Σοφια Σειραχ – the Book of Human Wisdom

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1. Introduction

...Everyone coming to Me and hearing My words, and doing them,
I will show you to whom he is like.
He is like a man building a house,
who dug and deepened and laid foundation on the rock.
Then, a flood having occurred, the stream burst against that house,
and could not shake it, for it had been founded on the rock.
But he who heard and did not accomplish,
he is like a man having built house on the earth without a foundation,
on which the stream burst, and it immediately fell,
and the ruin of that house was great…
{*Luke 6:46–49*}

…Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
The good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth the good.
And the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil...
{*Matthew 12:34–35*}

As the one could observe by reading the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament, God often had conversation with men: He spoke to them, and when they answered Him in an appropriate way, instructed and guided them in the way to their most good, for instance, such as salvation, deliverance, survival, illumination.

During entire human history, God taught and led His people even more diligently than the earthly – human – father would teach and lead his children. Among the many, who were led by God and who communicated with God, were Noah, then, Abram whom God has chosen to become Abraham the father of nations, Job the righteous, Moses, Jonas and other prophets***Σ1*** sent to Israel, especially, Eliu (Elias) the Thesbite who asked God to give him death because he is left alone and all other prophets are exterminated by idolaters, who received the last instructions to accomplish and then, was taken into the glory of the kingdom of God, and ultimately, the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ who would become the Apostles {*Genesis; Exodus; Deuteronomy; Job; 3 Kings 18; 19; 4 Kings 1; 2; Isaiah; Jonas; Matthew; Mark; Luke; John; esp., John 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; Acts*}.

In the New Testament time, Lord Jesus Christ said to His listeners that, if they, being evil, give good things (food) to their children, how much more the Heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit to those asking. Hence, the most cherished treasure of all gifts given by God is the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Truth and Wisdom that feeds the human soul–heart–mind***Σ2*** and guides the one through the earthly life preparing him for the eternity with God {*Matthew 7:7–12; Luke 11:11–13; John 14; 15; 16:7–16*}.

However, the Holy Scriptures convey not only Wisdom given by God to His creations; the Books of life illustrate how people *[[*who are similar to us*]]* perceive and comprehended the wisdom given by God, so it becomes their own good treasure of the heart {*Matthew 7; 12:35–37; 13; Luke 6:20–49*}, which they could bring forth to the world to make it better for all the living.

For instance, when a lawyer and a scribe asked God concerning the main law, God asked the lawyer in return: how do you read? Then, the Lord said to the scribe, evaluating his preparedness for Him: You are not far from the Kingdom of God {*Luke 10:25–37; Mark 12:28–34*}.

One of examples how the human mind may understand the knowledge of God is *Σοφια Σειραχ – The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach,* or *Ecclesiasticus* **[R]**. Although some Christian denominations classify it as Apocrypha, this book is the inseparable part of the The Book of Life – the Holy Scriptures, one of the greatest treasures that should be given to each Christian child, so he could

start to read, comprehend, absorb the wisdom of the most wise ones
who have passed the same road that he is taking
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put it as the foundation for own vision of the world
and as the guide for search for his own place within it
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to be prepared for the highest wisdom given by God – the Holy Spirit of Truth,
so he may evolve into a perfect being prepared for the eternity with God

With *Σοφια Σειραχ* and other books of Apocrypha, which illustrate human perception of the words of God, a child could build himself into the wise and valuable member of human society and then, take his place in the kingdom of God the Father.

Jesus the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, the Author of *Σοφια Σειραχ*, writes {*Ecclesiasticus 50; 51*} that he poured out of his heart the instruction, knowledge, and wisdom, so, the unlearned ones with soul thirsty for wisdom may come to learning, because

blessed is he that dwells in these things [knowledge, wisdom*Σ3*]:
he that establishes them into his heart shall become wise.
If he accomplishes them, he shall be strong for everything,
for the light of the Lord is his path
{*Ecclesiasticus 50:28–29*}

Perhaps, the first practical lesson for daily living should be instructions concerning a Christian family: Christian***Σ4*** families are the foundation, the source of the strength of the nation, and the settings, in which the Present and the Future of the Christian nation – the holy people of God {*1 Peter 2:9–10*} – are conceived, determined, and actualized.

