

Sunday, September 6, 2015—I Corinthians 1:22-25: We Preach Christ Crucified

Introduction/Review

- In our study together Last week we covered verses 19 through 21. In doing so, we spent the bulk of our time looking at verse 20.
- We saw that verse 20 contains four questions. Three of which call out three different types of objections to the wisdom of God: 1) “the wise,” 2) “the scribe,” and 3) “the disputer of this world.” The fourth and final question encapsulates the utter folly of all three types of objections.
 - *The Wise*—by asking the question “where is the wise” Paul is addressing the myriad of ways that man’s wisdom opposes the wisdom of God.
 - *The Scribe*— by asking the question “where is the scribe” Paul is addressing the religious aspect of the world’s wisdom.
 - *The Disputer*—a “disputer of this world” is going to seek to oppose the “wisdom of God” through the learned high road of education and philosophy.
- After rhetorically addressing “the wise,” “the scribe,” and “the disputer of this world” Paul drops his fourth and final rhetorical question, “hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” In one fell swoop Paul brushes aside the totality of the wisdom of this world and declares it to be foolish i.e., void of understanding or sound judgment; weak in intellect; unwise; imprudent; acting without judgment or discretion in particular things. Proceeding from folly, or marked with folly; silly; vain; trifling. (*Webster’s 1828*)
- I Corinthians 1:21-- God in his wisdom made it so that the world by the use of its wisdom would not know God. God chose to do it this way so that “no flesh should glory in his presence” (I Cor. 1:29). What pleased God was to take the very thing that the world views and foolish i.e., preaching and use that “to save them that believe.”
- This morning we want to move on with our exposition of the text by looking at verses 22 through 25.

I Corinthians 1:22

- **For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:**
- Many times in the past we have touched upon this verse when discussing God’s dealings with Israel in time past. From the earliest days of God’s dealings with Israel as a nation God dealt with them according to signs.

- Paul says in this verse that the Jews “require a sign.” The English word “require” means 1) To demand; to ask, as of right and by authority. 2) To claim; to render necessary; as a duty or anything indispensable; as, the law of God requires strict obedience, according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*.
- Exodus 4:1-9
- John 4:48
- I Corinthians 1:22—the Greeks meanwhile “seek after wisdom (*Sophia*).”
- Who do you suppose the Greeks are? Gentiles.
- The word translated “Greeks” in verse 22 is the word *Hellēn*. Of the 27 times that *Hellēn* occurs in the New Testament 20 times it is translated Greek(s) and 7 times it is rendered Gentile(s). Sometimes the word is used to refer to someone of Greek nationality while other times it used to refer to those who are non-Jews.
- Romans 1:14, 16: 2:9-10; 3:9; 10:12
- I Corinthians 12:13
 - Galatians 3:28
 - Colossians 3:11
- It is clear from comparing the cross references that Paul uses the words “Greek(s)” and “Gentile(s)” interchangeably to refer to all those who are not Jews. The notion that some have advanced that a “Greek” is a God fearing Gentile as opposed to regular old pagan Gentile is totally without foundation or textual justification.
- While the Jews required a sign the Greeks sought after the acquisition of wisdom.
 - Acts 17:15-21—the Greeks in the quest for knowledge “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.” The Greeks were all about acquiring and advancing the wisdom of men.

I Corinthians 1:23

- **But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;**
- Paul was not in the business of humoring the Jews in their fixation with signs or the Greeks in their desire for wisdom. Rather, Paul was in the business of preaching “Christ crucified.”

- Verse 17—“preach” “the cross of Christ”
- Verse 18—“preaching of the cross”
- Verse 21—“the foolishness of preaching”
- The preaching of “Christ crucified” was for Jews a “stumblingblock.” *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* defines a stumblingblock (or stumblingstone) as “any cause of stumbling; that which causes to err.” The dictionary also gives I Corinthians 1:23 as the verse to help define the word.
- The Greek word translated “stumblingblock” is also rendered as offense 9x, occasion of stumbling 1x, occasion to fall 1x, and thing that offends 1x.
 - Romans 9:33; 11:9; 14:13; 16:17
- Paul’s preaching of “Christ crucified” was clearly a stumblingblock and offensive for the Jews that heard his preaching even in the city of Corinth.
 - Acts 13:44-46; 18:6
- I Corinthians 1:23—while the message of “Christ crucified” was offensive to the Jews it was foolishness i.e., “folly; want of understanding” to the Greeks. (*Webster’s 1828*)
 - Verse 18—“to them that perish foolishness”
 - Verse 20—“hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world”
 - Verse 21—“by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

I Corinthians 1:24

- **But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.**
- “Them which are called” is a reference to those who heard Paul’s preaching of “Christ crucified” and believed it. These people did not allow Paul’s preaching of “Christ crucified” to be stumblingblock nor did they receive it as foolishness. Rather they heard it and believed it.
- For those who are saved (verse 18) whether Jew or Gentile, Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God (verse 21).

I Corinthians 1:25

- **Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**
- This verse is something of a turn of a phrase or figure of speech. God is neither foolish nor weak for he is both all powerful (omnipotent) and all knowing (omniscient).
- God even at his most foolish point is wiser than any man. Likewise God at his weakest point is stronger than man.
- Paul's "preaching of the cross" tells people that they are neither smart enough nor strong enough to bring about their own justification before God. Rather they are going to have to trust and rely exclusively in the work of Christ on their behalf because God will accept to substitutes for the complete work of his son the Lord Jesus Christ.