

INTRODUCTION

**THE HOLINESS OF GOD DEMANDED IT  
THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD DETERMINED IT  
THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD DIRECTED IT**

Last week we were well reminded that there is a heaven-wide difference between the ways and thoughts of God and the despairing thoughts of men. If salvation were *devised by man*, then it would be of works. But salvation is *designed by God*, and is therefore by faith. So when it comes to the *Cause of The Cross*,

**THE WISDOM OF GOD DESIGNED IT**

In reference to the wisdom of God, A.W. Tozer writes:

Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision. (A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge Of God*).

God is infinite wisdom. So it's utterly foolish and futile for us to think we can somehow make improvements upon God and His plans, and that includes the plan of salvation. How can you possibly improve the Infinite? How can you perfect Perfection?

Solomon wrote:

I know that whatever God does,  
It shall be forever.  
Nothing can be added to it,  
And nothing taken from it.  
God does it, that men should fear before Him.  
—Eccl. 3:14

God does it that men may reverence Him. Know Him. Trust Him. Obey Him. Worship Him.

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This morning, as we look at 1 Corinthians 1:17-31, let's consider something. Not only does the message, or "word," (literally the *logos*) of the cross seem foolish to unbelievers, but the entire redemptive story and process seems foolish. Let's consider:

### THE NATURE OF HIS BIRTH

Jesus was born of a virgin. The world says that's absurd—you can't have a birth without an earthly father (but that's the wisdom of the world). The Jews turned his virgin birth into a scandal. They said he was born of illegitimate birth—he was the son of an adulteress. They hurled these false rumors at Jesus Himself—especially those from Nazareth, His own home town:

"Is this not the carpenter, the *Son of Mary*, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him. (Mark 6:3; italics added)

The normal Jewish practice was to identify the son by his father's name (son of Joseph), unless the father was unknown. Here they purposely insulted Jesus and accused Him of being born of illegitimate birth. Note Jesus' words to the Jews and their response:

"You do the deeds of your father [the devil]." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." (John 8:41)

Again, they sarcastically implied that Jesus' birth was illegitimate. Jesus had to have one human parent or He could not have been human. But He also had to have divine parentage or He could not have been the perfect, sinless sacrifice on our behalf.

*If man had contrived some sort of world-savior, he would have done everything to prevent a public scandal from ever getting started.*

### THE PLACE OF HIS BIRTH

The place of His birth was Bethlehem of Judea; a little hamlet just outside of Jerusalem. Although small in size, and seemingly insignificant, "little among the thousands of Judah" (Micah 5:2), it was the birthplace of King David, as well as the Messiah, the Ruler of Israel, the One from eternity (Micah 5:2).

*If this had been man's doing, Jesus would have been born in Jerusalem (the capitol city). More than likely, he would not have even been Jewish! The world has always shown hatred and contempt toward the Jewish people.*

### THE PLACE HE LIVED

Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. Due to Gentile influence, Galilean Jews were more influenced by Greek and Roman culture than the Judean Jews. It was even called "Galilee of the Gentiles." Even the Galilean accent and dialect were noticeably different than the Judean. So the more orthodox Judeans despised the Galileans. But Galileans themselves despised people from Nazareth.

Nathanael (one of the twelve), was from Cana of Galilee, but spoke of Nazareth with contempt when he said concerning Jesus, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jhn. 1:46). So Jesus not only “lived on the other side of the tracks” (Galilee), He “lived on the other side of those tracks” (Nazareth).

*Men would say, “Okay, if He has to be Jewish, let’s make sure He lives in Judah!”*

## THE CLAIM HE MADE

He claimed to be God; Deity. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as the Mormons, say that Jesus nowhere in the gospels made a direct claim to deity. But the Jews of Jesus’ day, heard Him loudly and clearly.

Jesus said to them [the Jews], “Most assuredly [there’s no doubt about it], I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him. (John 8:58-59a)

The Jews clearly understood the meaning of “I AM.” In fact, we find it three times in John 8. When God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3:14, God referred to Himself as “I AM,” YHWH or Jehovah—the Self-existent One—the Eternal One. As far as the Jews were concerned, there was absolutely no misunderstanding or misreading Jesus’ claim to deity.

