

Globalism And The Wisdom Of Men

Religious Discrimination

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Please turn to II Thessalonians chapter 2. There is no doubt that the church of God has been given a measure of insight into some of the prophecies of God's Word so that we might be aware of what is going on around us. Thus, we can see that the scattering of the church is not the result of external persecution as it was in the early chapters of the book of Acts, but rather it is a punishment from God because He was displeased or is displeased with us.

In the latter years of Mr. Armstrong's life, the church as a body were anything but fervent in our desire to glorify God and to be in His Kingdom. We let things slip badly, and that includes yours truly. And as the scripture says in Matthew 25, all of the virgins slumbered and slept. God's scattering is a badly needed chastening to get us to wake up, to replenish our oil, get prepared, and go on to salvation.

We also have a measure of insight into things that are happening in the world. And although we see most of these things only in generalities, they too can serve to be quite a prod. And thus we understand that events are showing that we are inching toward the complete formation of the beast, the emergence of the great whore, the place of safety, the tribulation, the Day of the Lord, the return of Jesus Christ, our glorification in the Kingdom of God, and then the Millennium.

As wonderful as the Bible portrays the Millennium to be, we must never forget that that is not our goal. The Millennium is something that we are going to be involved with helping to produce and that is wonderful for us to look forward to. But our goal is extremely higher than the Millennium because we are to seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. And that is number one priority in our lives.

The Millennium is a sure thing. It is as sure as any prophecy that God ever gave and it is God's great desire that we be there and to be working under

Him and with Him in bringing this great joy to those living then, and then on into the Great White Throne judgment period as well. But now is our day of salvation and we best make the most of it that we possibly can.

I used that sermon last night ["The Handwriting Is on the Wall (1997)"] as the preamble to a series of sermons on prophecies that are involving the church in this critical period of time leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. And whether we realize it or not, what we are caught up in, what the prophecies are alluding to, and are therefore being affected by, are global in scope.

Last night's sermon was only intended to give us a sense of how events are affecting the true church, that are also affecting the other churches and other religions as well. But it certainly is not the primary cause of the true church's scattered condition, but it certainly is a player of considerable importance when seen in the light of what is happening to other church groups. Virtually every church calling itself Christian is feeling a sense of looseness, of alienation, of declining influence, loss of membership and direction, and control of its destiny.

I have an article that I mentioned in the sermon last night titled, "So Who Really Runs America?" It was authored by James Rudin. You do not know him, but he is a rabbi who was the National Interreligious Affairs director of the American Jewish Committee. I just want to read a couple of excerpts from this to you and give you another feel from a little bit different perspective of what is happening to religion, primarily in America. He writes:

Earlier this year, I heard a cry of anger from white Protestants at Pasadena Fuller Seminary, a leading evangelical institution. They claim they are excluded from the important corridors of national power where the real decisions are being made. Despite their growing size and influence, many evangelicals perceive themselves as a beleaguered community, impotent in influencing American society. They blame their outsider status on America's elites, who have conducted a campaign of bigotry against evangelicals for decades. Evangelicals have been characterized as rednecks and crackers and they take offense at the repeated attacks made upon their conservative Christian faith.

But surprisingly, anguished cries are voiced inside the National Council of Churches. The ecumenical home of America's mainline, mostly white Protestant churches: Episcopalians United Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans and Baptists. National Council of Churches officials readily admit members of their churches were once leaders in almost every sector of society. They completely dominated American life and the outgroups bitterly resented them for it. However, those heady days of hegemony are long past. As America becomes more multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multiracial, once dominant National Council of churches are losing both members and influence. Increasingly, they see themselves as just another religious group in a rapidly changing America. And the story is the same among Catholics.

Many Catholic clergy and academics charge that a pervasive anti-Catholicism exists in the United States. While Catholic bashing is not as virulent as it was in the 19th and early 20th centuries, leaders feel Catholics are still discriminated against in America's workplaces, corporate boardrooms, and on university campuses. And although Catholics comprise the largest religious group in the United States Congress Catholic clergy are frustrated that several of their top agenda items, including public aid for parochial schools, remains unrealized. Like other groups in American life, many Catholics feel outside of the mainstream. And finally, it is no surprise that a recent American Jewish Committee survey indicated Jews in the United States perceive anti-semitism as the greatest threat to their survival. The survey revealed that American Jews believe anti-semitism is on the rise and yet another sign they still remain outsiders, never quite at home in this country.