If a child is given special (and quite rare in our time) blessing to have kind and loving parents and to live in a normal, healthy, good and loving – Christian – family, he should easily perceive and understand the wise lesson of *Ecclesiasticus*:

The Lord has given the father honor over children,
and has confirmed the authority of the mother over sons.
Who honors his father shall have joy in his own children,
and when he makes prayer, he will be heard.
Honor thy father and mother both in word and deed,
that blessing may come upon thee from them.
For the blessing of father establishes houses of children,
but the curse of mother roots out the foundation.
He that forsakes his father is as a blasphemer,
and he who angers his mother is cursed of God
{*Σοφια Σειραχ/Ecclesiasticus 3:2, 5, 8, 14*}

This advice elaborates the Fifth Commandment of God:

honor thy father and thy mother
that thou may be established
and live long on a good land given by God
{*Exodus 20:12*}

The observance of the Fifth Commandment builds the foundation of healthy and happy family, which nurtures good people living by God's law***Σ5***. Health and prosperity of society and nation and the invincibility of state begin with health of the family: respectful and loving children, kind and loving parents are the greatest treasure of the nation that wants to prosper and to have abundance of all good things.

If a child is growing in orphanage, or has just one parent instead of two, or is neglected by his relatives, or is abused***Σ6***, he also needs to learn the normal foundation of life. Even if, currently, he has nobody who would care and love him, who would be worthy of his respect and love, he should know the normal nature of human society and human relations. He should remember words of David the shepherd whom God made the prophet and the king of ancient Israel:

...my father and my mother have forsaken me,
but the Lord has taken me to Himself.
Teach me, O Lord, in Thy way, and guide me in a right path...
...Wait on the Lord; be of good courage,
and let thy heart be strengthened...
{*Psalm 26(27):10–11, 14*}

Hence, such a child may come to believe that the difficulties are given to particularly talented people to make them wise and strong, so that they would evolve into the chosen few who are the sons of God destined to reign in Kingdom of God forever {*Revelations 21:1–8; 22:1–5, 12–15*}.

Then, perhaps, such underprivileged now child, in his future, would seek good spouse, so his children would have the loving parents and be provided with all good things, of which he was deprived in his childhood, so the evil will be eliminated by the good, and the infernal cycle of the evil would be broken.

From the other side, all good people – those who have own family and those who live alone – should keep in mind that even now, in our superpowerful and richest nation, there are many poor, unwanted and unattended children who go to sleep hungry: hungry for food and also hungry for love, respect, and kindness, from which the feeling of own significance and confidence comes. This precious feeling can be rooted into the child's heart and can give its blessed fruits (firstly, love and attention to other creations of God) because of kindness, attention, instructions for learning, and other assistance, which the child needs.

We all should remember that the Lord God said

1/ {in: *Matthew 18:5–6; 25:31–46*} that the one who receives a little child in His Name, receives Him, and:

Inasmuch as you did it to one of these the least of My brothers
[fed, sheltered, attended],
you did it to Me
Inasmuch as you did not do it [fed, sheltered, attended]
to the least one,
neither did you do it to Me
{*Matthew 25:40, 45*}

2/ and, especially, concerning responsibility for offense***Σ6*** of a child {in: *Matthew 18:1–7*}

whoever causes one of these little ones believing in Me to offend,
it is better for him that a millstone turned by a beast of burden
be hung on his neck, and he be sunk in the depth of the sea.
Wow to the world from offenses!
It is a necessity for the offenses to come,
yet wow to that man through whom the offense comes!...
{*Matthew 18:1–7*}

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All wisdom comes from the Lord and is with Him forever…
He has given her to them that love Him...
If thou desire wisdom, keep the commandments,
and the Lord shall give her unto thee...
{*Σοφια Σειραχ 1:1, 25*}

A loving and righteous Christian family is an ideal setting, where the one should learn what are the greatest values of life and how to come in possession of them. Among all desirable and important personal features that determine the worth of man, wisdom is the greatest treasure. The one who possesses wisdom is different from all the others as different is a man in darkness, who has a lamp for his feet, so he is able to discern the right path and to complete it safely, from all those who are creeping in the mud unable to find the right path in darkness, to discern and to avoid pitfalls, threats, risks, and untimely death.

Nevertheless, the word *wisdom* has very rare use in media, and its meaning is almost forgotten. Some even identify wisdom***Σ3*** with knowledge or even information, or even consider it as a possession of megadata, control of databases, access to privileged/secret information and so on.

However, wisdom, knowledge and information are different; precisely, they have different levels of complexity***Σ7***. If to use simplified analogy, the correlation among information, knowledge and wisdom might be explained by comparing information with fuel, knowledge – with car, and wisdom – with the mental power behind an ability to use car to reach destination safely, timely, and efficiently.

With wisdom, the mind receives the power to comprehend all that is beneficial for life and to accomplish all that is needed for survival and growth in this world and for preparation for the eternity with God.

