted His experience through the grid of the Word. To do that, He had to be totally submerged in it. Joshua 1:8 reads:

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:8 NIV)

Meditate in it day and night. Jesus said in John, chapter 15,

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:7,8 NIV)

The Word of God is not a textbook. It is a person. It is “alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.”² The time you spend in God’s Word is time spent with God Himself. To possess supernatural wisdom, you must devote your life to studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word of God. Not hearing it only. Studying it like the Bereans, who Paul said,

—These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily [to see] whether those things were so. (Acts 17:11 NKJV)

It does not happen in an hour on Sunday, or even in a half hour a day in a quiet time. It is a lifetime pursuit to so have a grasp on the Word of God that it is on your lips and in your consciousness day and night, night and day, as you walk by the way, as you lie down at night, it is engraved on the doorposts of your house.³ It’s everywhere. It’s your life. Television may have to go. Some sports activities and interests may have to get less attention. Newsweek and USA Today may get less reading time. Whatever time you have, you have to be in the Word. You may

² Hebrews 4:12

³ Deuteronomy 11

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not have that desire, but the desire comes from the Word itself; so until you begin the process, the thirst will never come. It is a choice, not a response.

2- You must be obedient.

You must, first of all, be a Christian. Reading the Scriptures without the Holy Spirit is like reading it without glasses when you cannot see without glasses. Jesus said:

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,
(John 5:39 NIV)

Until you come to know its author, the book will not make sense to you. Its whole purpose is to develop a personal relationship with the One who penned its pages. And once a Christian, your ability to gain wisdom is in direct proportion to a) your saturation with the Word, and b) your obedience to what the Word has said to you.

If God speaks to you through His Word about lying, for example, and you refuse to deal with it, you are not allowing knowledge to be turned into wisdom. You, then, are stifled in your attempt to gain the Mind of Christ. You have unconfessed sin in your life. That sin is disobedience to the known will of God. If the Word is not fresh to you, it may be because you refused to allow it entrance into your heart of hearts regarding an issue you did not want to deal with.

Jesus said this:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”
(John 14:21 NKJV)

Those are promises limited to those who obey. Many believers spend time in God’s Word and never seem to grow. They view it as a book to study, not a person to obey. It is an intellectual pursuit, not a spiritual pilgrimage. It is an exercise of the mind, not a challenge to the heart. If you are one of those, you can spend the rest of your life studying Scripture and be no wiser at life’s end than you are now. Jesus’ wisdom came because “He always did those things that please the Father.”⁴ (John 8:29). Never once did He come in contact with the Father’s Word and

⁴ John 8:29

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say, “no”. That’s the secret of wisdom. First, saturate yourself with His Word, and second, do what it says.

3- Humble yourself daily under the mighty hand of God.

This may be the toughest part of all. Many a man or woman has begun his or her pilgrimage through life saturating themselves with the Word, and as honestly as possible, being obedient. But somewhere along the way, pride in the very knowledge itself or the fruit of obedience itself begins to enter in. Soon we begin to feel that God ought to be impressed with our spirituality because we have been faithful.

No, Beloved, the minute we think God ought to be impressed with us *for any reason*, we lose touch with wisdom. Wisdom flows through humility.

... *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

(I Peter 5:5 NKJV)

He could use Jesus so mightily because:

1- He abided in His Father’s Word.

2- He did everything that Word asked Him to. (He always obeyed.)

3- He did nothing in His own energy or strength. (He constantly humbled Himself.)

There’s the missing key for most of us. Sometimes we are unwilling to bathe ourselves constantly in the word. It just costs too much. Sometimes, we become students of the Word, but hearers only, deceiving our own selves. We’re not obedient. But often, we search and we obey, but we forget...

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

(Philippians 2:13 NKJV)

Jesus never forgot that. And from His lips flowed the wisdom of His Father to such a degree that those listening stood in utter awe. Not all of them responded. But virtually all of them knew that they were in the presence of someone who had something they did not have.

“How did this man get such learning?” they asked. How indeed. The same way you and I get it. He had not been to their rabbinical schools for a reason. This is no condemnation of education. This is a condemnation of letting education become the source of your authority. Many a man or woman has gone to

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seminary or Bible school to be trained in the Word, only to come away thinking his or her newfound information *about* the Word was the equivalent of transformation *by* the Word. They are not the same at all.

You can have the wisdom of Solomon, Beloved. Yes, you. It isn't found in your degrees or your certificates or even in your IQ. It is found in your heart, and it is placed there by the Holy Spirit as you saturate, meditate, obey, and humble yourself.

Do that, day after day after day. And one day, much to your surprise, you will awaken to discover that "you have become like a tree, planted by rivers of living waters".⁵ You didn't expect to. You were too humble for that. You only sought the mind of God. Then one day you realized, He gave it to you. You overheard someone say of you:

"How did this person get such learning?"

And suddenly, you knew.

⁵ Psalm 1:3

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