

# A Religion Like No Other 4) Not Fooled by the World

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 • 2024-03-03 • Lent Series: A Religion Like No Other



You might have seen how it's been in the news lately. Artificial intelligence is really starting to take over. And what a lot of people complain about is how it has the ability to distort reality. Maybe you've heard in recent news how artificial intelligence has made some humorous changes to historical figures. For example, George Washington, the first president looks more like George Washington Carver, a prominent black scientist. Or the National Hockey League, which is all men, is depicted with a picture of famous NHL players... including a woman. Sure, those types of mistakes distort history or change reality a little bit. But sometimes it can be not just inaccurate but harmful. For example, you might ask it to generate a picture of a Nazi soldier, and it will try to be diverse with its image representation. Then it will represent the Nazis soldiers as women and with many of them as black instead of German.

Obviously, that's a distortion of history and a changing of the facts. But it gets worse. Some people turn to AI for a robot companion or date. A chatbot app will pretend to be their friend and flirt with them. It will feed them information and ideas, and it will tell them that it cares about them. It is distorting reality, especially since many of those artificial intelligence dating bots are basically transgender affirming bots that will give chat with you about things that are strongly opposed to the Christian faith.

And all this is sometimes humorous. Perhaps it might even be a little bit upsetting that people would try to change history or give a distorted reality. But what about God's Word? And what about religion? What happens when religion is distorted or changed? Well, that's something that's been going on long before artificial intelligence and image generation. It's something that we see from the very beginning of time. This is what makes our faith so different and unique. It's a faith unlike any other. Every other faith in the world has had the world on its side. But working against the truth of the cross of Christ is something more sinister and powerful than a program. The devil and the world seek to distort the truth of Christ and the message of the cross. So, today we examine once more how we have a religion, a faith like any other. It's not fooled by the world. The Apostle Paul speaks of that in first Corinthians chapter one.

First of all, Paul writes, there are really two opposing sides, not just culturally or politically, but spiritually. This world really has only two opposing worldviews. And Paul mentions them as he says, *"the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God."*

Picture the world and all its different cultures and languages and nationalities having many different ideas. There is a lot of diversity between peoples and cultures. Yet they are all alike in one respect. But this division can be found across every language and culture and across all time. You either have a view of the message of the cross as salvation, or you have a view of the message of the cross in which you regard it as foolish, and you reject it. That is, as Paul's making clear, either you are a believer and you have faith in Christ, and you view Christ and his cross with glory, or you don't. There is no in between. There are those two views, and to change the view any other way is to distort it.

And so those who view the cross as foolishness try to change the truth about Christ. But God won't allow it. Paul says, *"It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."* You see this world in all its wisdom, even the highest learned of this world will fall short when it comes to their approach of God and how they view God and his holy Word. God frustrates the plans of the wise in the world. *"Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"* The world has many figures that it looks up to. Not just prominent scientists and inventors, but it looks to many people as philosophers, teachers, and mentors. It will regard those who turn against the cross as wise. It will say someone who has devised a plan or a method for how this world came into being without a creator is wise. It will praise the therapist who speaks against God's Word as wise. It will regard the philosopher who confuses gender, and who separates people and causes division and hatred in the world as wise. And the scholar of this world will look at history and they'll say, *"Well, if I can just change this message about Christianity just a little bit, I think I can make it make more sense for today's audience."* The scholar, the philosopher, the wise person of this age will take the message of God in the flesh, God working in history, and they will distort it, erase it, or change it.

But God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. It doesn't matter if you're the best theoretical physicist talking about how this world came into be. It doesn't matter if you're the best archeologist describing the events of history. The world cannot erase what God has done. God has made the world's wisest people foolish. *"For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him."* Consider that truth. God, in his wisdom, decided to put a limit. God decided that the world on its own, with its own understanding, its own methods, could never obtain knowledge of the true God. God said, *"They're fallen. They're lost. And they will never, by their own reasoning or by their own searching, find me."*

It doesn't matter how smart a person is. Or it doesn't matter how intelligent they've demonstrated themselves to be. They cannot on their own know the true God or find him. That's why we'll see so many other religions in this world with man-made ideas and methods for knowing God. The world will even invent pictures of God. But it can never know the true God. It always will come short of knowing him.

