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God is Wise

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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ARTICLE FIFTY-FIVE: GOD IS WISE

“. . . to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen” (Rom. 16:27, NKJV).

“. . . in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3, NKJV).

THE DEFINITION OF WISDOM

It will prove helpful in defining God’s wisdom by comparing another of His attributes, that of His knowledge.

To explain:

- A. Knowledge refers to His total and eternal awareness associated with all events occurring in all places at all times.
 - B. Wisdom refers to His eternal ability to correctly apply all those facts to accomplish an intended goal.
 - C. Thus, knowledge may be looked upon as the divine root and wisdom as the divine fruit.
- Robert Lightner explores this distinction a bit further:

Though very closely related, knowledge and wisdom are not the same. Nor do they always accompany each other. No doubt we have all known those who have acquired a great deal of facts but who lacked the ability to use them wisely. Both knowledge and wisdom are imperfect in man but perfect and perfectly related to each other in God. Only He knows how to use His infinite knowledge to the best possible end. Through His wisdom God applies His knowledge to the fulfillment of His own purposes in ways which will bring the most glory to Him. (*The God of the Bible*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 99)

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33, NKJV).

- A. W. Tozer and J. I Packer have defined wisdom as follows:

In the Holy Scriptures wisdom, when used of God and good men, always carries a strong moral connotation. It is conceived as being pure, loving, and good . . . Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision. (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, Harper & Row, Grand Rapids, MI, 1961, p. 66)

Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness. As such, it is found in its fullness only in God. He alone is naturally and entirely and invariably wise. (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1993, p. 80)

- Thus, as has been observed, God's wisdom is based squarely on His divine knowledge. It is important to note the various scriptural references where the two words are linked together:

"Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?" (2 Chron. 1:10, NKJV).

"When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul . . ." (Prov. 2:10, NKJV).

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33, NKJV).

"Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the LORD is His treasure" (Isa. 33:6, NKJV).

"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2, NKJV).

". . . saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!'" (Rev. 5:12, NKJV).

A popular secular song speaks of this in regard to love and marriage:

*Love and marriage, love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage.*

This I tell ya, brother,

*You can't have one without the other.
Love and marriage, love and marriage,
It's an institute you can't disparage.*

Ask the local gentry

And they will say it's elementary.

*Try, try, try to separate them,
It's an illusion.*

Try, try, try and you only come

To this conclusion:

*Love and marriage, love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage.*

Dad was told by mother

You can't have one; you can't have none.

You can't have one without the other.

(Sammy Cahn, James Van Heusen, Barton Music Corp., NY, NY, 1955)

THE VALUE OF WISDOM

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding” (Prov. 4:7, NKJV).

“For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her” (Prov. 8:11, NKJV).

- Wisdom will bring honor (Prov. 4:8).
- It will present you with a crown of splendor (Prov. 4:9).
- It will establish your ways (Prov. 4:26).
- It is more precious than rubies (Prov. 8:11; 3:15).
- It is better than silver or gold (Prov. 3:14; 8:10, 11; 16:16).
- It is sweeter than honey (Psa. 10:10).
- It is a tree of life (Prov. 3:18).
- It will keep you morally pure (Prov. 7:5).
- It was used by God in the creating of all things (Prov. 8:23-35; Psa. 136:5; Jer. 51:15; 10:12).
- It will put light in the eyes and gives gentleness to one’s words and manner (Eccles. 8:1).
- It is better than strength (Eccles. 9:16).
- It is better than weapons of war (Eccles. 9:18).
- It brings with it humility and keeps one from selfish ambition (James 3:15).

THE GOD/MAN AND WISDOM

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6, NKJV).

This amazing O. T. passage predicts that the anticipated Messiah would possess a dual nature, being fully God and fully man. Thus, Isaiah’s two phrases:

- A Child is born, referring to His humanity

A. He would grow in knowledge:

“And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk. 2:40, 52, NKJV).

B. He would learn through obedience to His Father God:

“. . . though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8, NKJV).

C. He did not always know everything:

1. He did not know who touched Him:

“And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My clothes?’” (Mk. 5:30, NKJV).

2. He did not know the time of His return:

“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?’ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mk. 13:1-4, 32, NKJV).

- A Son is given, referring to His deity

A. He would possess all knowledge from the very beginning:

“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:2, NKJV).

“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man” (Jn. 2:23-25, NKJV).

“But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise and walk’?” (Mt. 9:4, 5, NKJV).

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?’” (Mt. 13:53, 54, NKJV).

“Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, ‘How does this Man know letters, having never studied?’ Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me’” (Jn. 7:14-16, NKJV).

B. He will possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge throughout the ages to come:

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’” (Rev. 5:11, 12, NKJV).

