***Understanding  
  
RV76-01***

We are in the process of studying Revelation 4:1-5 relative to the throne room of God. This is segment number 10. We're on verse 5, which reads, "And out of the throne proceeded lightning and thunderclaps and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God."

As you know, the last of the 12 apostles to die was the man named John. He was rather close to the Lord Jesus – one of the inner circle of the group. Peter and James were the other two. John died near the end of the first century, 100 A.D., and he died at nearly the age of 100 himself. He was the only apostle that we have a record of who died a natural death. All the rest of them were killed in one way or another as martyrs. It so happens that John was sent into exile near the end of his life by the Roman Emperor Domitian during a siege of persecution of Christians. His place of existence of exile was an island off the western coast of Turkey in the Aegean Sea called Patmos. It, of course, is there to this day, and it is one of the interesting places in the world that Christians like to visit – that stony, rocky, windblown plain of the Isle of Patmos. Here, John was sent into exile.

One Sunday morning, while on that island, the book of Revelation was revealed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. This book is a preview of the final seven years of human history immediately preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. This is one of the last things that the Lord Jesus promised His disciple that He would do before he ascended from the Mount of Olives. He said, "I'm going to come back again, in just the way you've seen Me go (physically)." And the seven years before that event is fulfilled is what the book of the Revelation is all about.

The first part of the book, up through chapter 3, deals with seven letters written to seven local churches that actually existed in a circle on the coast of Asia Minor. We have studied those in detail. There is, of course, considerable significance to those letters, because they reveal to us all kinds of problems that are going to exist in local church operation, all through the centuries, and the divine viewpoint solution for those problems. So, those seven letters are terrifically valuable to us today.

These churches also represent, interestingly enough, the course of church history from the day of Pentecost to the day that we call the rapture, when the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air – when all Christians are swept off the earth. The Christians who are in graves are raised to life, and all meet the Lord together in the area. That's called the rapture. The rapture means the catching away.

So, from the day of Pentecost, when the church began, to the day of the rapture, there has been a progression of history of the visible church here on earth. These seven letters, as you have seen, portrayed how the church gradually degenerated into the Roman Catholic system; how it was restored during the Reformation era; how it turned cold as a result of the Reformation era, because they neglected one critical doctrine (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit); how it was revived under revival of Bible study, as represented by the Philadelphia church; and, how it comes to total degeneration, which is where we are largely today (in the Laodicean church), where liberalism has reigned dominant in the local church operation.

Revelation chapters 4 and 5 see the church removed from the earth, and now in heaven. This happens at the rapture of the church. Then begins the last seven years of human history before the Second Coming of Christ. They are the most terrible years of human destruction; suffering; violence; and, worldwide turmoil that the world has ever seen. Today, our world, in many ways, is being prepared for a one-world government under a supreme dictator who will be empowered by Satan, which the Bible calls the antichrist. Of course, the Bible tells us that that last seven years is after the church is removed. I want to stress that. You can sit back and relax right now as believers. You're not going to go through this. You'll be taken out before this happens. But when all hell breaks loose on this earth, and God the Holy Spirit is removed so that He's no longer restraining evil like he is now, and Satan has free hand, then the world is going to learn how absolutely bankrupt is human reasoning – what a zero man is on his own in trying to solve human problems.

At the heart of bringing about a world like that (a one-government world) is one key factor, and that is the economic breakdown. That's what we're living in today. We are on a runaway train. All of us have a great deal of hope in this nation, and maybe we have an administration in Washington that can turn it around. But I would be something less than honest with you not to caution you to realize that that's only a thin thread. It is practically irreversible. The rest of the nations of the world, if you've been following the reports this week, are now ganging up on the United States economically. What happens in our country, because all the rest of the world builds its economy on the American dollar, is tearing apart the economies of the world. Our inflation is destroying them. The leaders of the world are fearing a revolution in the streets.