Well, you and I never felt that we did have any influence at all. But you can see, again, from their perspective, something is happening that they feel is beyond their control, that they are being forced out of the picture. They who once dominated American life and set the morals for this country are no longer setting the morals and ethics for this nation. They are being set by others who are seen to be outside the parameters of religion.

Last night I mentioned Malachi Martin. His latest nonfiction book is a weighty tome of over 700 pages titled, *The Keys of This Blood*. In it, he gives Pope John Paul's geopolitical outlook. The Pope's outlook is primarily based within the Fatima message and the visions, combined with his mystical belief in Mary. And tumultuous things are happening worldwide within the Catholic church and Pope John Paul's outlook is contributing to the tumult. And, as I mentioned last night, it is Martin's belief that unless something is done by the Pope, we are witnessing the death of the Catholic Church and he feels that it is breaking into smaller national churches.

I am going to give you two quotes from his book and it is good to remember that this is not a novel. It is nonfiction. This book has resulted from his concern for the Catholic Church's condition and his many contacts with the movers and shakers in the Vatican these past 25 years. But I want first to read, hopscotch, through II Thessalonians chapter 2.

II Thessalonians 2:1-2 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

Brethren, we are much closer than the apostle Paul ever was by 2,000 years almost now. The day of Christ, we believe from our understanding of the prophecies, really is at hand. That God's intention is that we need be not shaken by the things that are going on in the world as one religion after the other is falling before a force that is beyond their control! There is a very pervasive spiritual movement taking place all over the world at the same time. And it is destroying religions. At the same time, do not forget you understand enough of the prophecies to understand that even as it is destroying, it is creating something else that we know of as *the great whore*.

II Thessalonians 2:3-10 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day shall not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God [all that is called God, not just against the true church, all that is called God] or that is worshiped,

so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and will destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Now, from *The Keys of This Blood*, page 656:

John Paul's summary judgment about the grand design of the transnational and internationalist is perforce negative. [In other words, it has to be that way.] The design cannot succeed, according to him, but must and will end in catastrophe.

There is just enough spirituality in him to realize that this globalization is bad, and it is going to end in something that is too horrible for him to contemplate. And it should be almost that way for us as well. The only thing that saves us is that we have the truth and we know that God wins. But he has to depend upon the Fatima messages. He said,

The design is built on the presumption [now get this—this globalization] that we ourselves are the authors of our destiny. [Where is God?] Man is exalted, the God-Man, Christ, is repudiated, and with Him the idea of man's fallenness is rejected. [In other words, man is not evil, human nature is not bad.] Evil is a matter of malfunctioning structures, not in any real way a basic inclination of man. Behind the godless and un-Christian design of transnationals and internationalists, there stands man as a Nietzsche figure, a Superman.

[It is going to culminate in the beast, you see.] To John Paul's mind in the age of Superman, there would no longer be any reason to believe in Christian morality, individual liberty [Remember what he said, what was in the paper last night? About what he said in Poland.], and equality before the law. Attachment to civil rights, to the dignity and welfare and political worth of the individual, will become illusory and pointless. [1984; you just become a tool of the state.]

[Next paragraph] Superman replaces the God-Man. Superman as Man-God. Culture loses its very heart, which is religion, and with its worship of the divine and its observance of God's laws against human originated evil. Thereby politics as a function of culture loses its equilibrium because it has lost the source of its human decency. G. K. Chesterton was correct when he asserted that when man ceases to believe in God, most likely man will believe in nothing. [I might add here, ". . . but himself."]

That was John Paul's first reason.

The second reason, the more cogent one for him [Martin writes] is drawn from the Fatima message. That message predicts that a catastrophic change will shortly shatter any plans or designs that men may have established. This is the era of the Fatima "or". The Fatima message was supposed to be opened in 1960. It was to be read by the man who was then Pope and then he was to follow the instructions of that message to the letter. The Pope at that time was John XXIII and he refused to do what the message said. And the message said, "If you do not do this [that is the "or" part of the message], a catastrophe is going to occur that is going to blow this world apart."

This is the era of the Fatima message. Men have abandoned religion. [Remember I told you that first article will be read by Malachi Martin in 1978. He said in that article, which occupied a full page, small newsprint type, that he had already rejected American Catholics as being Protestant.] God does not intend to let

human affairs to go on for a long time in that fashion because this is His world. He created it for His glory. He made it possible for all men to attain the heaven of His glory by sending His only Son Jesus Christ to expiate the punishment due men for their sins. This is why John Paul is waiting.