THE GIFT OF WISDOM

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men’” (Eph. 4:7, 8, NKJV).

Here we are told that following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, He gave spiritual gifts to (saved) men: “. . . for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:8, NKJV).

One of these gifts (supernatural abilities given to glorify God and edify the body of Christ) was the gift of wisdom. In reality there are four kinds of wisdom referred to in the Bible. These are:

- There is *natural* wisdom

In today’s slang talk, this might refer to a person with “street smarts.” There are at least three examples of this kind in the New Testament:

- A. The unjust steward (Lk. 16:8)
- B. The lawyer Gamaliel (Acts 5:38, 39)
- C. The town clerk in Ephesus (Acts 19:35-41)

- There is *worldly* wisdom

- A. As mentioned by Paul (1 Cor. 1:18-21)
- B. As mentioned by James (Jas. 2:14-16)

- There is a *sanctifying* wisdom: This is the wisdom God desires to impart to all believers:

- A. As referred to by Solomon (Prov. 2:6)
- B. As referred to by Paul (Eph. 1:17)
- C. As referred to by James (Jas. 1:5; 3:13, 17)

- There is *stewardship* wisdom: This is the gift of wisdom—the supernatural ability to correctly and concisely apply spiritual principles to contemporary problems. Both Stephen and Paul possessed this gift.

- A. Stephen possessed this (Acts 6:10)
- B. Paul possessed this (2 Peter 3:15)

THE ACTS OF CREATION AND REDEMPTION IN REGARD TO WISDOM

- God’s work in creation

- A. As celebrated down here on earth

“The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or

word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world. God has made a home in the heavens for the sun” (Psa. 19:1-4, NLT)

“O LORD, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures” (Psa.104:24, NLT).

“To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, for His mercy endures forever; to Him who laid out the earth above the waters, for His mercy endures forever; to Him who made great lights, for His mercy endures forever — the sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever; the moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever” (Psa. 136:5-9, NKJV).

“The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens; by His knowledge the depths were broken up, and clouds drop down the dew” (Prov. 3:19, 20, NKJV).

He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens: and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasures” (Jer. 10:12, 13, NLT).

The LORD made the earth by his power, and he preserves it by his wisdom. With his own understanding he stretched out the heavens. When he speaks in the thunder, the heavens roar with rain. He causes the clouds to rise over the earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from his storehouses (Jer. 51:15, 16, NLT).

B. To be celebrated up there in heaven

“The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘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. 4:10, 11, NKJV).

• **God’s work in redemption**

A. As celebrated down here on earth

“. . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4, NKJV).

“. . . knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:18-20, NKJV).

B. To be celebrated up there in heaven

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll,

and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:8, 9, NKJV).

THE FOLLY AND BITTER FRUITS OF MAN’S WISDOM

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent’” (1 Cor. 1:18, 19).

‘Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who 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 Cor. 1:18-25, NKJV).

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14, NKJV).

- **The folly:**

Even after knowing the facts involved, sinful man has refused to apply them to wisdom:

“...because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:19-21, NKJV).

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isa. 5:20, 21, NKJV)

- **The bitter fruits:**

A. Their wisdom comes not from above but from hell itself:

“This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:15-17, NKJV).

B. Their works will not survive this storms of life:

“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Mt. 7:26, 27, NKJV).

- C. Because they have not heeded the warnings of divine wisdom, God will not hear nor answer their cries for help:

“Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: ‘How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies’” (Prov. 1:20-31, NKJV).

VARIOUS COMMENTS ON WISDOM

Don’t expect wisdom to come into your life like great chunks of rock on a conveyor belt. It isn’t like that. It’s not splashy and bold . . . nor is it dispensed like a prescription across a counter. Wisdom comes privately from God as a by-product of right decisions, godly reactions, and the application of spiritual principles to daily circumstances. Wisdom comes . . . not from trying to do great things for God . . . but more from being faithful to the small, obscure tasks few people ever see. (Charles R. Swindoll, 1934-)

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know one from the other. (Reinhold Niebuhr, 1892-1971)

Knowledge is horizontal. Wisdom is vertical—it comes down from above.

(Billy Graham, 1918-)

Knowledge leads us from the simple to the complex; wisdom leads us from the complex to the simple. (Anonymous)

The doorstep to the temple of wisdom is a knowledge of our own ignorance. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1834-1892)

The intellect of the wise is like glass; it admits the light of heaven and reflects it. (Augustus John Cuthbert Hare, 1834-1903)

We can be knowledgeable with other men’s knowledge, but we cannot be wise with other men’s wisdom. (Michel Eyquem de Montaigne)

Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar. (William Wadsworth, 1770-1850)