So, they are cutting loose from the United States. They're trying to abandon their association with us. They're trying to salvage the day. But they're all going to go down with us. When everything comes apart, people always try one solution that always seemed to work. They say, "Give us a leader. Give us a strong man." It happened in Germany. Adolf Hitler came along. He said, "I'm your man." Indeed, when he took charge, he made things better. And we were on our way to World War II. In the time of Napoleon, after the French Revolution, when atheism had its orgy of blood, and the people had enough of it, they screamed out, "Give us a leader," and a young field artillery lieutenant named Napoleon Bonaparte stepped up and fired a few shots into a rebel crowd, and said, "I am your man." They had their leader, and France got a new bloodbath under the wars of Napoleon.

In our day, in communist Russia, Stalin did the same thing. People say, "Give us a leader" when things are coming apart. The Bible says that it's going to happen again. The last seven years of human history are going to see a man rises out of the countries of Western Europe as a leader who can bring it all together. He takes charge. Beginning with chapter 6 of Revelation, we begin to study in detail what that man is going to do. And it is scary.

However, at the moment, we are in an in-between place – Revelation chapters 4 and 5, where the church is in heaven. And we're getting a preview of what will happen when all of us are taken out, and we're in the Lord's presence, and the tribulation period is about to begin. Today, only the United States still stands in the way of the total domination of the world by a one-man ruler and by a one-government organization.

By the way, don't forget that all the powerful forces on the financial front; all the multinational corporations; and, all the multinational bankers are all devoted to the concept of a one-world government. That is their goal. In one way or another, they are out to do it. I am beginning to suspect that I see some interesting handwriting on the wall, because we have a totally different kind of administration in the White House – a conservative. He is a man who stands for all of the things that the Bible stands for, that can turn this country around. But it's going to be very painful. I think he was put there, in part, by the same people who want one-world government. What better way to achieve their goals, now that the disaster has come, than to put somebody else in charge, and say, "He's the guy that caused it. And what he stands for is the reason we have this trouble," so that they can continue with their game.

Be that as it may, once the United States is off the scene, it's all over. And the United States is deteriorating rapidly, because Christians are deteriorating rapidly. Christians in our country, by and large, are the most ignorant, stupid, backward bunch of human beings that ever breathed on the face of the earth since the church began. They are practically zeros when it comes to a knowledge of the Word of God, because there are not teaching pastors who are informing people, and preparing them for the times in which we live, and preparing them to execute their ministries.

**The Throne of God**

So, John is transported into heaven now in a vision. He is given a preview of what it's going to be like when the rapture takes place, and we're all swept up together into the Lord's presence. Very briefly, we've seen that in chapter 4, John sees a throne on which God the Father is seated. Before the Father's throne, he sees seven flaming torches. These seven flaming torches symbolize God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit always appears in the Bible in symbolic form. At the baptism of Jesus, He was in the form of a dove. On the day of Pentecost, He was in the form of the cloven tongues of fire on the heads of the believers.

**The Holy Spirit**

So, here the Holy Spirit appears in the symbolic form of these seven flaming torches. The significance of these seven flaming torches is explained to us back in Isaiah 11:2. We are told what the ministry of God the Holy Spirit would be to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, when He appeared on this earth. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ was not only 100% deity, but He was 100% humanity as well. As a human being, He had to go through everything you and I have to go through. The Lord Jesus Christ, as a little baby, had zero knowledge. He did not know anything about the Bible. He did not know anything about spiritual things in His humanity. He had to be taught it by His parents. He had to go to synagogue school. He had to learn it. And that's exactly what the Bible says: "He grew in the nurture of the admonition of the things of the Lord." He grew in his physical structure, and He grew in his spiritual structure.

So, how did He make that kind of fantastic development, so that by the time He was a 12-year-old boy, He could sit in the temple with the men who held doctorate degrees, and He could be giving them responses to their questions – answering Bible doctrine questions in depth, and asking questions of such discernment that these doctors of the Law were put back on their heels in amazement: "How can a 12-year-old kid be talking to us with this kind of insight?" Because from the very first, this child was free of the sin nature. That is a problem that you and I still live with, but He did not because He was born of a virgin. You get your sin nature genetically from your father. If you can have a child born without a human father, he won't have a sin nature. It comes through the genes of the father. So, He was virgin-born, and therefore, free of the sin nature, but He still had to learn divine viewpoint truth. He got it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 11:2 says, "And the spirit of the LORD (the spirit of 'YHWH') shall rests upon Him" (that is, upon Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah). Then it describes the other factors – all of these represented by these seven torches: the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and might; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." That verse is important to us because the same God the Holy Spirit, who indwelt Jesus Christ and who ministered to Him, indwells you and me. This is one of the unique things that was not true of the Old Testament. The minute you received Christ as your personal Savior, you received the Holy Spirit as a permanent resident in your body. He indwells you as His temple, the Bible says, and He indwells you permanently. So, every moment of the day: you can't breathe; you can't sleep; you can't be awake; and, you can't go anywhere but what God the Spirit is right there with you: observing; attending; and, helping. He knows it all. He's there as your Helper. That's what Jesus Christ said. He said, "I'm going to heaven. I'm going to send you another Comforter (and that word means 'Helper') to replace Me." He is One who is just like Jesus Christ; that is, One who is also God.

