

# Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 63

## 1 Corinthians ~ Part 3

**Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.**

As I mentioned in my last post, we continue to explore **Sha'ul's Letters to the Corinthians**.

### Regarding Divisions within the Congregation ~ Part 2

#### God's Wisdom

***<sup>18</sup> For the message about the execution stake is nonsense to those in the process of being destroyed, but to us, in the process of being saved, it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> Indeed, the Tanakh says,***

***"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and frustrate the intelligence of the intelligent."***

The **execution stake** divides humanity. It is divided between **those in the process of being destroyed**, to whom the **execution stake is nonsense, and those who are in the process of being saved, to whom the execution stake is the power of God**. Sha'ul supported this truth by quoting Isaiah 29:14, where **God** warned the unbelieving leaders of **Yerushalayim** who considered themselves wise. **God's** judgment will expose all pretensions to human wisdom not anchored in **Yeshua**.

***<sup>20</sup> Where does that leave the philosopher, the Torah teacher, or any of today's thinkers? Hasn't God made this world's wisdom look pretty foolish? <sup>21</sup> For God's wisdom ordained that the world, using its own wisdom, would not come to know him. Therefore, God decided to use the "nonsense" of what we proclaim as his means of saving those who come to trust in it. <sup>22</sup> Precisely because Jews ask for signs and Greeks try to find wisdom,***

**Jews ask for signs** of **God's** power as proof of the **Messianic** profession. But **Yeshua**, during his time on earth, repeatedly refused to give one on demand, except for predicting his resurrection (Mattityahu 12:38, 16:1; Yochanan 2:18), so that disbelieving Jews asserted that no sign of **Yeshua's** messiahship had been given. Professor David Flusser, an Orthodox Jewish scholar in **Yerushalayim**, writes, *"Until the Messiah does the works of the Messiah we cannot call him the Messiah."* But Mattityahu 11:2–6 and Yochanan 10:32–38, 12:37 refute this objection by showing that he did perform such works. Indeed, some of His miracles were regarded in **Judaism** specifically as **Messianic** signs, such as healing a leper (Mattityahu 8:1–4) and restoring sight to a man born blind (Yochanan 9). Others seek a sign not from **Yeshua** directly but from those who claim to act in His name. However, a miracle is not proof that **Yeshua** is the **Messiah**, for there are demonic miracles (Mattityahu 24:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 13:3–4). Nor are miracles necessary for faith (Yochanan 20:28); no one has to wait for a sign before trusting **Yeshua** the **Messiah** (although sometimes, in His grace, **God** gives one).

**Greeks try to find wisdom.** Sha'ul frequently uses the word "**Greeks**" as a synonym for "**Gentiles**," However, he is probably speaking of a trait characteristic of the ancient **Greeks**, their desire to increase control over their surroundings through acquiring knowledge. Though useful if properly applied (the scientific advances of Western civilization are predicated upon it), the presumption that **God** can be contacted, sin forgiven, or ultimate meaning attained through wisdom is itself an act of faith and a misplaced one at that; known as **Gnosticism**; it is targeted in the **Brit Hadashah** as an enemy of the **Gospel**.

Today, there is a recrudescence of **Gnosticism** in what is loosely called the New Age Movement. Also, there are many, both Jews and Gentiles, who hold the supposedly secular presupposition that knowledge ("this world's wisdom," v. 20) is the key to everything; to deal with their concentric layers of intellectual objection requires endless rounds of philosophical demonstration. But no amount of it suffices to bring them to trust in **God** and His **Messiah**. On the contrary, the intellectual objections will melt away once the intellect itself has been brought to obey **God's** truth, for **God**, who created the intellect, has not set it in opposition to faith (1

Corinthians 2:16, Romans 1:17).<sup>1</sup>

*<sup>23</sup> we go on proclaiming a Messiah executed on a stake as a criminal! To Jews, this is an obstacle, and to Greeks, it is nonsense; <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, this same Messiah is God's power and God's wisdom! <sup>25</sup> For God's "nonsense" is wiser than humanity's "wisdom."*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David H. Stern, [Jewish New Testament Commentary](#).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18–25.