You realize that he is, in a sense, doing nothing in his office. He is just letting the Catholic Church deteriorate. He is not exercising his authority because he is waiting, because to him God must first intervene before John Paul's major ministry to all men can start. And you know what? He might be right on because his god is Satan and Satan will give him the sign. And John Paul may very well be the figure that unites these very disparate religions.

From page 671 same book, same author:

Nothing has contributed more effectively to the decadence of the Roman Catholic religious unity [and I want you to listen carefully to this because of the true church. I want you to apply the sense of what I am reading here to the true church.] and identity than the pervasiveness of the idea that suddenly, as of the mid-1960s, John XXIII's reign, Roman Catholics found out that they as Catholic belong to the general mainstream of religious feeling and belief among all men and women. [They suddenly found out that they were not unique. Is the true church of God unique?] Likewise, nothing has contributed more effectively to the confusion of Catholic rank and file for when they see and hear their prelates [ministers, pastors] and their priests acting and talking as if there was no specific Catholic uniqueness and truth, immediately their logical instinct is to regard the moral laws of the church and its dogmas as optional.

What in the world did those leaders in Pasadena do but they turned the true church around and made it part of the world. The true church was not unique and they led the true church back to what it was before we converted. That is exactly what is happening to the Catholic church.

(So if others are not required to believe these dogmas and apply these laws, why should I?) There thus arise that cafeteria Catholics

with a pick and choose attitude to Roman Catholic dogma and moral law. They insist on remaining in the church and calling themselves Catholic, but stoutly maintain that they need not believe this or that other dogma, need not observe this or that other moral law. Their numbers teem in the Catholic church today and include single individuals and organized groups.

He may as well be writing about the true church.

Let us turn to Deuteronomy 8. Who needs the faith once delivered when these things are optional? We can go off in any direction we want to.

Deuteronomy 8:7 "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of the valleys and hills."

Deuteronomy 8:10-19 "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today [Apply the principles to the true church here to yourself when God has prospered you spiritually and you become rich and increased with goods spiritually, beware lest you forget who gave that to you.], lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' [I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.] And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He

may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Then it shall be, that if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and walk after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish."

It is rather sobering to think about that spiritually.

Let us go to Deuteronomy 32 where we find the Song of Moses, another prophecy.

Deuteronomy 32:15 "But Jeshurun grew fat [prosperous. Jeshurun is a code name for Israel] and kicked [meaning he rebelled, but he did not rebel until he felt he was to the place in his life that he really did not need God. He was now self-sufficient.]; you grew fat [prosperous], you grew thick, you are obese [with prosperity]! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

. . . so much so that God pictures the virgins as going asleep as we approach the very establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

It is a well known historical fact that institutions, whether nations, or manufacturers, a church, seem to have a fairly predictable patterned lifespan. They emerge with a very vigorous energy. They grow, they become successful, they become proud—or we might say Laodicean—they become unproductive, rebellious, are overcome then by more vigorous competitors, and then they die or are absorbed into another institution.

God, knowing human nature, shows in these prophecies here in Deuteronomy that He expected Israel to follow this general pattern and that is why the warning was there. When you are prospered, watch out! But now what is happening in the churches is beyond the scope of even these prophecies. I am going to give you some statistics that show you how dramatic what is happening in the churches is.

The attendance dropped. The percentage of United States Catholics attending services weekly in 1958 was 74% of Catholics attended services weekly. By 1990 it was down to 51%, a 23% decline. The total United Kingdom church

membership, not necessarily attending, just membership. 1950 72% of UK citizens were members of churches. By 1995 it was down to 57%. The percent of Canadian population attending church weekly in 1960 58%. In 1988: 31%. German Catholics attending in 1960: 12.6 million. In 1990: 5.3 million, a 58% drop. Now, what these statistics indicate is the declining belief in the influence and the vigor of the churches.

There is going to come a time when all of this looseness is going to be pulled together into the one great false church that will be allied with the beast. And there are some psychological reasons why all of this looseness must exist.

Answer this question to yourself: Do you think that, given all the religious division that there is in the world, that people could be persuaded to join in one worldwide religion if they held on to their strong convictions about what they believed? I do not think so. Would they separate and join another religious group that they formerly believed that was wrong while they still held strong convictions? Never would that occur.