So, this same Holy Spirit indwells every believer now on a permanent basis, and these seven flaming torches represent the sevenfold ministry here in Isaiah 11:2. They are now being performed for you and me. God the Holy Spirit is the key to the Christian performing three primary roles to which every believer is called. You can kind of review yourself to see how well you're doing.

**Priesthood**

First of all, God has called you, from the day you were born again, to be a priest. In the Old Testament, they had a category of priest (the Aaronic priesthood). That is not so anymore. Everybody is his own priest. This is one of the great doctrines that came out of the Reformation. The reformers finally realized that the Roman Catholic Church was a hybrid (a mongrel) – an amalgamation of New Testament Christianity and Nimrod's Babylonian religion, and that Roman Catholicism was a pure-gutted pagan system covered over with Christian veneer. They realized that one of the things that had been deceptive was that there was an outside priest who got you to God. The Word of God makes it clear that every one of us is a priest. You only represent one person, and that's yourself. That is true unless you're a father, and you have children in your home. Until your children reach the age of maturity (that was 20 years old and up in the Old Testament), you are their priest. You have a function to fulfill as a priest. We can't go to that now, but we just need to mention it.

**Ambassadors**

You are also an ambassador. That's your second function that you are to fulfill as a believer. And that function is the function of being a representative of Jesus Christ. He is the king, and you are the representative to all the world. You speak for Him, and you are His witness, thereby.

**Soldiers**

Then the third function is that you are a soldier of Jesus Christ; that is, you are part of the angelic conflict. There is a conflict between the angels of God and the angels of Satan, and you're caught right in the middle every day of your life. You can become a spiritual casualty. But if you're not in the battle, nobody is bothering you. I'll tell you, there isn't anybody that the devil has less interest than the Christian who is not functioning in the angelic conflict. The devil doesn't bother anybody who isn't giving him any trouble. So, if you're having a happy, wonderful life without any troubles and any difficulties, then you're probably one of those characters that the devil is not too interested in.

However, in order to fulfill the roles of priest; ambassador; and, soldier, God the Holy Spirit is the key. Without Him, you cannot function in any of these. Without Him, you cannot be effective to any degree. And when you are not effective in these three functions, the result is that rewards in heaven are lost. That is the bottom line to the Christian life – to earn rewards in heaven. You can't earn salvation. That's a gift. But rewards you do earn. And everybody's eternity is going to be different, depending on the rewards that they have earned. It all depends on God the Holy Spirit enabling you to function as a priest; as an ambassador; and, as a soldier. As you function effectively in these categories, you are earning rewards.

Now, only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (and that enlightenment comes from the Word of God) can a believer secure the capacity to function in these roles and to secure blessing. And that is the point. Only the Spirit of God can give you capacity. That's what you need. You need capacity to act as a priest; as an ambassador; and, as a soldier. The Word of God is the means. We are to feed upon doctrine (and the word "doctrine" means "teaching." We need to feed upon that on a daily basis. You need to feed on it at least on a weekly basis. When you go to church, in heaven's name, you should be able to walk out and say, "Hey, I know something about the Bible that I didn't know when I walked in. I know something about being related to God in a fantastic way that I didn't know when I walked in." Otherwise, you're wasting your time. It is the Spirit of God who is the key.

So, what Isaiah said was that what was being ministered to the humanity of Jesus is an important clue to what is being ministered to our humanity today.

