

QUESTION: Why did the Greeks approach Philip and say, “We want to see Jesus”? What is the main theme of this event, and why is it recorded?

ANSWER: From the time of Jesus through the apostolic period, there were two main groups of people who sought to understand the full reality of God’s truth.

The first group was the Jews, and the second group was the Greeks. The primary distinction between the two was that the Jews sought confirmation through signs, while the Greeks pursued wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:22-23

[22] For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;

[23] but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.

This distinction highlights a crucial theological point: the Jewish mindset was focused on the tangible and visible manifestations of God’s power, as they had a long history of God revealing Himself through miraculous

signs (e.g., the parting of the Red Sea, manna from heaven, and the miracles of the prophets). In contrast, the Greeks, influenced by philosophical thought, believed that true understanding of God would come through reason and wisdom.

When Jesus arrived, He was the fulfillment of both groups' deepest longings: a Messiah who would not only offer signs of divine power but also speak with the wisdom of God. Yet, despite this, many still rejected Him. The Jews, who expected the Messiah to come with signs of glory (such as calling down fire from heaven or delivering them from Roman oppression), could not accept the idea that the Messiah would suffer and die. The Greeks, who valued philosophical wisdom, could not grasp the idea that the Creator of the universe would humble Himself to die on a cross for humanity's sins.

Jesus' Sign of Resurrection:

Jesus, while not giving the signs the Jews expected, gave them a deeper, more profound sign—the sign of Jonah. In Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus referenced Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish as a prophetic foreshadowing of His own death, burial, and resurrection.

Matthew 12:38-40

[38] Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

[39] But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

[40] For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

The sign of Jonah is an emblem of resurrection—just as Jonah emerged from the depths of the sea, so too would Jesus rise from the dead. In this, Jesus pointed beyond the need for miraculous signs to a greater truth: His death and resurrection are the ultimate proof of His identity as the Son of God (Romans 1:4). The resurrection of Jesus is the central event of Christian faith, proving God’s victory over sin and death.

The Greeks’ Search for Wisdom:

The Greeks were seekers of wisdom and knowledge. Their philosophical heritage was shaped by thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, who sought to understand the nature of the divine through reason and reflection. However, the revelation of God through Christ transcended human wisdom.

Acts 17:22-23

[22] Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

[23] for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To the Unknown God.’ Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.”

Paul’s address in Athens to the philosophers at the Areopagus shows that while the Greeks were deeply spiritual, they were still searching for the true God. They had an altar inscribed “To the Unknown God”, symbolizing their acknowledgment that, despite their philosophical inquiries, they still lacked the knowledge of the one true God.

Paul uses this point of contact to proclaim the gospel: the God they sought unknowingly is revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate revelation of God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:24). Jesus is not just a teacher of wisdom; He is the embodiment of God's wisdom. In Him, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Colossians 2:3).

The Greeks Believing in Jesus:

The arrival of the Greeks, who had traditionally sought knowledge through philosophical reasoning, to inquire about Jesus shows a profound shift. These Greeks represent the larger world's search for truth, which is now being fulfilled in Christ. When they approached Philip to ask to see Jesus, it was not merely a request to meet a man from Galilee but a desire to encounter the very truth of God.

John 12:20-26

[20] Now there were some Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.

[21] Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

[22] Philip went and told Andrew, and in turn, Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

[23] But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

[24] Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

[25] He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[26] If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Here, Jesus reveals that His glorification (through His death on the cross and resurrection) is central to His mission. He uses the metaphor of a grain of wheat dying to bear fruit to illustrate the necessity of His sacrificial death. Through His death, He would bring life to many, fulfilling the deep longing for truth and salvation that both Jews and Greeks sought.

Theological Significance of Jesus' Mission:

The fact that the Greeks, who represented human wisdom and knowledge, came to seek Jesus signifies the universal nature of Christ's mission. Jesus is not just the Savior of the Jews but the Savior of the world (John 3:16). He is the fulfillment of both Jewish expectations and Greek philosophical longings. The gospel of Christ is the ultimate bridge between faith and reason, the tangible and the abstract.

The theological truth here is that true wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ alone. He is the "Logos" (Word) through whom all things were created (John 1:1-3), and in Him, all the mysteries of God are revealed (Colossians 1:26-27).

Application Today:

Even today, Jesus is revealed in all things. Whether in the scientific community, among soldiers, rulers, the wealthy, the poor, scholars, or doctors—those who truly seek God will find Him in Jesus Christ. Jesus is not limited by human categories or positions; He is revealed to all who earnestly seek Him, regardless of their circumstances.

If we look around us, we see that faith in Jesus exists in every sphere of

life. Many people, even in the most difficult situations or those who have rejected God in the past, come to believe in Jesus because He reveals Himself to them. The truth of Jesus is inescapable; He is revealed in the natural world (Romans 1:20), in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), and in the lives of believers.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Have You Believed in Christ?

The ultimate question remains: Have you believed in Christ? If not, what are you waiting for? He has completed the work of salvation through His death on the cross and resurrection. Through Him, we receive forgiveness for our sins.

Ephesians 2:8-9

[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

[9] not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Accept His work today through true repentance and baptism. Once you do, you will receive forgiveness for your sins—free of charge, through God's grace.

Romans 10:9

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Receive Jesus now, and experience the joy and peace that come with knowing Him.

God bless you.

LORD, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS.

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