**Does Yahweh Fear Yahweh? The Importance and Implications of the Son Fearing the Father Perfectly**

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**Introduction**

Many commentaries and systematic theology books agree with Jesus submitting to the Father, but they rarely talk about Jesus fearing God the same way man should fear God. Not just in the scholarly fields, but also, many layman resources downplay the serious nature of the fear of Yahweh, which downplays how the Son fears the Father. Man is required to fear Yahweh because Yahweh is God, but did the God-Man fear God? Isaiah 11:2 says that “the Spirit of the LORD will rest on [the Messiah] … [t]he spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.” The coming Messiah is expected to fear Yahweh, can we say that Yahweh fears Yahweh? If He did and does, how much more should His followers fear God to be like the Messiah Who perfectly fears God? Many scholars may not disagree with Jesus perfectly fearing Yahweh, but the topic still needs to be more vocalized, more thoroughly developed, and more widely documented. There is need for a detailed defense of Jesus fearing Yahweh. Jesus fears Yahweh perfectly because of His nature, to satisfy royal prophecy and wisdom, and to become God’s Wisdom in redemption history.

**Biblical Guidelines to Study Specifically the Son Fearing the Father**

This paper will examine the Old Testament expectations and the New Testament assumptions of the Messiah needing to perfectly fear God. The primary texts I will use to defend my thesis is the command in Deuteronomy 17:19 and the prophecy in Isaiah 11:2-3 about Israel’s King needing to fear Yahweh. This paper is not directly aimed at Wisdom Christology,[[1]](#footnote-1) but the means of Jesus becoming God’s Wisdom. While there are many similarities between Jesus and personified Wisdom, the paper will only address the comparisons to show that it is not in conflict with Jesus needing to fear Yahweh. There is not enough space to see how the fear of Yahweh would affect all areas of Jesus’ life or other major doctrines, yet I will expound on His general lifestyle that characterizes the Wisdom writings. While Jesus is eternally God, His incarnation was for the fulfillment of the righteous law, which includes wisdom. Since the fear of Yahweh is the means of becoming wise, I will argue that Jesus needed to fear Yahweh to become the wise King and God’s Wisdom.

I am grateful to Dr. Hand and Dr. Talbert’s insight for how to understand the fear of Yahweh and how to directly defend my conclusions. Now, the nature of fearing Yahweh may seem just for man, because why would God, in one sense, fear Himself? Yet, Jesus obeyed commands for man to obey, even though Jesus was God. There is no mention of Jesus fearing Himself, only of submitting Himself to God the Father. Neither the Father fearing the Son and the Spirit or the Spirit fearing the Son are Scripturally supported, but the Son fearing the Father is. Though the Son and the Spirit are both God as much as the Father is God, the Father was the One Who specifically planned our Salvation (1 Cor. 1:3-31, 2 Cor. 1:2-7; Lk. 2:40, 49-52). Even though Jesus obeyed the Spirit for His desert temptations (Matt. 4:1-11), this paper’s main focus will be on Jesus’ relationship to the Father mainly at the first coming.[[2]](#footnote-2) However, because of the nature of Jesus and the fear of Yahweh I will also argue that He always feared God. The mystery of Jesus being God and man should not override the verses specifying about His growth in wisdom.

**The Nature and Importance of Fearing Yahweh for Wisdom from the OT**

Many scholars do not prefer this terminology. Jewish commentator Jeffery Tigay along with the Jewish Publishing Society translators render this “fear” in Deuteronomy 17:19 as “revere.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Eugene Merrill understands it similarly as “properly revere.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Duane Christensen views godly fear to mean “in the sense of ‘loving him [Yahweh]’ with our whole being.”[[5]](#footnote-5) John Calvin, commenting on the Messiah’s fear in Isaiah 11:2, says that it “means a sincere desire to worship God.”[[6]](#footnote-6) On that same passage, Victor Buksbazen, believes that “[t]he fear of the Lord s not abject terror before God, but that holy reverence which stands in awe before the infinite wisdom, majesty and holiness of God.” Though reverence and love can be connected to the fear of Yahweh, Proverbs 1:7 gives a more serious meaning.