Revelation 13:4-8 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:11-14 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the

beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Revelation 13:16-17 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand and on their foreheads, that no one may buy or sell except one who had the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

I want you to notice first that in reference to the beast that it is global in its operations (verse 7). And second, that the reference to the second beast are also by inference global in scope because it is directly associated with the beast. But it does say in verse 16 that it causes all, both small and great, giving the implication of a worldwide operation as well.

Now a governmental and religious operation and unity of worldwide size and scope is not just thrown together in moments. Last night, I used the date 1850 as kind of a rough starting point to tie this subject to the end times. But as Paul very clearly said in II Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity was already working in his day. But 1850 seemed to be a date when what is occurring could begin to be clearly seen. Even though it was not seen clearly, it was beginning to occur at that time, it could be clearly seen.

In this sermon, I want to give you a background on a discipline or a movement that has played a major role in preparing us or preparing the world for acceptance of the beast, especially, and the false prophet secondarily. Turn back to the book of Proverbs in chapter 26.

Proverbs 26:2 Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without a cause shall not alight.

Things do not just happen. This verse is showing that there is cause and effect. There is a reason, there is a cause for what is occurring on the earth. And I alluded to it pretty strongly when I said that there is a massive worldwide movement, a pressure being applied to people all over the world, a spiritual movement that is, at one and the same time, destroying things religiously, philosophical thought, at the same time it is creating something that is, in a sense, new and old at the same time. Now, in order for something like this to occur, it has to be done right. The right intellectual and emotional

atmosphere must be created in order for people to either be unthinkingly swept into what is occurring or feel compelled to join with it willingly.

Now, part of the pressure that we saw there in Revelation 13 is going to be sheer terrorizing force. "Who can make war with the beast?" But there will be other pressures. The necessity to accept it will be created in people's minds over many years through politics, philosophy, the secular educational system, religion, geography, even the weather, entertainment, and the economics of business, including technology and the earning of income. Because remember, those things were included within the scope of Revelation 13—that no one might buy or sell except he who had the mark.

Everything is moving; and it is becoming more and more visible as this thing begins to take shape. It has not really risen up out of the sea as it is pictured. But we are beginning to see elements of it rising. And it is pretty clear. Back to the book of Revelation again.

Revelation 18:1-3 After these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become the habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all nations [listen to this] have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

A worldwide spiritual movement that is making people, in the words of God, drunk. A drunk is unable to perceive the true shape of things. His mental vision, as it were, is discarded. And especially in many cases, a drunk thinks he can do things that he would never do were he sober; and the world is being moved spiritually to accept and becoming spiritually drunk so that they will accept something that in saner, more sober moments, they would have rejected utterly. But at a time when they are drunk, the inhibitions are removed, the convictions are weaker, and they would do something that they would never do before.

Catholics are losing their convictions that they are unique. The true church is losing its conviction that it is unique. The major body in the church of God is trying to blend itself right into the world and all distinctiveness is being

removed. Distinctiveness in doctrine, distinctiveness in vision, distinctiveness in worldview, distinctiveness in conduct, distinctiveness in character, distinctiveness in attitude. What is happening has been done so slickly that people are accepting it on both hands, every side, and do not even realize what is happening even though they can write about it.

So here we have in Revelation 18 a picture of what is rising: Babylon the great, a city representing or symbolizing the entire system that we see forming on today's world scene, and being made ready for the final climactic challenge against Christ and His Kingdom, where Satan and his demons strive to hang on to their dominion over this earth. And sincerely deceived men in positions of public service are totally unaware that the Babylon of the Bible is the objective of their drives to globalize, to create a new world order, thus blending all nations under one supra-national government dissolving borders, trade restrictions, monetary differences, economic imbalances, and religious antagonisms.

Now they have altruistic motives, because they think by doing this that they are putting an end to destructive, resourced debilitating wars and creating in the process new business markets and prosperity never before even dreamed of in the history of man. And brethren, the Bible shows that they are going to come reasonably close to accomplishing their dream, even as Nimrod and his associates dreamed at the Tower of Babel.

The operations to prepare us to accept this have been going on for a long time, long before any of us were ever born. And it is good to remember that serpent, Satan, is described as early as Genesis 3 as the most subtle of the beasts of the field. It is good to remember that in Matthew the 13th chapter in the parables there that the field is the world and the world is Satan's. And it is his first estate, or maybe a better, clearer translation of that in Jude would be his realm.