When Jesus used the phrase, “My Father,” He was speaking of a unique relationship with the Father. We find that phrase approximately 44 times in the four gospels.

But Jesus answered them [the Jews, who had already sought to kill Him] “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. (John 5:17-18)

“I and My Father are one.” Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.” (John 10:30-33)

Jesus’ claim to be God was the alleged crime for which He was tried, convicted, and crucified. At the religious trial before the Sanhedrin, Caiphas, the high priest, asked Jesus point blankly:

“Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. [Yes!] Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.” (Matthew 26:64-66)

The apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:4, 6-8a, concerning Jesus:

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen by God and precious. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture [Isa. 28:16],

“Behold I lay in Zion  
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,  
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”

Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient,

“The stone which the builders rejected  
Has become the chief cornerstone.”  
and “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”

The builders were Israel’s religious leaders and rulers. After investigating all the claims of Jesus regarding His Messiahship, they found He did not meet their standards of what Messiah ought to be, and rejected Him. They disallowed Him.

*The Jews viewed Christ (the very Word Himself) as scandalous, blasphemous, and offensive, and rejected Him. But from God’s perspective, He is the “chief cornerstone, chosen, and precious.” And to those who unashamedly believe and receive Him, they find Jesus to be precious, and discover the power and wisdom of God.*

## THE MEN HE CHOSE

His disciples were common, ordinary men. They were not highly educated or prominent socially, politically, or religiously. They had not been trained in the rabbinical schools (as was Paul). Most of them were Galileans themselves. Peter, Andrew, James, and John, were just common fishermen. Peter was impulsive, reactionary, and prejudiced. Philip was indecisive. Bartholomew was prejudiced. James and John were self-seeking, ambitious, and explosive (Sons of Thunder). Thomas was skeptical. Matthew (employed by the Roman government) was a hated tax collector. Simon the Zealot, was part of a radical revolutionary group to resist Roman aggression.

What a motley group. From the world’s perspective, these men were misfits. Nobodies! But in the first century, these men turned the world upside-down with the powerful message of the crucified, risen, ascended, and exalted Savior and Lord!

*No CEO would have ever given these guys the time of day. Donald Trump would have never gotten to fire them, because he never would have hired them! These guys were considered the scum of the earth. If you ever expect to have any kind of world-movement, it’s bizarre to include men like this! But that’s the way the world thinks.*

But again, God’s ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts.

Where is the wise [expert]? Where is the scribe [writer & interpreter]? Where is the disputer [debater, philosopher] of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Cor. 1:20)

Human philosophy and psychology have never found out God. Philosophy and psychology have never found the solution to man's sin. They never truly answer the questions of life: Where did I come from? What is my purpose here? What does all this mean? Where am I going? Regardless of what others may think, Dr. Phil and Oprah don't have the answers either.

In Acts 17, when Paul came to Athens, a city filled with philosophers and endless philosophies, as well as numerous gods, He discovered an altar with the inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. All their past great philosophers had come and gone: Socrates, Plato, & Aristotle. But they still hadn't discovered the real meaning of life. They hadn't found the One True Living God. So Paul proclaimed Him to the Athenians, and preached Christ's death and resurrection.

For you see [consider] your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble [birth] are called. (1 Cor. 1:26)

God still calls common and ordinary people to salvation, so He can do uncommon and extraordinary things for them and through them. Yes, the influential, the intellectual, the wealthy, the powerful, can all be saved. The celebrity, the well-known sports figure, and even the Hollywood star can come to know Christ—as long as they come to Christ in humble repentance of sin and simple faith in Christ alone for salvation.

So the gospel of Christ runs counter to the thoughts and ways of sinful man. The cross completely strips man of everything: his pride, power, possessions, prestige, position, philosophy, religion, and even his own good works, so that he may call out to God and God alone, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." That's why not *many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, and not many of noble birth are saved*. The gospel crushes man's sin and pride. But it also promises forgiveness and deliverance from sin.

The message of the cross is not about felt needs. It's not about improving your self-esteem or image. It's not even about making you happy. It's about rescuing us from an eternal hell, forever separated from God. No amount of wealth, education, power, prestige, religion, good works, or anything else can save your soul from hell. Only God can do that through Jesus Christ.