

Wisdom

The Greek philosophers of the first century followed their earlier counterparts in emphasizing rhetoric as a means of persuasion. Their emphasis upon human wisdom and rejection of God's role in human affairs (similar to the rationalism of the eighteenth century and secular humanism today) caused them to reject anything supernatural. Instead, they preferred a self-styled intellectualism that relied on man to solve man's problems, most of which man created. They exalted the art of persuasion to the extent that the manner of speaking (extensive vocabulary and endless analogies combined with elegant oratory) became more important than the content or meaning.

Having rejected the divine, they attempted to understand the world apart from divine morality, divine revelation, and God himself. However, God acted in such a way as to demonstrate the foolishness of the wisdom of men. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). And so Paul could tell the Christians at Corinth, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). In the person of Jesus Christ God demonstrated his wisdom, so much so that Christ personifies the wisdom of God.

Everything about Jesus Christ set at naught the worldly wisdom so prevalent in Corinth. His birth of a virgin demanded a supernatural act of God (Luke 1:35). His teaching centered on moral absolutes divinely revealed (Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 5:30). His identity as God in the flesh (John 1:14) directly countered their concept of a disinterested Deity. The atoning sacrifice of his death (Mark 10:45) ran counter to their idea of what God would or should do. Certainly, the supernatural act of the resurrection would cause them intellectual distress (1 Corinthians 1:23; 15:3-4). Additionally, the message based upon these things was inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

All of these matters should cause us to reflect upon the nature of wisdom itself. Wisdom is, in a sense, a world-view. It is the way we use what knowledge we have to meet the problems we face. Christ Jesus is wisdom from God. He took on this role when he accepted the limited form of humanity in order to solve the world's greatest problem -- the need for a Savior. Men needed model morality (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). Men needed a means to be separated from sin (1 Peter 1:16; Acts 2:38). Men needed capital in order to buy back the relationship with their Creator they had given away (Isaiah 59:2). Human wisdom, both then and now, knows only how to deny these needs -- an act of foolishness. Only God's wisdom was able to do something to meet these needs, and this he did in the person of Jesus Christ. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Yes indeed! He did so through Jesus Christ, the One who is Wisdom.

By: Kevin Rhodes