**The Spirit of God**

So, we found that this first flaming torch that John sees was called the "ruach YHWH." The Hebrew word "YHWH" was pronounced "YaHoWaH," as far as we can tell. This is the 4-letter word in Hebrew that is called the sacred Tetragrammaton. This was so sacred that the Jews would never pronounce it when they read it in Hebrew. They would always slip in the word for LORD ("Adonai") instead. But in any case, this is the most sacred name, and the personal name, of God in the Old Testament. Something like almost 6,000 times it is used, and it is the name that indicates deity. "YHWH" is deity.

**Promises**

In Isaiah 11:2, the first thing that is upon Jesus Christ (and is upon you and me) is the Spirit of Jehovah – the Spirit of deity. This is the Spirit of God, and this name is used particularly in terms of God who makes covenants – who makes promises that He keeps. This is a promise such as: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and you'll go to heaven." This is a promise such as "If you reject the gospel, and don't believe on Jesus Christ, and refuse to accept Him, and you call God a liar, then you will end up in the lake of fire forever." God is a God who keeps His Word in both directions. That is represented by this name.

So, this first torch indicates that the Holy Spirit is deity. And this Holy Spirit (who is present with the believer to guide and to bless) is not just some kind of an impersonal force. It is God Himself. This is the role of the Spirit of God. The Father makes the plan; the Son provides the basis at the cross for executing the plan; and, it is God the Holy Spirit who is the executor who puts it into motion.

**Jesus Christ**

The believer can only exploit the fact that the Holy Spirit indwells him through the daily feeding upon the Word of God, just as the Lord Jesus Christ did in His humanity. So, in Luke 2:52, we read about this growing child Jesus: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. He increased in the quality of wisdom (we'll get to that in a moment) in His divine viewpoint. He increased physically. The Boy grew up. He increased in favor with God spiritually, and He increased in favor with men socially. That was nice. When the Lord Jesus Christ met you, He said, "Yes, ma'am," and "No, sir." And He said, "Please," and "Thank you." He was a well-mannered Boy who had social graces, and therefore, He grew in favor socially as a human being.

Later on, the apostle Paul has this to say about the Lord Jesus Christ in Colossians 2:3: "In whom (that is, in Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The Lord Jesus Christ grew by feeding upon the Word of God. He learned it. That's why He developed. And in the process of that growth, He had the power of the Spirit of God to teach Him. This is what the New Testament tells us is the role of the Spirit of "YHWH" (the spirit of Jehovah) – to teach us Bible doctrine truth.

**Deity**

By the way, if we wanted to summarize this first torch in one word, that word would be "deity."

**Wisdom**

Then there was a second torch that John saw flaming there before that throne. We saw that that second torch (identified again in Isaiah 11:2) is called "wisdom." Summarizing it in one word, we would say "values." This torch is called the "ruach chokmah" (the spirit of wisdom). The word "chokmah" is a beautiful word in the Hebrew. That is the word for wisdom that we looked at last time. Wisdom is divine viewpoint frame of reference in the mind. "Chokmah" has to do with the mentality of your soul. It has to do with your mind to enable you to make the right decisions at the opportune time. Isn't that a great thing to have? It is the capacity to make the right decision at the opportune time. Without "chokmah," the Bible says you're a fool, because you're making wrong decisions when you have an opportune time. You don't have the judgment to make the right decision, and you're not born with it.

Wisdom comes from God. We have three great books of the Bible in the Old Testament that are wisdom literature: Job; Proverbs; and, Ecclesiastes. Saturate your soul with them, and boy, you'll be head-and-shoulders above other human beings all around you because you'll have "chokmah". You'll have wisdom. In the New Testament, we have one such book, the book of James. James falls in the category of wisdom literature. If you saturate your mind with the principles of James, you're way ahead of the crowd.

Human wisdom is the opposite. It brings self-delusion, and it brings grief in all areas of one's life. It is speculation detached from reality. The people who lack divine viewpoint wisdom are skeptical people. I cannot emphasize that enough. *People who lack wisdom are skeptical people*. They are the people who do not accept the things that they should accept. They do not act upon the things that they should act upon. They miss out on success and prosperity and blessing, because they are skeptical of the very things that God honors. It is a terrible thing to have a mind that has reservations about what God has said.