Consequently, *Σοφια Σειραχ* begins with the praise to wisdom {*Σοφια Σειραχ 1*} identifying it as the foundation of cosmos, as the source of order, as the means of establishment of the universe, the source of knowledge of understanding and skills, as the most desirable treasure, and then, explains how to obtain it.

The first and the most significant purpose that the parents should set before a child is obtaining wisdom. The lesson in wisdom should begin with explanation from where a human being obtains the greatest power that could elevate even a humble and poor man above a mighty king.

So, the one should be told that

1. All wisdom comes from the Lord and is with Him forever. Wisdom has been created before everything, and understanding is the foundation of the eternity. God created wisdom and poured it out upon all His works. Wisdom is with all flesh as the gift of God, and God grants wisdom to those who love Him {*Σοφια Σειραχ 1:1–10*}

2. The first condition of obtaining wisdom is observance of the law of God: only the mind that was trained to comply with the law of God and therefore, understands that the law of God is life and that lawlessness is death, is capable to ascend the understanding of the foundations of the world, which has been created and exists by the law of God. The understanding that lawlessness is death is referred to as "fear of God." Such understanding is the key to obtaining wisdom: the fear of God is lauded as the beginning and the root and even as crown of rejoicing and wisdom itself, as the honor, glory, gladness, and even as crown and fullness of wisdom {*Σοφια Σειραχ 1:11–20*}.

3. Concerning fear of God, it should be explained that

a/ fear of God {*Isaiah 8:13; Ecclesiastes 12:13*} is the only fear appropriate for a free human being created in the image and after the likeness of the Almighty, Perfect, and merciful God the Creator and Father of man. The Prophets and ancient theologians employed the word *fear* to designate the greatest danger and the greatest threat to the existence of man: violation of the Law–commandments of God, which define the human nature. The world exists according to the Law, which God Himself came to fulfill {*Matthew 5:17–18*}, and the Sacred Scriptures provide the glimpse of the absolute power of this Law when they refer to it as to the sword and the all–consuming fire {e.g., in: *Isaiah 5:24; 10:17; Matthew 10:34; Revelation 1:16*}. If a living being violates the Law, it perverts own nature, therefore, either triggers self–annihilation or he is to be destroyed, because in the world created, sustained, and controlled by the Law {*Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17*}, nothing is able to exist contrary to the Law

b/ the only mention of **fear** in the Christian teachings is the reference to the "**fear of God**" as to the fear***Σ8*** to violate the commandment of God and pervert own nature, yet even this fear vanishes, when a human being advances in love and reverence to God until such a degree when any violation of the commandments of God simply becomes impossible. God is Love – the Perfect Almighty Love {*John 3:16; 6:32–69; 10:11; 15:9–17; 17; 1 John 4:9–21*} that bestows life and other gifts of the Absolute Good on His creations; those who love dwell in God and God dwells in them: the perfect love has no fear {*1 John 4:7–20*}. Hence, the fear of God is, in fact, the fear **to violate the law of God by own thoughts, words, and deeds**

c/ the Christian (Greek/Eastern Orthodox) tradition explains the fear of God as understanding that

a/ God is the essence of life
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b/ by the very nature, a human being is centered on God,
lives by God, and comes to completion of all good things with the power given by God
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c/ the only fear the human being should have is the fear to violate the God's law:
to sin against God and against own nature,
so the sinner will be cast away from the sight of God
into darkness of ignorance,
madness and impotency of the mind,
and misery of the slavery to the evil and sin

4. Consequently, wisdom begins with understanding that the law of God cannot be violated: the violation of the law of God results in death. If the one is afraid to violate the law of God, he has found the path to wisdom.

As Ecclesiastes said,

Τελος λογου, το παν ακονε: τον Θεον φοβου,
και τας εντολας αυτου φυλασσε: οτι τουτο πας ο ανθρωπος
The completion of word, the point (edge) of the wholeness (entirety/all):
fear God, and keep His commandments,
for this is all (entirety/wholeness) of man…
{*Ecclesiastes 12:13*}

The exact translation of the warning {*Ecclesiastes 12:13*} is: the commandments of God are the point–edge–limit ***[[*ακονε*]]*** of the all–entirety–wholeness ***[[*παν*]]***, and compliance with the commandments of God is the all–entirety–wholeness ***[[*** **πας** (the form of **παν**)***]]*** of man.

Thus, the "fear of God" is, in fact, the fear to ruin the wholeness–entirety***Σ9*** of own life defined by the commandments of God.