The “fear”/יִרְאָה in Proverbs 1:7 is the defining verse that explains what the fear of Yahweh is. Though Proverbs is not the first mention of fearing Yahweh or the only meaning behind the Hebrew noun, Proverbs is only explaining more about what the fear of Yahweh is and looks like practically. ebHAnd the uses of יִרְאָה are always strong ranging from “fear” to “dreadful.” The idea of “fear” in Proverbs 1:7 is that man should obey God so seriously, that it would be right to tremble at the very thought of disobeying God. One example to clarify the Biblical meaning is in Exodus 9:20-21 where the fear of Yahweh is contrasted with not taking His Word seriously:

**Exodus 9:21** but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the LORD left his slaves and his livestock in the field. (Exo 9:21 ESV)

Though all Biblical reasons to obey God are based on God being our Creator, God does not mainly direct us to creation, but to His nature, His revelation, and His relationship to us. Man is to fear God because of: His Word in general (Deut. 17:18-20,[[7]](#footnote-7) Ps. 19:7-11, Isa. 66:5), His Word of warning (Exod. 9:21), His commandments (Prov. 13:13), His goodness (Ps. 31:19, 34:8-11, 111:1-10, Eccl. 3:1-15), our good benefit (Duet. 6:1-2, 10:12-13), His wisdom (1:7, 29, 2:12, 8:1-21, 9:1-18), and His glorious nature (Deut. 28:58). We are to fear Him when we disobey, but it seems like God also appeals for us to fear Him even when we do not sin. His glory is not just His powerful wrath, but also His goodness and love (Exod. 34:6-7, Deut. 28:58). Even Moses’ song that is to teach Israel to fear Yahweh involves deserved terror and undeserved hope (Deut. 31:12-32:45). Interestingly the fear of Yahweh is eternal as much as His Word is. King David says in Psalm 19:9a that “[t]he the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever” and Psalm 119:89 says “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.”[[8]](#footnote-8) So, fearing Yahweh does not diminish while maturing, but is the maturing means of being cleansed from our evil desires (2 Cor. 7:1).[[9]](#footnote-9) Also, fearing Yahweh is closely connected with loving Yahweh (Deut. 6:1-15, 24, 10:12) and serving Him (Deut. 10:20). Can total submission and complete love come without perfectly fearing Yahweh? The fear of Yahweh seems too tightly intertwined with other aspects of obedience, that we cannot love God without fearing Him. God desires and deserves the most serious submission and Jesus understood that more than anyone. Though Jesus is the Creator and not a creature, He can fully fear His Father because He is under His authority and goodness.

Most scholars have viewed the fear of Yahweh mainly as the first step to wisdom, however the relationship between godly fear and godly wisdom is more complex. The fear of Yahweh is not just a prerequisite to wisdom but “[p]recisely because it is the source of wisdom and, at the same time, the most important part of wisdom, the fear of the LORD can occasionally be identified with wisdom itself (cf. Job 28:28).”[[10]](#footnote-10) The fear of Yahweh is not just the producer of wisdom but is also a part and a product of wisdom. Even if the fear of Yahweh and wisdom are distinct, they are both cause and result. Because godly fear and wisdom are tightly intertwined, to deny the fear of Yahweh is to deny wisdom with it. To find wisdom in the Bible, is to find the fear of Yahweh, and vice versa. So, if Jesus grew in wisdom, His wisdom would grow by His fear and His fear would grow more by His wisdom. So even if the New Testament does not specifically re-state that fearing Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, wisdom is already established as inseparable from fearing Yahweh.

Fearing Yahweh is not just an added command as a response to our sinfulness but seems to be the essence of what it means to be human. Job Y. Jindo says that “[i]n biblical thinking, accordingly, the fear of God is a basic norm that constitutes the authentic existence of all human beings. Qohelet even refers to this fear as ‘what human being is all about’ (Qoh. 12:13). To forgo this mode of life, therefore, is to lack an ontological validation as human.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Since the fear of Yahweh is what makes us human, and since Jesus is the perfect human, then presumably Jesus would have to fear Yahweh to be the Perfect Human that mankind was made to be. Jesus did not come to return humanity to the whole Sinai law (as holy as it is), but to return all of mankind to Eden (the foundation of all mankind) in a greater way. Job continues “[i]n sum, for biblical authors, the fear of God is also the beginning of, and the condition for, human dignity.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Man still is created as God’s image (Gen. 9:6), but that's all the more reason to fear God. Though Jesus becoming human shows His humanity, He is also exalted as being the perfect God and perfect Man (Phil. 2:5-11). To be human is to fear God.