Why is that? Why would God want to make the world in its sin so lost, so utterly lost, that it could not find him and could not know him on its own? God did that so we would not be fooled by the wise of this world. He did it so that knowing God would not come through the intelligent or the philosopher. Knowing God would come through an entirely different way. It would come through revelation from God. God, in his wisdom, decided to put a barrier between himself and this world.

And the only way through that barrier is when he opens the door and when he reveals his word. Paul says, *"In God's wisdom, the world (could not) did not know him. So God was pleased through what was preached to save those who believe."* It's not by reason or intelligence. But only by the Word of God that we attain knowledge of God and know what it means to be saved, namely, right with God. It comes only through the preaching of the cross of Christ. It's through the preaching of the message of God coming to a world so lost in sin that it could never find him. It's the message of a world that would perish apart from God and under his wrath. But God came to that world. That's the message of the cross that Paul's referring to.

Seem so foolish. But it's true. God saw the world and came to the world. He sent his Word to the world in the flesh. And that Word came to redeem this world from sin. He did it in the flesh, offering up a sacrifice of himself in the place of sinners. To the world that all sounds foolish. Many look for more. But this is what God has chosen. Because it's not by intelligence, it's not by understanding or philosophy, but it's those who believe. It's through faith and in the power and working of the Word of God.

There are different ways people might try look for the truth. Paul noted, *"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom."* I think Paul kind of hit the nail on the head. There are really only two ways people in this can try to find truth. For some, it's by personal experience and miracles. They might say, *"I'll believe when God causes something wonderful to happen. And then I've got proof."* They are much like the people who demanded a sign from Jesus. But miracles and personal experience don't create faith. The Jews would strive after it and they would demand signs. And still today, many people want personal experience, their own feelings, to validate what is truth. But it won't. Miracles and signs cannot create faith.

On the other hand, there is those who look for wisdom. The Greeks looked for complete understanding and rationalization. Don't we see that today? If someone's not looking for miracles to validate their faith, they're looking for personal understanding and wisdom. With rational understanding they'll try to reason God out. But it won't work. Reason cannot create faith.

One will look for wisdom or personal experience. Another will look for wisdom or reason. But you cannot reason it out. Paul says, *"We preach Christ crucified."*

It doesn't matter if there are signs or wisdom. Those things come. But first, faith must come through the preaching of the gospel. Signs can confirm faith. Wisdom can be found in God's Word. But the preaching of the gospel is what creates faith.

*"We preach Christ crucified."* That is *"a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."* If you know someone who's looking for personal experience and you tell them Jesus died for their sins on the cross, it will sound like foolishness. Or if someone is trying to reason their beliefs out, the incarnation makes no sense. *"But we preach Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."* This is our message. This is our hope.

You know, the world will create divisions with its reason. It will try to pit races, cultures, nations against one another. But Paul says it's altogether different. This might be a message of stumbling or foolishness, but to those whom God has called both Jews and Greeks, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. It doesn't matter whether you're Jew or Greek. It doesn't matter what your background is, what your culture, your language, or where you come from. What matters is those whom God has called through the gospel. God calls people to faith and has called people to faith from every part of this world, every culture, and across time.

And he doesn't do it with signs or wisdom. He does it with what the world regards as foolish. The unifying, powerful, amazing message of the Son of God. Christ crucified for sinners. And the message of the power of God in Christ who rose again from death. And the message of Christ, who gives the gift of eternal life to sinners who do not deserve it. This is what is not understood by the world. But it is received by faith by those whom God has called. It is the power and wisdom of God. Don't be fooled by the world. We have a religion unlike any other, a religion which the world will regard as foolish, but which we regard as the wisdom and power of God in Christ. Amen.