From another angle of consideration, the fear of God might be understood as self–preservation: the special state, through which the mind secures survival – own and own creations, correlated people and establishments (family, society, nations, etc.).

Why violation of the law triggers annihilation–death of the one who violates the law and initiates collapse–ruin–disintegration of his creations and establishments?

Law or the universal code – Λογος, the Word–God {*John 1:1–16*} – creates a core of a human heart–mind: the structure, order, and framework of reasoning. Around this core the entire wholeness – human reasoning–mind – is arranged; then, it receives wisdom – the power of reasoning and understanding, and the divine energy needed to embody law into the very own life and all own creations.

With the power–wisdom and by the law, it evolves into the cosmos–universe that carries the seed of the eternity: the Law–Word that is the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

Then, the law***Σ5*** works as the wholeness–maintaining factor, which prevents deviation from the norm. Without such wholeness–maintaining factor, any wholeness ***Σ9*** – living system – degenerates, perverts own nature, and disintegrates.

4. The very essence of wisdom is understanding***Σ10*** of the absolute good for man and of man: the harmony of the life–creating and life–sustaining wholeness. The knowledge of this wholeness–life comes with the complete***Σ11*** knowledge of God – firstly, knowledge of the words of God, through which the one learns everything pertaining to life and godliness, obtains the life everlasting, and enters the Kingdom of God {*John 6:63; 12:46–50; 14; 15; 16; 17; 2 Peter 1:2–11*}.

For instance, if the one desires to obtain immortality that is given by the Holy Spirit Whose presence transforms a human being into the immortal temple–dwelling of God, he must, by observing the words–commandments of God, become an embodiment of the law of God – the one made in Christ and after Christ and living by the Holy Spirit: the firstfruit of new creations of God created by the Word. So he would be empowered to receive the Holy Spirit and to live by Him: to dwell in God and to be the living temple of the Living God {*John 1:1–18; 14; 15:26; 16:7–16; 17; James 1:17–18; Romans 8; Ephesians 2:4–10; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19–20*}.

As Lord God Jesus Christ said {*John 12:26; 14; 15; 17*},

if the one loves Lord Jesus Christ, the Word–God,
he keeps His commandments
{*John 14:15*}
[[thus, the one learns to live by the law of God
and becomes the embodiment of the law given by God***]]***
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then, the Word–God petitions God the Father
{*John 14:16–17*}
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God the Father sends the Holy Spirit
issuing from Him
to be *in* and *with* the one who loves the Word–God
by keeping His commandments/law
{*John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26*}
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the Holy Spirit takes from the Word–God
and gives to those to whom He is sent:
He teaches and instructs children of God:
gives them wisdom
and leads them into the house of their Father
{*John 16:13–15; 14:15–26*}
↓
God the Father
shall love him who loves the Word–God by keeping His commandments:
God the Father and the Word–God shall come to him,
and establish dwelling with him
{*John 14:21, 23; 15:25–28*}
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so the one,
by serving Lord Jesus Christ, the Word–God,
by keeping His commandments, by living through Him and in Him,
is accepted into the Unity of God and in God
{*John 12:26;* 14:15–26; *15:25–28; 17*}

As the Lord said, to love Him means to keep His commandments {*John 14:15, 23–24; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6*}, or, in other words, to live in accordance with the human nature, which He created and which exists according to the law of the Creator. Each word of God is the spirit and life {*John 6:63*} – the source and the condition of human life {*Luke 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 35(36):9*}.

Consequently, each word/commandment of God must be observed and accomplished without any deviation – as St. Paul the Apostle writes {*2 Corinthians 4:2–6*}, the Christians do not adulterate the words of God: His Light shines in their heart and gives brightness of knowledge of God in Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the one who loves God by keeping His law–commandments–words,

a/ with his love to God
proven by keeping the commandments of Lord Jesus Christ,
while he has to exist within the world burying in the evil
{*John 14:15–26; 1 John 5:1–7, 10–21*}
b/ because of grace – love and mercy of God
revealed through Lord Jesus Christ
{*John 1:1–17; 3:16–21, 35–36; 17*}
c/ by the Holy Spirit Who gives knowledge and wisdom
{*John 6:44–45; 14:15–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15*}
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is transformed into a new creation
made after the Word–God and imitating the Word–God –
the one with whom the Word–God is, who keeps His commandments,
who is empowered by Him, and who lives by the Holy Spirit:
the child of God who is living in God and with God
{*Matthew 5:17–19; 19:16–26; 22:36–40; John 1:1–16; 13:34–35; 14; 15; 16; 17;*
1 John 2; 3; 4; 5; Revelation 22:1–5, 13–15}

The core–essence of this new creation is Λογος, the Word–God, the Eternal Inviolable Law/Will of God the Creator and Father of all the living.