The fear of Yahweh does not just pertain to fulfilling the Wisdom writings, but the Wisdom books themselves are about obeying the Torah commands. C. Hassell Bullock asserts that “Deuteronomy associates the fear of the LORD with the giving of the law on Horeb … Whenever the phrase occurs in wisdom literature, it implies the covenant faith.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Most of the Old Testament from Exodus 20 onward is shaped by faithfulness to the Sinai covenant, yet the creation account interprets how to understand the Sinai covenant (which shapes the rest of the Old Testament). Though Proverbs is district from the Torah and the Prophets, it both expands the Torah’s theology and applications to Israel and the world. This means that wisdom based on fearing Yahweh is fulfilling both the creation mandate and the Sinai covenant.

The fear of Yahweh is not just a creation-based command, but a command based ultimately on the nature of the Trinity. All commandments are ultimately rooted in God’s nature, directly or indirectly. If obedience and fear are interlocked, then could we say that Jesus feared God even before His incarnation? Jesus has always obeyed the Father: even before creation (Eph. 1:3-11), at creation (Gen. 1:26-27), and at the Tower of Babylon (Gen. 11:5-9). So, if the Son always was submissive to the Father, is there ever a time when Yahweh did not fear Yahweh? Just based on the nature of fearing Yahweh, He always feared God.

**The OT Expectation of the Messiah Fearing God**

Just as fearing Yahweh and wisdom are founded in the Torah, so is the expectation of the future World Ruler to fear Yahweh. God through Moses commanded the future king of Israel in Deuteronomy 17:18-19 to read his hand-written copy “of this law” “so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God” as long as he lives. Even if we cannot be dogmatic on what “this law” means, we can be dogmatic that the King needs to fear Yahweh. This instruction is not just for the kings of Israel, but for the Ruler of the whole world since Deuteronomy is tying to the prophecies of Genesis 3:15, 49:8-12, and Numbers 24:15-24. Though Luther applied an allegorical approach to this section of Deuteronomy, he recognizes this passage ultimately referring to Jesus the Messiah in obeying God’s Word and His humility toward His brothers (Phil. 2:6-7). He even goes as far to say that “[l]iving in the fear of God, He has a kingdom…”[[14]](#footnote-14) Christopher Wright sees the limitations and responsibilities of the Israeli king as not just applying to the shortcoming Old Testament kings, but the concept carries over the New Testament: “[t]he concept of servant-kingship has penetrating political relevance in addition to its [NT] christological dimension.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Because the fear of Yahweh is the essence of being human, it makes sense for the King of all mankind to fear God.

Though the Torah-framed Wisdom books can apply to anyone, they are specifically written to David’s royal family. Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song are all connected to David’s family, which shows that the Messiah will come from David’s line. This future King is to live out the commands that David’s dynasty was meant to follow. Just from these writings, we would expect the Messiah to fear Yahweh as the other Israeli kings were commanded to do.

Isaiah was eager for the Anointed King to perfectly fear Yahweh. Isaiah 11:1-9 describes the future Ruler of Israel as fearing Yahweh, establishing justice, and giving peace to the whole creation. Isaiah states in verse 2-3a that “[t]he Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him…the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD.” John Calvin,[[16]](#footnote-16) John Oswalt,[[17]](#footnote-17) and Victor Buksbazen[[18]](#footnote-18) all rightly agree that Isaiah is referring to Jesus and even see Jesus fulfilling Isaiah 11:1-9 both at His first and second coming. Even though Jesus is risen and reigning over His Church, He is not formally ruling over Israel and the world now as Isaiah 11:1-9 predicts. However, this does not deny that the Messiah would be wise before He rules. As a matter of fact, the later songs of the Servant in Isaiah tie back to the Messianic declarations of early Isaiah passages. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 even starts with the Slave of Yahweh being “prudent” before “He Himself bore the sins of many.” Isaiah does not seem to see a contradiction between the Messiah fearing Yahweh and being Yahweh Himself.[[19]](#footnote-19) In fact, we could argue from Isaiah 11:1-2 that the fear of Yahweh is partially the reason for the righteous reign in verses 3-9.