But brethren, the earth is *our inheritance*. It was bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ, promised to Abraham and his descendants, but we have not yet received it. Satan is still here and he has a great deal of authority and we are having to make war against him on his home territory or at least what he thinks is his. A major part of his warfare against us is a subtle infiltration into our minds through deceptive counterfeits, false doctrines,

fifth column propaganda, and wrongheaded tolerance that erodes the faith of the people of God, that destroys the moral influences of the churches, even the false churches.

Two seemingly disconnected things happened to me within a few days of each other. I was beginning to prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles. The first was the receiving of four booklets by direct mail on the subject of psychiatry and psychology. I had not requested them. They just showed up in the mail at the office and if anyone here was responsible for sending them to me, thank you. The second was a Bible study that I was preparing at the same time that involve the use of Paul's term in I Corinthians: wisdom of man.

I Corinthians 2:1-6 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

Paul is showing here that there is a contrast between the wisdom of God and what he calls the wisdom of men or the wisdom of this world, or even more accurately, the wisdom of this age. In other words, in terms of salvation, there is a true wisdom and there is a false wisdom and either one may appear to men as being wisdom, or one or the other may appear as being wise and the other one foolish.

Now, understanding what this wisdom is, is very important to understanding this book, I Corinthians, and this sermon. The word wisdom is introduced all the way back in chapter 1, verse 17.

I Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect.

I Corinthians 1:19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise."

I Corinthians 1:20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God. . .

I Corinthians 1:22 For the Jews request a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.

I Corinthians 1:26 [he introduces us into the flow of his thought] For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men according to the flesh are called. [In verse 27 he says, to put to shame the wise.]

I Corinthians 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God.

And then follows chapter 2 with its mentions of wisdom.

Now, these paragraphs here are the foundation of all that follows in the subjects that Paul addresses in the rest of the book. It is the basis, as it were, for everything that he writes here. If we are going to understand why Paul wrote about these things and what was driving the thinking and the conduct of the Corinthians, we have got to understand what the wisdom of man is.

We are already told a great deal about this wisdom when he said that the Jews request a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom. And that is seen in the context of terms of a relationship with God and salvation. So this wisdom of men has something to do with religion. It has something to do with philosophy. It has *nothing* to do with sending a rocket to the moon or inventing automobiles. It has to do with things that drive the morals of society.

Now, the contrast here is between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man. The wisdom of God (I will leap all the way ahead) is, in terms of

salvation, that which is *revealed*. Remember Deuteronomy 29:29 last night? God has revealed already what is important to us in terms of salvation. He has done that so that we will know what to do with our lives in regard to character, in regard to morals, in regard to spirituality, in regard to ethics, those kind of things that are important for developing the image of God. Those things He has clearly revealed. So that is what we are most concerned about. So, Paul makes a contrast between what is revealed by God's Spirit and something else that he calls the wisdom of men.

In verse 17, it says, "not with wisdom of words" and that is a correct translation. It is not words of wisdom, it is wisdom of words. The other way may seem more natural but Paul is describing there the manner of a Greek orator who eloquently delivers a speech. And in Greek rhetoric, speakers cleverly presented philosophical arguments to support a particular viewpoint.

Now, Paul separates himself from that where he proclaims the gospel in plain, straightforward, and simple terms. He can do that. He might have been able to speak like a Greek orator, but he did not do it that way because the faith that saves is brought about by revelation of God, not by words of wisdom or wisdom of words. It is the working of the Spirit of God in the minds of people that changes them, not the way that the words are said. It is the word of Christ (Romans 10:17) that brings about the faith that saves.

Paul was saying that to dress out the good news, the specious theorems would destroy its effectiveness. And again, because the effectiveness of the gospel depends upon the working of God, truth, and faith, not eloquent but specious human arguments.

Verse 18 is important to understanding the drift of Paul's message here. The word "for" is a conjunction and it is connecting the thought in verse 17 with that of verse 18. In other words, verse 18 is an explanation of verse 17. And that is that the gospel is the message that proclaims Christ's death and present responsibility of High Priest as an event of historical and theological significance. And that message points to Christ, who died the death of a criminal, and whose death concerns the eternal destiny of man. Remember that eternal destiny thing because of what Pope John Paul said in regard to man determining his own destiny. He can see that the beast that is rising is making a super man out of human beings. But the message of God points us

to Jesus Christ and the relationship by the Spirit of God that we have with the Father and the Son as being the source of salvation, combined with the revelation of God that works to produce faith in a specific message in us.