**Capital Punishment**

It is amazing how many times the Bible makes a declaration – God has made a declaration, and people want to debate it. We have all this talk about capital punishment. Is it right? Is it wrong? Should it be? Shouldn't it be? And if you listen to people, you think that God had never spoken on the subject. If you've got "chokmah" (wisdom), right away, you know, "Hey, I've got a frame of reference. I know what God thinks on that. I know exactly what the answer is. I don't have to debate that issue."

**Homosexuality**

We have all this talk about homosexuality. Is it wrong? Does it have rights? Should it be tolerated? Should we let them teach in our schools? Outside of civil liberties that we will give to anybody, there are also the freedoms of choice and the principles of morality that apply from the Word of God. Here's all this talk as if here was a heinous sin (a degrading sin), and somehow they can be tolerated as something not so bad. There's a place for it in our society. If you have wisdom, you know that God has spoken. You have a frame of reference. You know how to decide that. You've got a value system.

Without that, if you're just going to be on human wisdom, boy, you're going to speculate, and you're going to find reasons to justify the grossest kind of evil. You are going to be skeptical of the very things that you should be ready to receive.

That's why some people in business are enormously successful – because they have wisdom. They have a frame of reference. They have a sense that they can spot the time to move. Wisdom is making the right decision at the opportune moment.

**Understanding**

The spirit of wisdom is joined by another influence of the Holy Spirit, which also affects the mind. This is called the spirit of understanding. It looks like this in the Hebrew: "binah." "Binah" is "understanding." In the Hebrew, this word refers to the mental capacity of discerning – to be discriminating. That is a wonderful thing: to have a mind that is discerning; to have a mind that is discriminating; to have a mind that provides you with the ability to discern the real meaning of things; and, to have a mind that enables you to sense the consequences of a variety of choices that you can make.

There are some people that are forever beating their heads against a brick wall because they do not have this quality of "binah." They have no understanding. They're such dumbbells that they cannot discern that if they follow this course of action, it's going to hurt them; or, that if they follow this course of action, it's going to be a grief to them. But if you have understanding, which, again, is a quality that you get from God, you then have the capacity to know what you're really hearing, and to know what you're really seeing.

A lot of you people have got it. People come up and talk to you, and you'll report to me that so-and-so had this conversation. You'll say, "This is what they said, but what they meant was this." And I know you've got understanding, because you were not conned by the person's words. You recognized the smokescreen. You knew the cover-up, and you knew that what the person was saying was something else – that their motivation was something else.

I want to tell you that if you know somebody who has "binah" understanding, don't try to con them. You're going to make a fool of yourself. Just spot that person, and say, "I better not try to play games, because he's going to see through me." That is the issue here. The Lord Jesus Christ was given the capacity to see through people. So all the big doctors of the Law and the Pharisees would come to Him deliberately trying to trap Him: "Do you think we should pay taxes to Caesar?" And the Lord Jesus Christ saw right through con artists. And He made a statement that closed their mouths and infuriated them again and again and again. He could see through people. He had discernment. That's what understanding means: to be able to separate; to know what it is you're hearing; and, to know what it is you're seeing.

For example, in John 6:30, there is an example of the Lord Jesus Christ being able to see through people, and people, not having ears to understand what they're hearing, and eyes to interpret what they're seeing. To interpret it wrong is terrible, but we need to be able to interpret the thing in the right way: "They said, therefore unto to him, 'What sign can You show us, that we may see and believe you? What work do You do?" The Pharisaical leaders (the leaders of Israel) and the people surrounding Him said, "Give us a sign. Prove who you are. And they said, 'Our fathers did eat manna in the desert. It is written. He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses did not give you that bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life unto the world."

What does that mean? Do you have the "binah" understanding to be able to see through those words, and to say, "This is what Jesus Christ meant when He said, 'God has sent bread from heaven, and this bread comes down from God, and through this bread, you can have eternal life?'" Obviously, He's talking about Himself, isn't He?

"Then said they unto him, 'Lord, evermore, give us this bread.'" What do they mean? They think that He's talking about a bread that you could eat, so you'd never get hungry again, so that they'd never have to work. They missed it all completely. They did not have understanding. They couldn't discern what His words meant.

