

# The Wisdom From Above

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The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. James 3.17

I recently read Plato's Republic again. I had forgotten that Plato was such a smart tater! He stands as a good example of the best that the world has to offer as far as wisdom is concerned; some of his ideas are very interesting and thought provoking, while others are downright terrifying. Though he was a brilliant man, Plato is not God. How should a Christian act within a government? We can choose to listen to Plato, or we can read through the Bible and see what God has to say. This is a choice that must be made because God and Plato do not teach the same things. This is choice that must be made multiple times every day as we live our lives: are we going to follow the teachings, theories and philosophies of mankind, or are we going to follow God and obey his commandments? Our choice will ultimately determine the kind of person that we will become, spiritually minded or physically minded. An interesting first point is that these two wisdoms do not always teach different things. Paul uses the concept of a body to describe the church. Every Christian is a member of the body and, while some of the body parts have more noticeable roles, none of the body parts are unimportant. If we all realize that everyone is special and has an important job to do, then we will treat everyone well and help the entire body grow into a mature person (1 Corinthians 12.20-25; Ephesians 4.15-16). Plato, in describing what he saw as the ideal society, used the exact same metaphor. He realized that success only comes when everyone works together and, in an ideal society, the lowest farmer is given the same honor as the greatest leader. These similarities should not surprise us because God has given mankind intelligence. We should expect that there are certain divine principles and characteristics that mankind can discover using our God-given intellect (Romans 1.20).

Mankind's wisdom does not always match up with God's wisdom, however. When this is the case we must be able to tell the difference between the two. The wisdom that comes from earth is demonic and sensual. It does not focus on spiritual things but on fleshly desires and lusts; it elevates man's will, making the creation above the creator. For example, God wants us to pray for all of the world's leaders so that saints the world over can live godly lives in peace (1 Timothy 2.4). Earthly wisdom, however, tells us that we should overthrow unjust governments and replace them with ones that, in our judgment, are better suited to the job of governance. These two views cannot be reconciled, and we have a choice to make. Another example is how these different wisdoms value human life. Plato's highest good was the state, and when someone was no longer of service to the state, they should do everyone a favor and "stop using resources". God's highest good, however, is love for the individual. Rather than being concerned with the survival of temporary nations, God is concerned with eternal consequences for each individual person's soul. He desires that all people should be saved, not tossed aside when their government has no use for them. Here, again, these two wisdoms are not the same. We have a choice to make, and the saints must be able to tell the difference between demonic doctrines (those that take glory away from God) and heavenly wisdom (those things that give glory to God). This choice isn't always easy to make, and sometimes it is very difficult to tell that a choice is even being made. We struggle with this, and it has been a problem for saints since the start of Christianity. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were still not spiritual people (1 Corinthians 3.3). In Hebrews, some people who should have been teachers were still struggling with the very basic teachings of Christianity (Hebrews 5.12). However, there were others who had trained themselves to determine the difference between heavenly wisdom and earthly erudition (Hebrews 5.14). We want to become people who are wise, but we don't want to be striving after Platonic wisdom. We must consciously make the decision to immerse ourselves in God's word and look to heaven for answers rather than men. Plato's ideas may lead to a truly great earthly republic, but only the teachings of Jesus Christ can make us members of God's kingdom. He alone is the way to the Father (John 14.6).