# FROM EDEN to AI

SESSION 2

*God in the Machine*

Ancient theatergoers were among the first to discover God in the machine. By the 5th century BC, playwrights had begun scripting grand entrances. Actors playing gods were hoisted by crane and lowered onto the stage. Often their arrival was the drama's pivot point.

Aristotle became the first to point out how often this technique was used to resolve an otherwise unresolvable plot. You don't need a good playwright if you have a crane; just lower whichever pagan god or goddess you want onto the stage, and they can solve it lickety split

Today the Latin term **DEUS EX MACHINA** refers to a convenient but improbable solution to a seemingly unsolvable problem.

From the earliest tools to today's AI, humans have been constantly building tools that promise to solve problems, increase knowledge, and augment power and productivity.

**When a problem seems too big for humans to solve, why are we so attracted to the possibility that something we create will rescue us?**

**TECHNOLOGY** is what human beings make in response to the limits of being human.



Walter A. Maier
(1893-1950)

Radio was a new technology a century ago. In 1923, one percent of all U.S. households owned a radio receiver. That same year, Lutheran pastor Walter A. Maier wrote an editorial entitled "Why not a Lutheran Broadcasting Station?"

Youth groups, seminary students, and Maier's personal friends collected the money to purchase a 500-watt radio transmitter that could broadcast from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

The station was online by Advent 1924. Despite the looming Great Depression, donations continued that allowed Maier to launch *The Lutheran Hour* to a national audience on CBS Radio in 1930. By that time, American homes with radios had grown to 50%.

Upon Maier's death in 1950, The Lutheran Hour had become the largest regular broadcast – secular or religious – in the history of radio.

What did radio make possible for the Church that wasn't possible before?

What could radio *not* change about the Gospel itself?

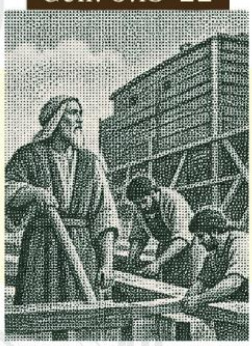
Radio was an emerging techology in the 1920s.

How would you describe the Church's posture toward emerging technology a century later?

The Bible is a chronicle of technology. It gives us countless examples of tools, craftsmanship, and ingenuity. Throught Scripture, the Bible records people using the technology of their time to accomplish godly purposes.

The construction of Noah's ark required materials, measurements, and engineering. The skills of craftsmen like Bezalel and Oholiab were identified by the Lord as essential to the construction of His tabernacle. Paul's use of the technology of language and writing dramatically increased the reach of the Gospel in His day and into ours.

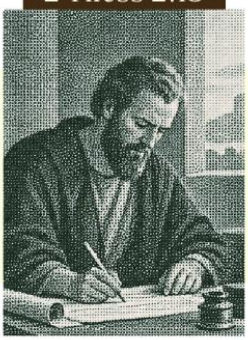
Gen. 6:13-22



Ex. 31:1-11



2 Thess 2:15



What do these three examples have in common?

What do they allow us to say definitively about technology?

## EXODUS 31:1-11

## EXODUS 32:1-8

*What comes into focus when these episodes are laid side-by-side?*

Humans approach technology and ask **CAN WE MAKE IT?**

Our failure is when we forget to ask **WHY ARE WE MAKING IT?** and **WHAT ARE WE TRUSTING IT TO DO?**

Technology does not have to be conceived for a malicious purpose to become an instrument of evil. An idol can be beautiful, useful, and impressive. The error is ours when we give it the trust, allegiance or saving power that only belongs to God.

There are all sorts of things we can ask technology to do that it is ultimately incapable of: keep us safe from every danger, make us productive enough to feel valuable, rescue us from doubt, suffering, or death. Anything can become an idol when we ask too much of it.

## QUESTIONS FOR ANY TOOL




## WHAT ARE GOOD AI PROMPTS?

- *clear about the task*
- *offers relevant context*
- *identifies intended audience*
- *specifies constraints*
- *seeks questions as much as answers*
- *doesn't surrunder responsibility for the task*

## WHY DOES AUTOCORRECT CHANGE MY WORDS TO SOMETHING UNHOLY?

- *autocorrect predicts language not intent*
- *AI seeks a plausible output not a perfect one*
- *there are no perfect tools*
- *know what a tool is good at*
- *know how it fails*
- *remain attentive while in use*

## WHAT ABOUT AI'S RESOURCE USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP?

*AI depends on:*

- *data centers*
- *electricity*
- *cooling*
- *hardware*
- *supply chains*

*All tech has material costs.*

*We ask is the benefit worth it?*

He came to his own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We are fascinated by the possibility of a machine that resolves the conflict, supplies the missing answer, and rescues us from our limitations. But the Gospel gives us something categorically different.

God doesn't accomplish our salvation by giving us **A TOOL**.

God doesn't accomplish our salvation by making us **LESS HUMAN**.

He saves us by becoming **HUMAN** for us.

The Son of God does not stand at a safe distance and send us an upgrade. He enters our creaturely life, bears our sin, suffers and dies in our place, and rises bodily from the grave. Our salvation is not a human achievement or a technological breakthrough. It is God's gracious work in Jesus Christ.

That doesn't make tools unimportant. It puts them in their proper place. We can receive technology as a gift, use it in service to our neighbor, acknowledge its limits, and refuse to ask it to be our savior.