"And Jesus said unto them, 'I am the bread of life.'" He gets more specific: "He that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you that you also have seen Me and not believed. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me. Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will who has sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Hey, that's a great statement. Do you want to know why you can't be lost again? Because Jesus Christ is protecting you once you're in. That's what that verse says: "Those that the Father has given Me in eternal life, I will raise up at the last day. I never lose a child of God once he's in the family.

Verse 40: "This is the will of Him who sent Me: that everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life. And I will raise Him up on the last day." This is physical resurrection. "The Jews then murmured at Him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Isn't this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he said, 'I came down from heaven.''"

That's understanding, folks. They said, "What do you mean that you're the bread from heaven. We know you. You live down the street here. You work in Your father's carpenter shop. We know who your parents are. What do you mean that you came down from God, and you're bread that can give me eternal life?" They couldn't put it together. It's terrible to have a dumb mind, isn't it? Some people know more about that than others.

"Jesus, therefore, answered and said unto them, 'Don't murmur among yourselves. No man can come to Me except the Father who has sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up on the last day.'"

**Election**

By the way, there's the doctrine of election. Nobody comes to God until God says, "I'm alerting you to your need of eternal life," and God puts His hand in your back, and He pushes you right toward Jesus Christ. And you say, "I believe it." Do you see why we don't pressure people? Do you see why it's a terrible thing to go through all these pressure movements at the end of a service to try to get people to be saved? All it does is deceive them, because that is not the way God works.

Verse 45: "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father comes unto Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except he who is of God, and has seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believes on Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and they're dead. This is the bread that's comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I would give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' Then Jesus said to them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. And he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life. I will raise him up at the last day, for My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers ate manna and are dead. He that eats of this bread shall live forever."

Now what does that mean? It takes discernment. The Roman Catholic Church, which does not have discernment, came along and said, "Well, that means that we convert a piece of bread into the body of Christ, and we eat it. Then we take some wine, and we convert it into blood, and we eat it. That's how we eat Jesus Christ." And that's not true. He has just previously said, again and again, in this passage, that you receive Him by believing in Him. You eat of Christ by believing in Him as Savior.

Verse 59 says, "These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum."

Two summers ago, I stood on the very site in Capernaum at the synagogue where He uttered these words. I can see in my mind's eye those stupid people who lacked discernment, who were surrounding Him, who could only think in these physical terms that when He said to eat Him, that he was suggesting something like cannibalism. They did not grasp what He was saying in terms of believing on Him.

What was the result? Drop down to verse 66 in John 6: "From that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, 'Will you go away also?'" Here's the comparison. Here are some men who have "binah." They have understanding. Most of the crowd did not. They shoved off, and left Jesus Christ, and they left to go into the lake of fire.

Now the Lord turns to his twelve and says, "'Are you going to leave Me too?' Then Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure you are that Christ, the Son of the living God.'" And there it was. They understood what Jesus was saying. They had understanding. They understood that He was saying, "You eat Me by believing on Me, and by trusting in Me as Savior." Peter said, "Where are we going to go? You're the only one that has it."

So, understanding refers to the comprehension of meanings as distinguished from the bear apprehension of the facts and the data. A lot of people have information, but they do not have a grasp for the meaning. That's what the word "understanding" means here in terms of the ministry of the Spirit of God.

You have another example of this in Daniel, when Daniel recognized that he had information, and he tells the king, "I don't know what this means, but God has given me understanding, and that's why I can interpret your dream. It is the difference between having the same information that all the other wise men had. The king gave them all the facts, but only with this man Daniel had the discernment. So, comprehending what God thinks on the matter is what it's all about.

Understanding comes as a gift from God. If up to this point, you followed, and you may say, "I'm for it, and I want it. I need understanding." Then the first thing to realize is that you get it from God. We have this demonstrated in 1 Kings 3:5, in the case of the wisest man that ever lived, King Solomon: "In Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night. And God asked, 'What shall I give you?'" Solomon was a young man. His father David has died. He has ascended to the throne. God says, "What do you want, Solomon? I'll give you anything you ask for."

"And Solomon said, 'You have shown unto Your servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before You in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You. You have kept for him this great kindness, that you have given him a son to sit on his throne as it is this day. Now, O Lord, my God, You have made your servant king instead of David, my father. I am but a little child. I don't know how to go out or come in.'" This man had discernment: "And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people who cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. Give, therefore, Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge this Your great people.' And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing."

