

DESTROY THIS TEMPLE

The wisdom of the fool is important in the history of ideas, and in literature is represented by the ‘wise fool.’ Stephen Hague of Faith Theological Seminary wrote this about the ‘wise fool.’

Historically, plays and entertainment in various cultures have had the figure of a jester, clown, or fool. William Shakespeare’s plays sometimes redesigned this character where he made the fool a central figure of the story, and not just a jester. Influenced by the Bible, Shakespeare played on the biblical notions of the wise man; his fools are often “the wise” who have prophetic revelations for the main characters of the plays that are often themselves shown to be the true proper fools. His fool is often the only one who is not afraid to speak the truth, providing commentary on both the story and the other characters.

In William Shakespeare’s play, *Twelfth Night*, the wise fool says of himself:

Wit, an’t be thy will, put me into good fooling! Those wits, that think they have thee, do very oft prove fools; and I, that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man: for what says Quinapalus? “Better a witty fool, than a foolish wit.”

Later in the play, Viola, says of the wise fool:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool;
And to do that well craves a kind of wit:
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
The quality of persons, and the time,
And, like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
As full of labour as a wise man’s art:
For folly that he wisely shows is fit;
But wise men, folly-fall’n, quite taint their wit.

The Christian is the wisest fool, because he rejects the wisdom of the world, and receives the wisdom of God, who is the source of all true wisdom.

When Israel were in bondage in Egypt, they cried out for relief. When Moses was at Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, he saw God in a burning bush, and God told Moses that He would send him to lead Israel out of Egypt to serve Him. God said to Moses, “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.” (Exodus 3:19, 20) Moses would, in the name of God, tell Pharaoh to let God’s people go, but Pharaoh would refuse. So, God would bring them out with a demonstration of His great power. Aaron told the people what God said, and Moses proved Aaron’s message by performing the miraculous signs God had told him to do. (Exodus 4:30, 31) Moses told Pharaoh to let God’s people go, and Pharaoh did refuse. So, God said, “Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.” (Exodus 6:1) God brought upon

Pharaoh and Egypt ten plagues, and, finally, Pharaoh let the people go. Pharaoh had a change of heart, however, and, with his army, pursued the Israelites, and had them trapped before the Red Sea. Moses, by the power of God, parted the sea, and the Israelites crossed the sea floor, but Moses closed the sea over Pharaoh and his army, drowning them all. Afterward, Moses sang a song of praise, which begins: I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. (Exodus 15:1, 2) God is almighty, and He showed His might when He delivered His people from bondage so that they might serve Him.

Moses led the people to Mount Sinai, and there God made a covenant with them. God told Moses to tell the people, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exodus 19:4–6) God mightily defeated the Egyptians, and redeemed the Israelites, so that they might serve Him, and none other. If they would serve Him, then He would be their God. When Moses told the people God's terms, the people agreed to them. They said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." (Exodus 19:8) So, God gave the Israelites His law, the Ten Commandments. The preamble to His law is, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 20:2) The Israelites could not properly serve God while in bondage in Egypt, so God delivered them out of Egypt so that they might freely serve Him. God's ten Commandments are these:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There is only one true God, and so God's people may have no others.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." God alone derives worship as God, and so God's people may not make any likeness of something that He has made, and bow down to it, and worship it.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain." God's name is sacred, and His people may not improperly use it, including claiming to be His people, but not obeying Him.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." God made the world in six days, and rested on the seventh, and so He requires His people to do the same.

"Honour thy father and thy mother." God put every person in the charge of a father and mother, and so every person should give due respect to his father and mother.

"Thou shalt not kill." God is the creator of life, and He alone has authority to take a life, and so no man may take the life of another without God's permission.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." In holy matrimony, the man and the woman become one, and so neither may be with another until death parts them.

"Thou shalt not steal." God gives things to men, and no man has the right to take the things of another, unless permits him.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." God cannot lie, and He forbids His people to tell lies about another person.

"Thou shalt not covet." God gives, and God takes away, and so a man should not desire to have what belongs to another man.

The command concerning no other gods naturally comes first, because there is only one true God, and all others are false, and so it is only right that people worship and serve Him only. The command concerning coveting comes at the end, because men love some things so much that they would break God's law to get them. They love those things more than God, and so make those things idols. (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5)

This law, these commandments, are based on God's nature and character, and they show God's great wisdom. They are right in themselves, and they are good for mankind. Disregard of God's commandments is not only offensive to God, but harmful to mankind. When Israel were ready to enter into the promised land, Moses said to them:

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deuteronomy 6:5–8)

Moses reminded the Israelites that he gave them God's law, and He exhorted them to keep it. It was wise for them to keep it, not simply because, if they did not, then God would punish them, but because His law is wise and good. If they followed God's law, then He would bless them. The other nations would see the wisdom of God's law, and the blessing of it, and they would make God their God, and His law their law. Through Isaiah the prophet, God said to the Israelites:

I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. (Isaiah 42:6, 7)

The Israelites believed that God had chosen them to enlighten the world.

