

GOD!
Message 18
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

INTRO: "In the beginning God..." So begins the book of books. The very first subject in the Bible is God. A while ago, at prayer meeting I was asked what it means when it says in Revelation, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End', says the LORD..." (Rev. 1:8). Does God have an end? Did He have a beginning? How can He be the beginning and the end if He has no beginning and no end?

I have read that the Hebrew rabbis referred to the whole of a matter as the Aleph and Tau, those are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Apostle John, writing in the Greek language calls it the Alpha and Omega. In English we say from A to Z. Isaiah 43:10 says, "Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me." Is God saying, "When I come to an end, there will be no God?" No, He is eternal, without beginning and without end. There will be no God after Him because He will never end. There was no God before Him because He had no beginning. That God is the beginning and the end, I think expresses the whole of the matter. God is the whole of the matter. There is nothing more important than God. Everything revolves around God. In these texts God may well be saying, "No God, then nothing! I am the beginning and the end of all that truly matters. Get Me right and you've got it all right. Get me wrong and you've got it all wrong. I am the beginning and the end. I am the Aleph and the Tau. I am the Alpha and the Omega. I a the A and the Z. Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me because I had no beginning and I have no End and I am Almighty God. Besides Me, there is no other!"

In these messages we have been looking at the attributes of this incredible God and all we find is good, good and more good. We have found the only One who is truly good. And everything He does is good. And all He is, is good. Study the gods of people's imaginations and you will never find another good God!

And this morning we want to look at His wisdom, and find a God so wise, that our own understanding and comprehension shrinks down and down until we say, "I don't know. I don't know. I don't understand why. I don't understand why." And then, this Almighty God says, "Come to Me, all you that

labor... Come and put your trust in Me. Cast your unknowns on Me and let Me take care of them. Read My Word and find Me trustworthy. Then come, come and keep on coming."

5. Wisdom

Wisdom! What a word! I think it must be at least 30 years ago I penned this definition in the fly leaf of my then almost new Bible: "Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool, but to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom." Those are the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

McClintock and Strongs say of wisdom, "...in a general sense, (wisdom) is a comprehensive knowledge of things in their proper nature and relations, together with the power of combining them in the most useful manner. Among the Hebrews, the term 'wisdom' comprehended a wide circle of virtues and mental endowments (Exodus 28:3; 31:6; 1 Kings 3:28; 4:29-34), and its precise import in the Scriptures can only be ascertained by a close attention to the context."

In my estimation, McClintock and Strongs general definition is as good as one will find: "...(wisdom) is a comprehensive knowledge of things in their proper nature and relations, together with the power of combining them in the most useful manner." I have read that there is an old Persian Proverb which says, "For every pound of learning a person has, he needs ten pounds of common sense to know how to use it." And common sense, I am told, is not so common. Somebody else has said that wisdom is the ability to keep your mouth shut while your mind continues to talk to itself. But basically, wisdom is the ability to make knowledge useful in every day life.

However, in the Bible, to determine the exact use of the word wisdom in its different uses requires a search of the context. Earlier we had 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 read for us. Turn to that chapter. Note verse 19 (read), 'wisdom of the

wise'. Verse 20 (read), 'wisdom of this world.' Then note verse 21 (read). Now verse 25 (read).

So we have the wisdom of the wise, that is the worldly wise. We have the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God. And it pleased God to construct things in such a manner that the wisdom of this world can never discover Him. Man must submit himself to the wisdom of God and the message of the cross, in order to become truly wise. The reason for this is that no flesh should ever glory in His presence (29). But of the Christian verse 30 says, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption..." And why must Christ become our wisdom? Verse 31 tells us it is so, "...that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'" Then note 2:4-8 (read). And so, in these passages we have the very purpose for the creation of man, the glory of God. God did not make us for us. He made us for Himself.

So with regard to creation, listen now to Jeremiah 10:12, "He has made the earth by His great power. He has established the world by His wisdom. And He has stretched out the heavens by His discretion." And then Proverbs 3:19, "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens."

It is by wisdom that God founded the earth. It takes a lot of wisdom to create or make something and then know how it will end up. For example, when it comes to sex education, the school system decided that what young people know is more information. If we inform them, then they will learn to act responsibly. So the school system informed the young people. But did giving information result in better behavior? Sometimes information given too soon does more damage than good. So it takes wisdom to put things in place that will have good long term results. So our definition of wisdom says that wisdom "...is a comprehensive knowledge of things in their proper nature and relations, together with the power of combining them in the most useful manner."

God, in His great wisdom created the earth, yes truly the entire universe, and by His understanding He established the heavens. But, if God did all of this in wisdom, let us now raise the great question that will naturally come. Here it is: "Well, if an all-wise God created everything, did He not know that man would sin and sin would bring pain and destruction and trouble and trials and disastrous deaths and horrible diseases and famines and earthquakes and cancer and murderers and sufferings of every description? How could an all-wise, all knowing God bring something like this about? And even worse, how could He then, in the end, condemn the majority of mankind to hell? This does not seem like an all-wise God to me."