Though we know through more revelation that Isaiah 11:2-3 focuses on Jesus’ second coming, the Messiah at His first coming still needs the wisdom to live and rule uprightly. God is comforting His people in Isaiah 11:1-3 by saying that the Messiah will rule perfectly and peaceably because He fears Yahweh by the Spirit.[[20]](#footnote-20) Though this prophecy has not come yet, the Spirit’s empowerment to obey Yahweh is emphasized in the Gospels (Matt. 12:18, 28, Lk. 3:21-22, 4:1, 18). In one way, Jesus fulfilled mainly the ideal lifestyle of Proverbs in His first coming but will fulfill Proverbs’ royal rule with the ideal lifestyle during the second coming. This in-turn is fulfilling Deuteronomy 17:19 and is confirming 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 about Jesus submitting to the Father at the new creation. Fearing God seems to be not just in His humanity in order to obey a command, because fearing Yahweh is “His delight” (Isa. 11:3) just as much as it delights God (Isa. 33:6, “The fear of the LORD is [Yahweh’s] treasure.”). Even if Isaiah 11:1-9 is only about the future millennial Kingdom, both Isaiah 11:1-9 and 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 are still about Jesus’ future reign. Since we know that He will rule in the fear of Yahweh, what keeps us from saying that He lived in the fear of Yahweh at His first coming to bring about His rule?

After all the expectations of the Son of David fearing Yahweh, can we say that Jesus did not have to fear God to the extent man was meant to fear Yahweh? Even the NT writers and Jesus do not use His Divine title as an excuse to follow God less. Can we have submission without the fear of Yahweh? The commands of the Old Testament and the prophecies of the Old Testament should not be conflicting, but complementary in their function. Would Jesus, the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the Source of the NT, be an exception from fearing Yahweh? Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (with all the wisdom literature) is being fulfilled in the Messiah as He is fearing Yahweh. Though Proverbs does not separate lifestyle from rule, the Proverbs can still be applied to people outside of royal positions, like Jesus at His first coming. Jesus did not hold a royal role at his first coming (Matt. 8:20) but will at His second coming.[[21]](#footnote-21) Jesus is expected as the Messiah to fear Yahweh perfectly and forever.

**Possible NT Objections to Jesus Needing to Fear God**

I am very appreciative of Dr. Saldivar, Jesse Yancy, Emily Grace Claggett, and Benn Silveira for their insights to this objection section.

The NT Does Not Directly State that Jesus feared God

Hebrews 5:7 is the closest verse to support that Jesus feared God when, as the KJV renders it, Jesus “was heard in that he feared.” Though εὐλαβεία/”fear” can be synonymous with the other word for fear, φόβος, and the verb form, εὐλαβέομαι, is used in Jeremiah 5:22 LXX for translating חוּל/“to tremble,”, scholars view εὐλαβεία as “reverence” not to the extent of the deep, godly fear of Proverbs 1:7. Isaiah 11:2 in the LXX uses εὐσέβεια to translate “fear” which means “reverence, respect” and Isaiah 11:3 uses φόβος to translate “fear,” but the Greek words for Isaiah 11:2-3 and Hebrews 5:7 are still not a definite correspondence. Though εὐλαβεία in Hebrews 5:7 is similar in sound and meaning to εὐσέβεια in Isaiah 11:2, there is less possibility that Hebrews 5:7 is alluding directly to Isaiah 11:2-3 because of the different wording. But the concept of reverence for the Father does not deny the Old Testament fear of Yahweh, Heb. 5:7 can connect to Isa. 11:2-5 conceptually, even though not grammatically.[[22]](#footnote-22) Many contemporary commentaries believe that ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας in Hebrews 5:7 means “because of His fear” as a statement of cause than a statement of what He was saved from. Either interpretation of ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας does not negate that Jesus feared Yahweh. This verse may be referring to Gethsemane specifically, as many commentators believe, and some have viewed Jesus’ prayer to God as out of His fear that He would fail. Though Jesus did fear Yahweh in order to obey Him, there is no explicit statement that He feared failing in the Gethsemane accounts. Jesus could have feared failure and be confident that He will not disobey because God listens to those Who fears Him (Ps. 145:19, Prov. 3:7, 14:26, 16:6, Mal. 3:16). Jesus could have feared not just failure to disobey, but failure to receive the glory and joy after the cross. Whether Hebrews 5:7 shows Jesus’ reverence to the extent of fearing Yahweh neither confirms nor deny the more precise Isaiah 11:2-3 passage.