Now, the wisdom of words that the orator utters is of human origin. It is not revealed, it is of human origin and, as Paul is saying here, is opposed to the message of the Gospel. Now why? Paul gives two reasons why. Because of what the Jews and what the Greeks believed. There is faith, believing-faith, see. Following a man who died a criminal's death was to the Greeks foolishness. To them that was not wisdom at all and so they came up with their own concepts of how a man was to achieve the most that he could be—human potential, as we would call it today. Therefore, their wisdom of words was of human origin.

To the Jews, Christ was a stumbling block because He did not fit in to their preconceived notions regarding what the Messiah would be like and what He would do. Some of that still remained in the apostles even after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Acts 1). "Are You at this time going to set up the kingdom?" No, Christ said, you are going to have to wait on that. That is in the hands of the Father. The Jews did not get their ideas about the Messiah from God either, therefore both concepts, Jew and Greek, came from human intellect and therefore the world.

And that very thing was Paul's concern regarding the Corinthians because that same worldly generated wisdom, the wisdom of men, was actively working in the minds of those in the church in Corinth. And it was greatly influencing, indeed causing, the majority of the many problems that he addressed within this book in that congregation. It was that wisdom of men which was at the base of all of their divisions. Paul said, "You are yet carnal"; they were converted, but they were still thinking like they were in Egypt and they were operating by the wisdom of men.

That is my concern this day because that same source of their worldly wisdom is alive. It is very active in the world and in the church today. It is what has caused the division. It is what caused us to go to sleep. It is what caused us to lead lives of sin, to become Laodicean. Be not deceived,

brethren. The worldly wisdom Paul refers to is not restricted to false concepts of Christ's death. It is multifaceted, vital, and alive in its effect on living God's way today.

Let us understand that a little bit further and go back to the I Corinthians 1 again.

I Corinthians 1:24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Christ is the power and the wisdom of God. Power here is referring directly back to verse 18.

I Corinthians 1:18 For 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.

While we readily understand and agree that Jesus Christ is the Creator, this is not referring to that power, but the power to recreate us into the spiritual image of God unto salvation because that is the issue for us now. Christ was resurrected as very God, which is also our goal. That was God's *sign* to the disbelieving Jews.

The wisdom of God does not refer to Christ's personifying wisdom, but Christ is God's reply both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, who consider the gospel to be foolishness.

In verse 30, we get to the crux of the matter:

I Corinthians 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

The subject by this time, Paul's subject here, has been adjusted somewhat in order to fit the church, the people to whom he was writing, and to you and me, into it. Back to verse 27. I am just going to read a couple of words.

I Corinthians 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of this world. . .

I Corinthians 1:28 And the base things of the world and things which are despised God has chosen. . .

I Corinthians 1:29 that no flesh should glory in His [that is, God's] presence. . .

I Corinthians 1:30 But of Him [that is, God]. . .

Paul is dealing here with both the Father and the Son and He wants us to understand that God the Father is the author of our salvation, not the wisdom of men. Paul said you are "in Christ," you are in union with Christ. That is the means, brethren, of spiritual creation and Christ is the power of God creating us in the image of the Father and the Son. And so Christ has become our wisdom.

I Corinthians 1:30 But of Him [that is, of the Father] you are in [union with] Christ, who became for us wisdom from God [the Father]. . .

Now, what about righteousness, holiness, and redemption? Almost all modern commentators suggests and agree that the *King James Version* is misleading at this point because the Greek grammar makes it extremely difficult to coordinate all four nouns—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—in the way that the King James has translated it. So rather as it is now translated, righteousness, holiness, and redemption *explain* wisdom. Now, if you have a *New King James Version*, that is the way that it is translated. And those last three nouns—righteousness, holiness, and redemption—are separated from wisdom by a long dash, thus making that statement parenthetical. I always had trouble with this verse. But now it makes sense to me.

Now follow the explanation I am going to give you through verse 30. In other words, kind of read it as I explain.