It is true, to write the vast amount of suffering already experienced by man would take so many books the earth might hardly contain them. Just a little while ago my wife heard of a lady interviewed by Nancy Leigh Demoss. This woman was around 40 years old and dying of bone cancer, that cancer that is so extremely painful. As a young woman she had been abused. Her life had been hard all the way and by the time we listen to this message she will have died a most painful death unless God has undertaken by some miracle.

And yet the Bible says that God created everything by His wisdom. Where is the wisdom in so much suffering and pain and sorrow? Where is the wisdom in creating a being that had the potential to sin, and God in His omniscience knew he would, and now sin has brought all this misery and trouble to mankind? Just where is the wisdom in that? Most of you have probably seen the picture that won a Pulitzer. It was taken in 1994 in the Sudan famine. It is a young black boy who is crawling in a most pathetic fashion to a United Nations food camp located about a kilometer away. There he is with skinny forearms on the ground, his boney legs are tucked under him as he tries to push himself forward, with his head almost touching the ground. Crouching patiently behind him on his haunches is a vulture

just waiting for the time when life will have become so weak that it will be safe to take him. The man who took that picture committed suicide three months later. And someone will say, "You mean an all-wise, all-knowing God would allow something like that?"

The answer is yes, it was an all-wise God who created the universe and mankind and yes, He knew that all these things would happen. God created man to glorify Himself, and therefore He created man with a free will, or as a free moral agent. As I see it, God cannot truly be glorified if that glory does not come from free will. It is amazing that the very things God seeks to use to drive us to Himself, the devil twists and uses to drive us away from Him!

Well, God surely had something great in mind when He created everything. I want us first to see His wisdom in the very act of creation, and then let us learn from that, that surely He was just as wise in creating man when He knew all along that man would sin and all that that would bring about. So let us first see the wisdom that is there in creation alone. When God created everything, He knew everything about everything. Before He created anything, He knew how to create a whole universe out of nothing. Now consider that, is that not an incredible amount of wisdom right there? Has any man ever been able to do that to the smallest possible degree? Has anyone ever been able to make one particle of dust from nothing? So we see that God's wisdom transcends ours to such an immeasurable degree, that we can only stand in wonder and say, "We have not the slightest idea how He did it." He is wise, exceedingly far beyond us.

Then consider all the different species of animals and bugs and fish and birds and plants. Now think of how much wisdom it took to create this in such a way that it would keep going as it has these 6000 years. How much wisdom does that take? Study one species of animals alone, and your mind will stagger, and stumble, and stay

down, when it comes to explaining how God did it all.

When God tested Job He let Job and His friends argue about a lot of things. And when they were all done and had gotten nowhere, finally God stepped in. And God said to Job, "Now prepare yourself like a man. I will question you, and you shall answer Me." And then came one question after another with regard to God's creation. And when God was done, Job laid his hand over his mouth and said, "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer You? Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." Then God said a second time, "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you and you shall answer Me." And this time God questioned Job on the nature of man. And when God is done, Job basically says, "Oh my God, You are so far beyond what I thought, You are so incredible, I repent in dust and ashes."

Study the planets. Study the calendar. Study the ocean waters. Study the different areas on earth. And the more you study, the greater this wisdom of God grows. Now let me take us back to our question: If God is so wise, why did He make angels and man with a capacity to sin? And if He knew they would sin and all the pain and misery it would bring, how could He be considered to be so very wise?

Well, let me give you an illustration of what kind of a question that is. Let us say a five year old boy is flying in a little airplane with his dad. And then they unexpectedly run into a severe storm. The little boy is deathly afraid as they are thrown around in that little plane. Now this dad has had a lot of experience. He has spent many hours in the air and weathered many storms. Now let us say the scared little boy says, "Dad, give me the controls. Let me handle this thing. What you are doing looks all wrong. I think we should be going the other way. Give me the controls."

That picture is not nearly as far out as man who says, "How could an all-wise God create free moral agents with a capacity to bring about all suffering and pain and sorrow that is going on. And when we question God's existence or wisdom over creation because of all the suffering in the world, it is a lot less likely that our thinking is right than it is likely that that little five year old could have outdone his dad in landing that plane.

Listen now to Isaiah 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Now how far higher are the heavens than the earth? Well, who knows? Science has traveled an untold number of light years and has not reached the edge of the known universe. That is only the second heaven, then there is a third heaven yet.

So, how far are God's thoughts above ours? Immeasurable is the distance! So if God's thoughts are that far above ours, I suspect His wisdom is also that far above ours! If that is so, how would we even dare ask a question about God's wisdom in all the suffering and sorrows and sickness?

So, I want you to go back with me now to the time before creation, that is before God created the heavens and the earth and angels. Are you there in your mind? Now tell me what there is as far as we know from the Bible? What is there? As far as we know there is nothing but the Triune God. That is all. And this Triune God is infinitely good and holy and righteous and wise and on and on. But there is no one besides Himself to appreciate Him. We talked about this in message 4.