Jesus is Already the Wisdom of God

Does Jesus already being God’s Wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:24, Colossians 2:3, and Proverbs 8 mean that Jesus did not have to fear God? 1 Corinthians 1:24 is a present tense talking about Jesus being God’s Wisdom and Power now. Colossians 2:2-3 portrays Jesus as holding the riches of knowledge and wisdom Who richly gives to His needy followers (1:9-11, 3:16, 4:5).[[23]](#footnote-23) And concerning Proverbs 8, Bruce Waltke compared and contrasted Lady Wisdom[[24]](#footnote-24) to Jesus and concluded that “Solomon’s personification of Woman Wisdom functions as a type of Jesus Christ. In typology the antitype shows both similarities and superiority to the type.”[[25]](#footnote-25) But these passages only affirm Jesus as being wise, it does not deny that Jesus could fear Yahweh. Also, 1 Corinthians 1:24 in context does not mention Jesus’ eternality, but His endurance of the crucifixion as being God’s Wisdom and Power. Jesus was perfectly righteous before His incarnation, but He still came to fulfill the righteous requirements. He had to choose wisdom while being human in order to be our righteous ransom and to prove Himself worthy of His Resurrection to Reign.

Jesus Knew He would not Sin

Another objection would be since Jesus knows God completely, knows that He Himself is God, and knows He never sinned or will sin, He does not need to fear God. Would Yahweh being omniscient be the reason not to fear Yahweh? Does knowing keep Him from sinning, or knowing and obeying perfectly keep Him from disobeying? Though Jesus is fully God, Philippians 2:6 says that Jesus “existed in the form of God, [but] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” A thing to be grasped indeed, Jesus has complete knowledge of God and fully obeys the Truth, but He chooses to be considered not equal with God. Even though He never sinned and is not a creature, He is still seeing Himself as under God, which is the essence of fearing Yahweh. Also, Jesus did not just empty Himself of all knowledge, power, and presence, He emptied Himself of all wisdom that He would gain again (Luke 2:40, 52). Jesus said that His Father taught Him (John 8:28) and His knowledge and fear are enabled by One Spirit (Isa. 11:2). In that passage, Jesus saw no problems with saying that He perfectly learned from His Father while still being God Himself. What an amazing paradox to us, that God gained knowledge from God by God.

Jesus’ Omnipotence Keeps Him from Sinning

There is no in-depth theological discussion in the Scriptures about how or if Jesus developed His Divine Strength, but does He obey His Father because He is almighty or is He almighty because He perfectly fears God? Would He be Divinely strong without fearing Yahweh? Or is His submission and His strength interconnected where He cannot be one without the other? Jesus emphatically said that He depends on and submits to the Father (Jn. 5:17-30). Even when He comes back to earth in His present glorified state, He is prophesied to fear Yahweh in the perfect environment (Isa. 11:2-3, 1 Cor. 15:27-28). Interesting how the application in Philippians 2:5 says we are to have the same mind as Jesus; how much more Christians should view themselves as under their siblings if Jesus did before God! Jesus took God so seriously that it would right for Him to tremble before God. Also, how much more pressure, being God and man, Jesus would have if He was to disobey God? To disobey God, He would cease to be God and would cease to be God’s Son Who came to fulfill His Father’s plan. Not just God, but also a man, He would cease to be the Perfect Image of God to be our perfect ransom. Jesus commanded His disciples to fear God and taught that it would be better to die than to disobey (Matt. 5:29-30,[[26]](#footnote-26) 10:28, 16:24, 18:8-9).[[27]](#footnote-27) God would cease to be God if He lied or literally forgot some information, would He also cease to God if He disobeyed God? God did not sin and though that neither directly proves nor disproves the idea of Jesus would cease to be God if He should rebel, His obedience could not happen without fearing His Father. He desired to follow God so seriously that He would tremble the most out of anyone if He should disobey God.

Jesus’ Divinity keeps Him from fully Fearing God

Could Jesus have taught fearing God without Himself fearing God as a creature or experiencing God’s wrath? Do the Messianic prophecies demand Him fearing Yahweh as a creature? Jesus taught His disciples to fear the One Who would destroy the body and the soul. Jesus would not have to fear that God would destroy His body and soul, because Jesus is the Saving God, but He would most probably still fear to disobey God because of sin is still worthy of death and that is what He came to die for. Jesus came “to fulfill all righteousness” even though He did not physically marry or raised children. Jesus did as the Proverbs teach about fearing Yahweh like turning away from sin (Prov. 3:7, 14:16, 16:6) and hating sin (8:13). These actions He did are inseparable from Him fearing God and He still would fear God because of God’s authority and goodness. Just because His reasoning to fear was not completely like ours, that does not mean that He could not perfectly fear Yahweh to fulfill the Old Testament.

