

Message #4

Proverbs 1:7

GOD DETERMINES HOW WISE A PERSON IS BY HIS CONCEPT OF GOD!

The way a person thinks and acts toward Jehovah determines whether or not a person is wise or foolish.

The key to being wise is nothing we can do, rather it is an attitude we must have.

QUESTION #1 – What is fear?

The literal meaning of this word in Hebrew is terror. Such passages as Jonah 1:10 and Exodus 14:13-31 inform us that the idea of terror is revealed in this word.

A contextual meaning of this word is reverence. It needs to be stressed that the “terror” element cannot ever be fully eliminated or replaced by the reverence element. Such passages as Psalm 2:11 and 5:7 indicate that our service and worship are to be carried out with a reverential fear.

A purposeful meaning of this word “fear” is obedience. There can be no doubt that obedience to the Word of God is closely connected to the fear of God.

We may conclude that “fearing God” is a prerequisite for any person gaining the wisdom of God. Fearing God means to have an intimidated reverence for God which actually fears His awesome power and obeys His precious Word.

QUESTION #2 – What is “The fear of the LORD?”

The phrase “fear of the LORD” occurs 14 times in the book of Proverbs (1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17).

In the Hebrew language, this type of construction is called the “construct relationship,” which means that the first noun “fear” is **qualified** by the second noun LORD. Fear is dependent on “LORD” for its full meaning. What this practically means is that it is not just any fear or any reverential intimidation that brings one God’s wisdom; it is a specific qualitative “fear of the LORD.”

The Hebrew noun LORD is the word YHWH (pronounced in English Jehovah). This is the name God gives to Himself in Exodus 3:14. This is a very sacred name and has come to be understood as referring to the self-existing One.

What Solomon was driving at was this: when a person is gaining such a fearful, intimidating reverence for the fact that God is so self-existent awesome and sovereign that He can do what He sovereignly pleases, he is beginning to gain the wisdom of God.

QUESTION #3 – What does it mean that “fearing the LORD” is the “beginning of knowledge?”

The participle “beginning” is used three ways in the Hebrew language:

- 1) It is used to refer to the starting point–this is the place one starts.
- 2) It is used to refer to the supreme point–this is the most important point.
- 3) It is used to refer to the sum point–this is the sum total of the matter.

Quite simply this means that **unless there is the fear of the LORD, there will be no wisdom.**

QUESTION #4 – Who are the “fools?”

The word “fools” in Hebrew suggests moral perversity. It comes from an Arabic word which means thick or dull.

This clause is antithetic parallelism to the first clause in **verse 7**–in direct opposite to one who fears the LORD and begins to gain wisdom–there is the “fool” who despises wisdom and instruction, he despises the skilled and disciplined life that is required by God to gain His wisdom.

The verb “despise” is one that means to hold in contempt or to trample with feet. In this context the thing the fool does is to trample down with his feet and hold in contempt the idea of the “fear of the LORD.” **The fool is one who refuses to reverentially fear the Sovereign God.**

According to Proverbs, the fool is one who is arrogant (12:15); short-tempered (12:16); boastful (14:3); disobedient (15:5); and argumentative (20:3). This is especially true when it comes to fearing the LORD. **The only thing a fool reverences is himself.**

If a believer wants God’s wisdom, he must ask himself what is his attitude toward God:

- 1) Do we fear God?
- 2) Do we reverence God?
- 3) Do we obey God?

Our attitude toward God determines whether or not we are on the path of wisdom or folly.