Therefore, within the one who has been chosen for immortality, the Triune God, the only One True God, establishes His dwelling***Σ12*** accepting him into the wholeness of life – into the eternal Kingdom of God. The Divine Omnipotent Unity of the life–creating–maintaining Law–Power–Energy is manifested by creation of a new immortal being, the child of God that is born of God

– because of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word–God
– with the Holy Spirit
– by the will of God the Father

That is how the one who accomplishes the commandments/law/will of God enters the eternal wholeness – the complete abundant perfect world, in which God accepts His creations into the Unity of the Almighty Power/Will, the Divine Wisdom/Energy, and the Absolute Law {cf.: *John 3:16–21; 6:37–40, 44–58, 63; 10:10–18; 27–30; 11:25–26; 12:26; 44–50; 13:34–35; 14; 15; 16; 17; 1 John 4; 5; Revelation 21:1–8, 23–27; 22:1–5, 13–15*}.

In conclusion: according to the Holy Scriptures {e.g., in: *Psalm 110(111):10; Matthew 19:16–26; 22:36–40; John 1:1–18; 3:16–21, 36; 4:23–24; 6:37–63; 10:1–18, 27–30; 12:44–50; 13:34–35; 14; 15; 16; 17; 1 John; Romans 13; Ecclesiastes 12:13–14; Wisdom 1:4–16; 6; 7; Σοφια Σειραχ 1*}:

A. the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God {*Psalm 110(111):10*}: the fear to violate His law

B. the completion/highest point, the point/edge of the entirety–wholeness–all and everything of man, is to fear God and to strictly follow ***[[*****φυλασσε** – guard, observe, protect, strictly follow***]]*** His commandments

C. the essence of the law of God is Perfect Love without fear and suffering, and fulfillment of the law is love to God and to the others. The one may enter the eternity with God only by Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who is the Word–God – the Almighty Creator, Power, Glory, and Wisdom of God, Who was given for salvation of the world: the one who keeps the commandments of Lord Jesus Christ {*John 14:6–26*} receives the knowledge of God given by Lord Jesus Christ – the knowledge that is the everlasting life {*John 17:3*}. The way to immortality with God the Father is accomplishment of His will given as commandments of Lord Jesus Christ; there cannot be another way to God in the world created by the Word–God {*John 1:1–18; 6–29–69; 14:15–26; 15; 16; 17*}

D. the "fear of God" is the fear to violate the Law of God by own thoughts, words, and deeds, and therefore, to become a pervert unworthy of love and mercy of God and, then, because of rejection of the commandments of the Word–God and according to own self–judgment, to be condemned to eternal separation from God: to eternal darkness without the Light {*John 3:16–21, 36; Revelation 21:8; 22:15*}. The meaning of violation of the law of God (sin***Σ13***) is contradiction and disregard of the commandments–words of God, while the words of God must be accomplished exactly***Σ14***, without any modification, alteration, modernization, for instance, because of current technical gadgets, or political correctness, etc. A human being should always be very careful of his thoughts, words, and deeds, and cautious, especially in his dealing with the others. The good conscience***Σ15*** based on the law of God and issuing feeling of responsibility for own thoughts, words, and deeds might facilitate development of the ability to foresee the consequences of own words and actions, and therefore, to establish and to maintain, not ruin, the wholeness of own life in God and within the human society.

The ancient Book *Σοφια Σειραχ* illustrates understanding of the eternal absolute inviolable law that, with establishment of Christianity, became the key to the kingdom of God {cf.: *Matthew 23; Mark 7:6–13; Luke 11:44–52*}, and the practical inference from it: the root of wisdom is fear to violate the law of God.

Hence, **the summary of the first lesson**:

– a Christian

either
lives by the law of God, which makes him true follower of Lord Jesus Christ
because he loves God by observing His commandments, as God said
{*John 6:28–40; 12:44–50; 14:15–26; 15; 16; 17; 1 John 3:18–24; 5:1–3*}
or
is doomed to perish because of violations of the law of God,
which make him incompatible with the eternal world created by the law of God
{*Revelation 22:13–15*}

– observance of the law/keeping the commandments of God is the beginning of wisdom that opens the way into the everlasting life in the presence of God
– if God gives to the mind wisdom, for such a mind, there are no limits of cognition, learning, understanding, development, creation.

To be continued...

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