

Wisdom - Understanding - Knowledge

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Proverbs 3:19-20 says, "By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew." This order, **wisdom - understanding - knowledge**, seems to be the order in which God proceeds. God began with wisdom to design the universe. Out of God's wisdom flowed God's understanding as He placed the objects in the universe. It was God's knowledge that separated the waters which nurtured the earth to bring forth life. Solomon indicated the primacy of wisdom when he said, "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom." (Proverbs 4:7) Further, he said, "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. When God asked Solomon, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you," Solomon answered, "Give me wisdom." (II Chronicles 1:7, 10) It seems that "wisdom" comes first, then understanding and finally knowledge. James seems to confirm the importance of wisdom coming first by saying, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." James did not say, "If any of you lacks understanding" or "knowledge." He said "wisdom." If this order is to be observed and followed (that is wisdom releasing understanding which in turn produces knowledge) then perhaps man should educate himself accordingly.

When one looks at the Western educational system superimposed upon us by Rome and Greece, it is immediately apparent that educators follow the exact reversal of wisdom - understanding - knowledge. Western man is taught to follow the process of knowledge - understanding - wisdom. Students are told repeatedly to "gather as much knowledge as possible, from this accumulated knowledge you will gain understanding, and then you can declare yourself wise!" The great mockery of this procedure is that science must constantly change its conclusions when new and different knowledge becomes available. Have any of us forgotten when scientists declared the earth flat? Or, do we remember the evolutionists who must constantly change their time periods? These are the people, like their father, Charles Darwin, who vainly gather as much knowledge about animal life as possible. They then "scientifically" distill this "knowledge" into their "theory" of evolution. Finally, they produce papers bereft of true understanding into what they triumphantly call "wisdom." Alas, on to their stage of self-declared wisdom walks the duck-billed platypus! "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (I Corinthians 1:20) Finally, consider the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's chief scientist's quote on CNN in 1997 following the landing of the rover on Mars. When asked if they had found life on Mars (critical to the evolutionists) he said, "In science, you must have a lot of imagination." Indeed. Some scientific theories require more faith than to believe God's Word.

Immanuel Kant's "Dare to Know" motto has done more than attack the Roman Catholic Church. It has set man on a path of self-destruction. It did not help usher in the "Age of Reason" to replace religion. It reversed God's learning process. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12) Man should begin his journey to obtain knowledge by first getting wisdom. "By **wisdom** a house is built, and through **understanding** it is established; through **knowledge** its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures." (Proverbs 24:3-4) Even the design, construction and furnishing of a house follows the procedure of wisdom - understanding - knowledge. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10) "Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off." (Proverbs 24:14) "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom." (Proverbs 4:7) "Greeks look for wisdom" (I Corinthians 1:22) but they are looking for it at the wrong end! Greeks try to find wisdom through the doorway of knowledge. Their procedure is reversed! It seems the doorway to knowledge is wisdom. Man must first observe the wisdom of God. From observing God's wisdom comes understanding. Acquired understanding leads to knowledge which is universally and easily applied.

Modern man has considered evolution as a replacement for or an explanation of creation. At first glance, evolution seems plausible. Yet, when its theory is investigated, many questions arise which evolutionists simply cannot answer. Silence is their only answer to questions like "Where is any evidence of animals in transition?" I ask the evolutionists, "Where is the one-legged eel who chose to leave the water in favor of the land?" The very word "evolution" should tell everyone that the process should be continuing and therefore observable! That this process is imperceptibly slow is not an answer! If it is, then millions of examples would be evident in every form of life. It would be in the fossil record as well as the current life examples. Again, all we have from the evolutionists are theories and "doctored" missing-links trying to make apes into men. Consider the professor at a Presbyterian University who, while teaching evolution and forbidding any student to mention God, creation or the Bible, mockingly said, "Of the 20,000,000 animals on earth, 2,000,000 have been named. Try to get 2,000,000 animals in the ark!" My daughter, Kristin, who was taking the class, said, "Aren't you the same professor who told us yesterday that 95% of all animals live in the oceans? They hardly needed the ark!" Again, I ask the evolutionists, "What would be the mathematical probability of a "female" eel getting the same urge to develop one leg and live on land to go ashore on the same beach, the same day as the aforementioned "male" eel? Evolution indeed. How foolish evolution must look to God. To the evolutionist I say, "I hear the duck-billed platypus' low growl as she defends her eggs so they can hatch and begin to nurse! The problem with man's theories about things like evolution is that they all begin with accumulating knowledge, distilling knowledge into understanding and declaring that wisdom is the result.