The passage goes on to tell how God said to Solomon, "You asked for the right thing. You asked for understanding so that you could properly rule this people – you could discern." What did Solomon have to discern? Well, he hardly got to the throne, and do you know what he had to discern right off the bat? There were these two harlots (two prostitutes). Each of them became pregnant. They each bore a child, and they were living together. During the night, one of them, sleeping with their infant children, rolls over and suffocates the child. She wakes up; realizes what's happened; sneaks over to the other bed with the living child; and, swaps it for the dead child. When the other mother wakes up, she finds the child dead and says, "This is not my baby." She looks over there and says, "That's my baby." The first prostitute says' "No." So, they go to Solomon.

This is what Solomon was saying: "God, how am I going to decide this if I don't have 'binah?' I have to have a mind that can look through, and that can discern. I need to be able to see through things.'" And he saw through it right away. You know how he solved it. He said, "Take a sword; cut the baby (the living baby) in half; and, give half to each one." And just as Solomon thought, the real mother said, "No, I don't want any of that. Let her keep the child. I don't want to kill my child." And Solomon said, "That's the real mother." Now that is understanding. And the Lord said, "Solomon, you didn't ask for a lot of things. You didn't ask for fame. You didn't ask for long life. You didn't ask for riches."

Verse 11: "And God said unto him, because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life; neither have asked riches for yourself; nor, have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to deserve justice, behold, I have done according to your words. I have given you a wise and an understanding heart so that there was none like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like you. I have also given you that which you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like you all of your days." God said, "Great. You wanted discernment. You've got it."

Put yourself in Solomon's place. Suppose that somebody came to you and said, "Anything you want, you've got it." What would you ask? "I'd like a girl to get married to. I'd like a new car. I'm sick of that '61 Chevy I'm driving around." I know what I'd ask. I'd like a doorbell in my house that would ring. I would like to live in a house where they ring the bell, especially because we have three doors. I'd like doorbells with different ringers at each door, so that I'd know which door someone was at. That's what I'd ask for: a house that has a doorbell in it. We have all of these wonderful things that we go around and ask for, and that we'd like to pursue.

But this kid had understanding. And he said, "Lord, I'm a child." He wasn't. He was a grown young man. He said, "You've been very merciful to my father David. I've seen how You have blessed him. You blessed my father David such that during his last 25 years, he made the greatest impact on our people of any man who has ever been in the history of our nation. That was the last 25 years following his sin of adultery. You picked him up out of the dust, and you made him the greatest man that there ever was in our kingdom. You did this – not my father David. You can do this for me. I need 'binah.' I just need understanding. I need to be able to see through people, and I need to be able to see through things. I can't go to school to learn it. It's a gift that You give me through Your Word."

God said, "That's good, Solomon. You could have asked for so many things. You could have asked for victory on the field of battle, and long life, and riches. You're going to get all that, but you're going to get the thing you need that will give you all those things. You'll have the understanding."

So, the spirit of wisdom is what Solomon reached out for. And God said, "I'm delighted to give it to you – the ability to comprehend. This understanding comes from the written Word of God. That's important to remember. That's why church service is important. That is where you develop your capacity for understanding.

In Psalm 119:104, we read, "Through Your precepts (Bible doctrine), I get understanding. Therefore, I hate every false way." The psalmist said, "It's not just indifferent to me that I hear human viewpoint. I hate it with a vengeance, because every bit of human viewpoint in my mind denies me the perception to see through people." The greatest people in the history of the world, and the greatest people in our society, have always been those who had understanding to see through people.

This is the thing that we should consciously and diligently, therefore, seek. In Proverbs 4:5, we have the statements, "Get wisdom. Get understanding. Don't forget it. Neither decline from the words of My mouth" (again, the words of doctrine).

Verse 7: "Wisdom is the principal thing." We looked at that last time: "Therefore, get wisdom. And with all your getting, get understanding." Get a divine viewpoint frame of reference, then get the capacity to see things as they are; to see through people; and, to be able to spot reality.