**The Importance of 1 Corinthians 1:30**

1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Jesus “became to us wisdom from God,” the past action does not say He was not wise before, but it shows a stage in redemption history. Jesus was wise before we were made and He made everything in wisdom, but Paul seems to show that Jesus had to demonstrate His wisdom in order to save us. Gordon Fee says that “it is not ‘wisdom from God’ that Christ was made for us, rather it is ‘wisdom *for us* from God’; i.e. God made him wisdom on our behalf.”[[28]](#footnote-28) There are diverse views on the grammatical and theological relationship between “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” As either Jesus becoming all 4 terms for us, wisdom redefined through the next 3 salvation terms, or the 4 terms answer 4 other terms in verses 27-28.[[29]](#footnote-29) Paul Gardner says that “Christ is the one who shows forth and has lived out the plan of God … He *is* wisdom, but not as understood by the world. He is the manifestation of the great plan of God to save and to judge.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Calvin sees wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption as “four commendatory titles” of Jesus “that include his entire excellence, and every benefit that we receive from him.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Whichever interpretation, Jesus became wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Not to say that He was not either one of these before, because Jesus was already God Who is already wise, righteous, holy, and mighty to redeem. However, 1 Corinthians 1:30 sees our salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus as the means of becoming these qualities. Ellicott even says that Jesus "displayed to us God's wisdom… in His whole manifestation, His whole life, and works… (‘from God’) point[s] to God as the ultimate origin of the gracious working.”[[32]](#footnote-32) Could the text include, imply, or assume Jesus’ whole life to be part of Jesus’ saving act? Though Jesus’ death is what saves believing man, He chose to fulfill all righteousness to be the full ransom. 1 Corinthians 1-2 emphasizes Jesus’ death, but does that negate that the Messiah was not wise before? Then how could He be the Perfect Passover taught in the same letter (5:7)? How could Jesus be crucified as the Messiah if He was not acting like the Perfect Messiah before? Even if the passage does not include His whole life on earth, His crucifixion still was an act of God’s Wisdom that He choose to obey according to the Scriptures (1:19, 15:1-57). 1 Corinthians 1:30 does not negate Jesus becoming God’s Wisdom in His whole life, but it most probably assumes His whole life would be consistent with His sacrificial death.

**Do the Gospels Assume that Jesus Fears God?**

Matthew may not directly state that Jesus feared God perfectly, but there is also no negation of the fact either. Matthew seems to emphasise wisdom in ch.11-13 to maybe show that Jesus is the fulfiller and greater expression of the past revelation. Scholars may not agree with the exact interpretation, but Matthew and Luke do have a different literary interpretation of wisdom in there corresponding passages: Matthew (11:1-19) is connecting the works of the Messiah with the works of Wisdom and Luke (7:18-35) is connecting the children of that generation with the children of Wisdom. D.A. Carson disagrees that “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” in Matthew 11:19 adds to Wisdom Christology, saying that Jesus, John, and other past prophets are the works that defend God’s wisdom.[[33]](#footnote-33) But Grant R. Osborne believes that “[i]t seems that Jesus identifies himself with the works of Wisdom, so that Wisdom’s deeds are Jesus’ deeds.” So, Jesus is defending Himself by His miracles and messages.[[34]](#footnote-34) Can Jesus be vindicating Himself and God, since Jesus came to fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah? Thathathai Singsa believes that “[a]s Wisdom’s children, Jesus and John the Baptist share the prophetic role as well as the prophetic fate by experiencing opposition and rejection by the ‘children of this generation’ (7:31-32; cf. Q 11:47-48).”[[35]](#footnote-35) Singsa also connects personified Wisdom with Jesus as a preacher and miracle worker[[36]](#footnote-36) and further contends that because John is not of the same importance and power to Jesus, thus Jesus is attributed to Wisdom.[[37]](#footnote-37) Either interpretation shows that Jesus is a part of God’s wise plan and is living out God’s wisdom. Later in Matthew 12:42, Jesus calls Himself greater than Solomon, which may not directly state that he grew up more wisely than Solomon, but that His wisdom at the present is better than Solomon. However, wouldn’t that not directly demand a greater fear of Yahweh from His youth? Would not fear be the source of wisdom, an aspect of wisdom, and a fruit of wisdom? Even if the Wisdom passages in Matthew do not directly mention Jesus fearing God, Matthew 3:15 still states that Jesus and John came “to fulfill all righteousness” and later in 5:17-18 Jesus said that He came “to fulfill” “the Law and the Prophets.” Jesus came not just to satisfy prophecy, but also God’s precepts, which include the command of fearing Yahweh. In one sense, Jesus fearing Yahweh defends His case for being part of God’s plan.