Wisdom has its origin in God the Father who causes it to dwell in Christ. In turn, through Christ, since we are now in union with Christ, we have become the recipients of this wisdom, and through this union with Christ, we possess spiritual wisdom from God to know God and to appropriate His work for our salvation. It says "who has become wisdom from God for us," that is, in our behalf. And that means His death and His work as High Priest reflects Christ's work for us. And thus, because of His work, we have righteousness, holiness, and redemption: wisdom.

Here is the conclusion of what Paul is saying. Therefore, anybody who tries to achieve the good life, the abundant life, eternal life, and salvation by any other means is following the wisdom of men, not God's wisdom. There is only one message, is what Paul is saying, and it is revealed from a supernatural Being. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men might be saved and being saved includes calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

Almost since the very beginning of the Church of the Great God, I have been reminding us from time to time that our relationship with the Father and the Son **is** salvation to you. It is the most important thing in your life because Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." This is why we urge you to pray. This is why we keep beating on you to study God's Word. Develop that relationship with this One that you are going to marry. Submit to Him, obey Him, worship Him as Lord and Master because *He is salvation*. He is High Priest. He dispenses His Spirit. He gives us His love. He gives us every gift that we need to overcome, to grow, to have right sound minds in our head. His very death was to give us access to Him so that our sins would not separate us and we be devoid of the Revelation of God, and the wisdom, righteousness, justification, sanctification, holiness, glorification, born again, regeneration.

So it is our union with Him that is the source of everything good to being in the image of God. He is the fountain of living waters, the bread of life. It is He who said that "The words that I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are life." Paul said that the gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. And God says that His thoughts are so far above man's that there are no adequate comparisons. And all of this is contrasted with the wisdom of man, which is alive and well and is impacting our lives daily from

the source that has had great impact in our lives already in the way that we view things, the way we view life's purpose, the way that we conduct our lives, our perception of ethics, morality, and spirituality, and attitudes toward a multitude of behaviors, both by us and others on such subjects as guilt, forgiveness, responsibility, character, love, sin, sound-mindedness, and on and on it goes.

I will leave you with this thought. I was reading yet another book review in *The Charlotte Observer* again, which is really a lousy newspaper. This time it was on August the 25th, 1997 in an article by one Christopher Haupt [?] and it was a book review titled, *The One Best Way* by Robert Kanigel. It was on the life of Frederick W. Taylor. (I know you all know Frederick W. Taylor. I did not know who he was either. Nobody ever heard of him except this fellow who wrote the book.) Do you know who he was? He is considered as the original time and motion man. He was an efficiency expert, as we would say, and he is given credit as being the inventor of the scientific management of all aspects of business. One 44 word sentence really caught my interest because I was thinking on this sermon at the time.

For his attempts to carry out his dream [that is, Taylor's dream] no less an authority than Peter Drucker [you may have heard of Peter Drucker, a very popular modern writer on business issues, and he is called here the management savant] remarked (in Kanigel's words) that Taylor, not Karl Marx, warranted a place in the trinity of the makers of the modern world.

Did you know that Taylor had that big of an impact on your life? He must have, because you know that Karl Marx has really had an impact on your life even though you never lived under him. His philosophy, his ideas regarding economics and government have impacted on this world tremendously and has caused the United States to act and react in certain ways for scores of years. But this man says that Taylor was even greater, had a greater impact on the world than Karl Marx.

. . . that Taylor, not Karl Marx, warranted a place in the trinity of the makers of the modern world, along with Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud.

Now those men (in the opinion of a man, Peter Drucker, who spends his time thinking about such things), who have shaped, who have done the most to shape our modern world are Frederick Taylor, Charles Darwin, and Sigmund Freud. Drucker undoubtedly gathered his list from extensive reading of the impact of these people's contributions to the way we are and why we are. And that says very much about why we are the way we are.

Now Taylor I can understand because of his economic impact, it has been *immense* on the modern world, the Western world anyway. And by and large, I would have to say, it has been positive.

But the other two men's influence has been great, perhaps even greater but negative to an extreme in terms of a relationship with God. Because both of these men's writings destroy faith in God! Destroy *the* faith! Darwin for his teachings, atheistic teachings, atheistic evolutionary musings regarding the origin of the species has spawned many obvious spiritual evils. But Sigmund Freud, he has been generally hailed as popularizing materialistic, humanistic, atheistic psychology and psychiatry. And he has appeared as an angel of light and spawned very many subtle cancerous evils in education and religion.