For this reason, Proverbs 3:5 warns against leaning on your own human viewpoint understanding: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding." So, all of you high-IQ characters, take notice. Don't trust your smarts. That will never make it. It will never give you the discernment that the Word of God will give you in spiritual understanding. It is a gift from God.

Psalm 119:34 says, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law. Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." That's a good verse. People who have understanding obey the Bible. People who have understanding obey biblical morality. People who have understanding do what God has said, and they refuse to do what He has forbidden. That is understanding. And the psalmist says, "I'm going to keep it with my whole heart."

Psalm 119:73: "Your hands have made me and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments." This is the capacity to understand what God has said.

In the New Testament, we have the same principle in 2 Timothy 2:7: "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things." What Paul is referring to are the things that he says in terms of doctrinal instruction. Many people secure information, but they are totally incapable of applying it in a discerning way to their life situation. That's the problem. You can have information, but that doesn't mean that you have perception.

Luke 24:45 says, "Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Here is the Lord Jesus Christ, about ready to leave the disciples in His ascension. He stops, and He talks to them. He runs one more Bible class with them. Verse 44 says, "And he said unto them, 'These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me." "The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms" is the way of saying "Old Testament Scriptures." Then Jesus says, "He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."

There are a lot of people who read the Bible, and who have a lot of information about the Bible, but they don't understand it. Has it ever occurred to you to ask yourself why you believe the things you do about the Bible? This is pretty important stuff. If there is a God out there (and there is); if He is a personal God (and He is); if He is a God who is absolutely holy (and He is); if He Himself is the standard of how He is going to deal with you (and He is); if you are going to face Him someday face-to-face (and you are); and, if He is going to judge you relative to your evil and what you have done about it on the basis of His principle (and He will), then the course of wisdom says, "Now, whatever decision I make on this, I'd better be right. I have a lot riding on that.

If I'm going to listen to some human leader someplace along the line, I better have some way of verifying what this man is saying. If I listen to somebody, or because I grew up with it (this is all I've ever known), and I'm wrong, I'm going to end up in the lake of fire. I don't think I can gamble on that. And if I'm a Christian, and I'm listening to the wrong person, or I have the wrong understanding about the Bible, and I'm going to lose rewards so that the quality of my heaven is like some poor slob in shantytown, instead of enjoying all the riches of God's presence, I've got a lot riding on it. I cannot take the chance. I've got to know the basis for what I believe."

That's why we call this church Berean Memorial church, in honor of those famous believers in the city of Berea, whom, when the great apostle Paul came to them preaching: "Received the Word of God willingly." And the Bible says, "And they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether what Paul was saying was indeed in the Word of God, or whether this was high-flying nonsense that he was making up." This is what it means to search the Scriptures, and to make yourself an *approved* servant of the Lord.

So, I would suggest that you kind of back off and say, "Why do I believe what I believe? Who told me these things, and how do I know that they're right?" Can you see what's going to happen when some Roman Catholics finally faces God, and he's got a system of salvation by his human effort works, all of which are contaminated by his sin nature? God tells him, "You're going to the lake of fire." And he screams, "But I listened to the pope." And God says, "He's there, too. He's on the welcoming committee, because he made the same mistake of believing salvation by works just like you."

That's a serious mistake. You've got a lot riding on it. That's why people with understanding will come to the Scriptures, and they will not only learn the Scripture, but they will look to God to give them a discernment to perceive what's in those Scriptures – what it means.

Ephesians 1:18 says that a person's understanding (his ability to perceive reality) can be enlightened; or, Ephesians 4:18 says that it can be darkened. In the Old Testament, there is a classic example of people with enlightened discernment, and people with darkened discernment. Next time, we'll take up that fascinating classical historical example. I think when you get through listening to that case, you'll have a grasp of what the torch of discernment means.

Wisdom is value. This torch of understanding has to do with "discernment." That is the one word to summarize what we're after. The one word for the first torch is "deity." God the Spirit indwells you. He is your constant companion. He is the source of your power and the source of your understanding. Wisdom is the capacity to have a value system. It is the capacity to make the right decision at the opportune moment. Understanding is the capacity to see through to reality: through people; and, through things, so that you are not a sitting duck for somebody's con game. You have God's discerning capacity to see things as they are.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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