And then, somewhere in eternity past, this Almighty and holy and good God decided to create angels to bring glory to Him. They would be able to appreciate Him and now all of this goodness of the Triune God would have value for others and for God. But God knew if He created angels who

could glorify Him, it could only be true glory if they could also decide to not glorify Him. And we know from history that that happened and Lucifer, one of God's highly anointed Cherub angels decided he wanted part of God's glory too (Is. 14 and Ez. 28). And so Lucifer sinned, and now for the very first time sin, something horribly evil, existed. The blame of all sin lies right here. And pride was the root of it all.

Now I ask you, did the all-wise God know this would happen? Of course! And I believe He also knew what He would do. He would create man, also a free moral agent who could choose to do right or wrong, and through man He would destroy the devil. And through man, both the sin of man and the redemption of man, He would bring about ultimately that for which He had created free moral agents in the first place: His glory. And when this present age will be over and the tribulation and the millennium have passed, then He will have succeeded to bring about a universe in which He will be glorified by free moral agents, through the redemption of Christ; a universe that is entirely free from sin and in which He will be appreciated and glorified by redeemed sinners and un-fallen angels for all eternity.

And for this redeemed humanity, He will create new heavens and a new earth. And He will come down from heaven and dwell in a city especially prepared for this and rule over mankind for all eternity. So let us read Revelation 21:1-8.

And out of all the sorrow and pain and suffering He will bring about, through His manifold wisdom, something of such incredible magnitude and beauty that for all the rest of eternity man will stand in awe of this incredibly good and holy and righteous and merciful and gracious and loving and kind God. And I suppose that for all eternity redeemed man and un-fallen angels will say: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has first

given to Him and it shall be repaid to Him? For OF Him and THROUGH Him and TO Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen!" (Romans 8:33-36).

And then they will say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4:8, 11). When all is said and done, people will not say, "Lord, you are not worthy because of all the suffering that took place."

Now I want to draw an application from all this. That is, what have we to learn from all this? What can we learn from the wisdom of God displayed in creation and how He does everything? Listen to Ephesians 3:8-11. Paul says, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him."

Here we are told that God's wisdom is manifold. The word translated manifold, means many-fold. You see, some people are wise in math, some in inventions of new things, others with art and so there are all kinds of wisdom. But God's wisdom is manifold. Let me give you an example. Many times we have a hard time making a decision. Should we do this or should we do that. And we think, "If we do this then this MIGHT happen." You see, we speculate on what 'might' happen. But God always knows what WILL happen. And so, He knows what will happen if He allows a flood or an earthquake or any other natural disaster to happen. He knows what will happen if He allows us

to have nice rains or no rains. He knows what will happen no matter what choices are made. He knows everything about everything. And He knew what would happen if He created angels and later man and the universe. And He knew what would happen when man sinned. He knew what would happen if a totally righteous Person came to dwell among sinful men. He knows everything about everything.

And so, He created everything and gave man and angels a free will. And He knew if He gave man the truth and the Savior, that in the end, some of mankind, of their own free will, through the truth would find and respond to the unsearchable riches of Christ in the Gospel, the most incredible news of all time. And through all of this He would bring glory to Himself and saved man and Almighty God and un-fallen angels would live happily ever after. That is the truth recorded in the last three chapters of the Bible.

And now I invite you to listen once more to Romans 8:28, to that incredible verse we all know so well, "And we KNOW that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." God is so able to orchestrate all events, while not tampering with man's free will in the least, that all things, ever single thing, works together for good to those who love Him. That means all the things we like and all those we do not like. All of these, God is able to make to work together for good. And it is no secret that only a God who is all-wise, or we might say, omni-wise, could do that.

CONCL: So we conclude with this, that God is omni wise. And we have a huge question before us as we close. Do I truly believe God is so wise that He is able to make the weather, the news, my health, my relationships, the place I live, the friends I have, the enemies I have, the vehicle I buy, the wife I marry, the husband I marry, the children I have, the people I meet, everything, absolutely everything work together for good to those who love Him? Do I truly believe that all suffering and sorrow and sickness and disaster and accidents, all of these He can make work together for good to those who love Him?

If I truly believe that, why would I then not surrender myself entirely to Him? Let me recommend to you again something I have done now since July 15, 1990 and that is to commit to the Lord those things that cause you to worry. Write them down. Date them. Commit them to Him. And when He takes care of that worry, date it and thank Him. Here is how my first entry of this year started: "Jan. 5, 09: It is the first Monday of Jan. I have a number of concerns and it wants to overwhelm me. Here they are:..."

Could you say this morning: Lord, here I am. I surrender myself to You entirely, body, soul and spirit. Lord, I cannot make sense of all my circumstances. I do not know why You have allowed certain things into my life. But I do not need to know. I am ready to surrender to You because You are omni-wise and I believe that. You desire my trust. I give You my trust.

I trust that many of you have done that. But for anyone wishing to do that this morning, while the Spirit is speaking, I give you opportunity to indicate that publicly by standing before God and these people and then I will close in prayer.