My real concern is that this reversed study process has infiltrated the Church. The Church mindlessly follows the world's learning procedure. One must ask, "Why have seminaries drifted into faithlessness? Why do they produce God-denying clergy who lead congregations away from God? Why are they in rapid decline, reduced to being libraries and have ever smaller enrollments?" The answer could be that they are staffed by faithless, God-denying, self-accredited personnel who have dedicated themselves to opposing God's learning procedure. To the American theologian, Paul Van Buren, who loved Freidrich Nietzsche's proclamation "God is dead," I say, "Freidrich Nietzsche is dead" - **God**. The vain attempt of the seminary to be "accepted" by the liberal-arts community has led it away from God's learning procedure. Once the theologian ceases to begin with wisdom, then faithless, God-denying religion replaces Godly life-style.

Today's Western Church is filled with alleged scholars who deny the faith. These faithless ones resort to ridicule when addressing men of faith by calling them "simple-minded" or "fundamentalists." This intimidation leads Believers to conclude that only the faithless are true scholars. The *Biblical Archaeology Review July/August, 1997* magazine (vol. 23, no. 4) contains yet another of these examples. Editor, Hershel Shanks, calls Thomas Thompson and Niels Peter Lemche of the University of Copenhagen "prominent Bible scholars." Thompson and Lemche conclude that David and Solomon had only a "metaphysical existence" (p. 36). Thompson has decided that David and Solomon are "mythological" (p. 34). He "estimates" the population of Jerusalem in the 10th century B.C.E to be "about 2,000." Therefore, "without a significant population in Judea, without a city of Jerusalem, ..." he said, "I don't see where there's room for a united monarchy within history" (p. 34). Lemche said regarding Biblical authors who wrote history, each "was making it up," and "they were creating mythologies." Regarding the Book of Judges, he compares it to "Norse tradition." He says, "we love those stories, but we don't believe them to be true" (p. 32). Thompson said, "If we don't have evidence, we don't have history" (p. 36). This is blatantly the same procedure followed by the evolutionists: knowledge - understanding - wisdom; the reversal of God's learning procedure. To these self-acclaimed Bible scholars I say, "If there is no real David or Solomon, there can be no Messiah!" Bible scholars above all others must return to God's learning procedure: wisdom - understanding - knowledge. Since there is a Messiah, even Jesus, Paul said of Him, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3)." Notice wisdom comes before knowledge.

Paul warned us against false teachers. He warned, "So that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments." (Colossians 2:4) Paul said to Timothy, "Turn away from Godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, ..." (I Timothy 6:20) Notice how "knowledge" comes first. It is clear from these passages that philosophical teachings of this world are false, opposing and fine-sounding arguments which do not come from or lead to Messiah.

Isaiah reveals that man's ability to know "how to" begins with wisdom from the LORD Almighty. He said, "Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say. When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick. Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it. All this comes from the LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom." (Isaiah 28:23-29)

God's wisdom has practical aims. James says that God's wisdom leads humans into daily applications of knowledge. He says, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." (James 3:17) "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." (James 3:13)

May I suggest that doing God's Word God's way is more important than just doing God's Word any way one chooses. Proverbs 3:19-20 suggests that God's path to applied knowledge is wisdom - understanding - knowledge. Perhaps man should firstly observe the "wisdom" of God in creation. Secondly, man should gain "understanding" from having observed God's wisdom. Lastly, man could fruitfully apply the "knowledge" he gained from understanding. Why is this critical? If we reverse this procedure in any discipline we end up leading people away from God. Alleged Bible scholars may think their worldly procedure is harmless debate, but they are actually helping to form eternal conclusions. The easily intimidated Believer is led down paths. The worldly path of knowledge - understanding - wisdom may be harmless to the platypus but this same procedure theologically has led to the denial of God. The Godly path of wisdom - understanding - knowledge may be useless to the platypus but this tried and true procedure has led millions to accept God's Messiah and go on to lead the world with knowledge in every discipline.

Philosophers preach "The Age of Reason" and say we no longer need God. Western universities worship at the feet of Godless teachers such as Plato and Socrates. They have purchased these doctrines of men with all their wealth. Yet, their graduates are as bankrupt as their philosophies. They cannot answer the true needs of mankind. Western universities and seminaries dispense knowledge without establishing either its need or revealing its source. What has it gotten us? It has resulted in lawlessness, immorality, alternative life-styles and disease. Have they forgotten that society is held together by Godly families? It appears so as they oppose "traditional family values" by more openly teaching "sexual freedom." "To your own self be true" is their creed. Their Bible is situational ethic and psychologists are their "accredited" pastors. "Enough," I say. Let us return at once to God's learning procedure of **wisdom** חָכְמָה (capable of judging, skillful in an art - p. 277) - **understanding** יָדָעַת (to distinguish, to separate, to discern, to perceive - p. 113) - **knowledge** דַּעְתָּה (knowing me σοφία - p. 205) *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*. The doorway to knowledge is wisdom. The tool to apply knowledge is understanding. Ask God for wisdom today! He will give it to you liberally. As you observe the wisdom of God you will gain understanding. With newly gained understanding you will be better able to apply knowledge.