God gave Israel His law. Yet, they were powerless to keep it. As all men come into the world as sinners, so they are not able to keep God's law. Saint Paul described his life as a devout Jew before He believed in Christ. He wrote:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (Romans 7:18, 19)

This was the experience, not of Saint Paul only, but of every Jew apart from Christ. Saint Paul wrote:

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. (Romans 2:17–24)

The Jews were proud to be God's covenant people, and considered themselves guides for the heathen. They did not keep God's law, so there were blind guides. They claimed the name of the Lord, yet they did obey God, and so took the name of the Lord in vain.

As Moses came to deliver Israel from the bondage of the Egyptian so that they might serve Him, So the Son of God came to deliver them from the bondage of sin, to deliver them from themselves. On one occasion, early in Jesus's earthly ministry, when the passover was near, He went into the temple, and there He found men selling the animals required for sacrifice, and men changing money so that the people would have the half shekel they were required to give. Saint John records what Jesus did about what He saw:

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. (John 2:15–17)

Jesus, gentle as a lamb, and more meek than Moses, made a whip out of cords, and whipped the merchants and money changers until he had driven them, and their merchandise out of the temple. Then He told those that sold doves to take them out of the temple. The temple was God's house. It was a place of religious devotion, where people confessed their sins, offered sacrifices, and prayed. Men who loved money more than they loved God found a way to profit from the religious devotion of others, and Jesus would not stand for it. He purged them from His Father's House. His disciples remembered what David wrote in the Book of Psalms concerning his conflict with wicked men, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (Psalm 69:9) David had great zeal for righteousness, and for the glory of God, and this would make him enemies whose opposition would consume him. As it was with David, so it was with Jesus, of whom David was a type. The Jews were angry with Jesus for interfering in their affairs and impeding their business, and they desired to kill Him for it. Moreover, Jesus called God His Father, and so made Himself the Son of God. They demanded that He, like Moses, show them some miraculous sign that He was God's agent. Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19) The Jews said, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (John 2:20) It had taken forty-six years for men to build the temple, and they scoffed at the idea that Jesus could build it in three days. Saint John makes this comment in His Gospel: "But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." (John 2:21, 22) The Jews understood Jesus to be speaking of the temple of stone built by human hands, but He rather spoke of the temple of His body. He knew that the Jews did not believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. He knew that they would kill Him because He was good, and they were evil. They would destroy His temple, His body, by putting Him to death. Yet, He would after three days rise from the dead. Jesus a number of times told His disciples that the religious leaders would kill Him, and that He would rise from the dead, but they could not understand Him. They understood what He meant when He said that He would be killed; Saint Peter even opposed Jesus on that point. They did not, however, understand what He meant about rising from the dead. It was not until after He did rise from the dead that His disciples understood. Saint John wrote, "When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." (John 2:22) After He rose, Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb, and she told Peter and John, who ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Peter entered the tomb first. Saint John wrote, "Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not

the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.” (John 20:8, 9) On more than one occasion, the Jews demanded of Jesus a sign from God that proved His claim to be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus did many miracles, and these were proof that He was from God. He told the Jews, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.” (John 10:37, 38) Yet, He also told them:

An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:39, 40)

Because Jesus is the Son of God, His testimony is true, and His generation should have believed Him. Because they were wicked, however, they did not accept His testimony, and demanded a miraculous sign from God. So, Jesus said that they would be given no sign, except for His resurrection. Yet, the Jews of His generation were so wicked that they would not even believe in Him if He rose from the dead.

Concerning proof of the gospel, Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 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? 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. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthian 1:18–25)

The gospel is that Jesus Christ was crucified for the sins of men. To those who are in their sins, this is foolishness, but to those whose sins are forgiven, it is the power of God, because it saves men from hell. When Isaiah the prophet denounced judgment against the southern kingdom of Judah, He said:

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. Isaiah 24:13, 14)

The Israelites of Isaiah's time paid lip service to God, but they did not serve Him with their hearts. They were wise in their own eyes and they did as they pleased. So, God would expose them for the fools that they were. The same was true with the Jews of Jesus's time. Saint Paul asked where was the wise man, the scholar, the debater? No one can stand up to the wisdom of God. The world with all its wisdom could not know God, so God was pleased to save men by a means that dying men would consider foolish. The Jews demanded a miraculous sign from God, a demonstration of His power, something empirical. The Greeks demanded an

argument, demonstration of God's wisdom; something rational. God gave them something different from what they desired. He gave them a gospel of Christ crucified for men's sins. To the Jews, this is a scandal, because the law of Moses says, "He that is hanged is accursed of God." (Deuteronomy 21:23) To the Greeks, it is foolishness because a dead man can help no one. Yet, to those whom God has called to salvation, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. He is the power of God because by His crucifixion He "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Galatians 3:13) He is the wisdom of God because by His crucifixion He is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

God by His great power redeemed Israel from their bondage in Egypt to serve Him, and in His great wisdom, He gave Israel His perfect law. Yet, Israel failed to keep His law, and had no real atonement for their sins. So God, by His great power, and in His great wisdom, gave His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, a sacrifice for sins, and raised Him from the dead, so that those who believe in Jesus might have power to obey God's law, and forgiveness when they fail. God is no fool. What seems foolish to men is in reality the wisdom of God, and what seems weak to men is in reality the power of God.

Let us know God's law, and strive to keep it. Let us believe that Jesus is the Christ who died, and rose again for man's salvation. Let us understand that God has all power, and all wisdom.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.