

1 Corinthians 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God (epeide gar en te sophia tou theou ouk egno ho kosmos dia tēs sophias ton theon, ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔγνω ὁ κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας τὸν θεόν)—Paul explains why God chose the cross: human wisdom failed. **In the wisdom of God** means according to God's wise design—He created a world that reveals His existence (Rom 1:19-20). Yet **the world by wisdom knew not God** (ouk egno, οὐκ ἔγνω, "did not know")—human philosophy, despite access to general revelation, failed to produce saving knowledge of God. The verb ginōskō (γινώσκω) means intimate, relational knowledge, not mere information.

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (eudokēsen ho theos dia tēs mōrias tou kērygmatos sōsai tous pisteuontas, εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς πιστεύοντας)—God's alternative method: kerygma (κήρυγμα, "proclamation, preaching"), the simple announcement of the gospel. **The foolishness of preaching** is not that preaching is foolish but that the content preached (the cross) appears foolish. Salvation comes through faith (pisteuontas, πιστεύοντας, present participle: "those believing"), not intellectual achievement.

Historical Context

Greek philosophers (from Socrates to the Stoics) sought to know God or ultimate reality through reason, contemplation, and dialectic. They failed—not for lack of brilliance but because sin blinds the mind (2 Cor 4:4) and hardens the heart. God's solution was not better philosophy but gospel proclamation: the announcement of what God has done in Christ, received by faith, not comprehended by reason.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why did human wisdom, despite access to God's revelation in creation, fail to produce saving knowledge of God?
2. How does "the foolishness of preaching" (simple gospel proclamation) succeed where sophisticated philosophy fails?
3. What is the relationship between faith and reason, and why is faith necessary for knowing God?

Interlinear Text

ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳς τοῦ θεὸς οὐκ ἔγνω ὁ
after For that in G3588 the wisdom G3588 God not knew G3588
G1894 G1063 G1722 G4678 G2316 G3756 G1097

κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίᾳς τὸν θεὸς εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς
the world by G3588 the wisdom G3588 God it pleased G3588 God
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διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς
by G3588 the foolishness G3472 G3588 of preaching G2782 to save G3588
G1223 G4982

πιστεύοντας.
them that believe
G4100

Additional Cross-References

Luke 10:21 (Parallel theme): In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Matthew 11:25 (Parallel theme): At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Ephesians 3:10 (References God): To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

1 Corinthians 1:24 (References God): But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Daniel 2:20 (References God): Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

Romans 1:28 (References God): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Romans 11:33 (References God): O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

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