Luke 2:40 and 52 describe Jesus growing in wisdom, and wisdom could only come by fearing Yahweh. Darrell L. Bock believes that “being filled with wisdom… shows that Jesus grew in his perception of God’s will … Since Jesus is filled with wisdom (Wis. 7:7), he is portrayed as deepening his perception of God’s will and his fear of God. Jesus as the wisdom of God will be a minor point of emphasis in Luke…”[[38]](#footnote-38) While Jesus becoming and being God’s Wisdom is not mentioned much after Him adolescent years, Jesus still grew up in wisdom and proved it in His ministry. His wisdom could just be knowing how to grow mentally as a human being, but verses 40 and 52 bracket the section of twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple doing His Father’s work.[[39]](#footnote-39) Both Jesus doing His Father’s work[[40]](#footnote-40) and the bracketed verses interpret each other to mean that Jesus was growing in godly wisdom, not just in human development. Jesus gaining wisdom would prepare for His saving act that would show God’s wisdom of rescuing mankind. Interestingly, Luke brings out the theme of Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament, like in Matthew, but mainly focuses on the prophecies that Jesus would fulfill concerning His death and glorification (24:25-27, 44-46). Though Luke emphasizes fulfilling prophecy, He satisfied prophecy by means of being wise and righteous. Though Luke does not build directly on Jesus fearing God and has little mention about Jesus growing in wisdom, Jesus could not have increased in wisdom without the fear of Yahweh and by increasing in wisdom Jesus is also increasing in the fear of Yahweh. Because the fear of Yahweh is connected to other commands, His perfect love for and full obedience to God are interlocked with godly fear and wisdom. Even from His adolescent years, Jesus is taking God so seriously that He would not let anyone keep Him from disobeying His Father’s instructions. The Gospels are praising Jesus for being wise, which means they are praising Him for perfectly fearing Yahweh.

**Conclusion**

While there is much debate over how to interpret Jesus as God’s Wisdom, more conversation on this topic. There may not be many direct connections between Proverbs and Jesus, but there needs to be more discussion about how Jesus fulfills the Wisdom writings. Not just research about Jesus being the wise Ruler but is He also the Wise Israel for fearing His Father as commanded in the Torah? Connecting the fear of Yahweh throughout the Old Testament is complex and developing how Jesus fulfills that sophisticated revelation, I believe, would be a fruitful endeavor. Like all sacred mysteries from Sovereignty and responsibility to the hypostatic union, we should praise God for these truths. Even with all the needed conversations, we have all the more reason to fear God and to fear Jesus (Eph. 5:21) for His perfect fear of God.

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1. While intertestamental literature may clarify how the Jewish people viewed wisdom at the time of Jesus and could have helped with understanding the Old Testament, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament alone as Divine Scriptures and came to fulfill the Old Testament, not the apocryphal writings (Matt. 3:15, 5:17-18, 22:37-40, Lk. 24:25-27, 44-46). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Though if the Spirit fully submits to the Father’s plan, is not Jesus still fearing the Father perfectly while also fearing the Spirit perfectly (Who also is God)? Isa. 11:1-9, 42:1-4, 61:1-3 all mention the Spirit’s work on the Son for obedience. The Spirit Himself is submissive to the Father (Jn. 16:13). Also, interesting irony that the Holy Spirit is not associated with “a spirit of timidity” (2 Tim. 1:7) but is connected to “[t]he spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:2). Whether “the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” refers to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus’ spirit, the Spirit still energizes godly fear from beginning in Isaiah 11:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jeffery H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, The JPS Torah Commentary, (The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 1996), 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, Vol. 4, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman: 1994), 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, Rev. ed., Vol. 6a, Word Biblical Commentary, (Waco: Word Books, 2001), 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah Vol. 1,* Translated by John Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Bakerbooks, 1948), 375 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jeffery H. Tigay, Deuteronomy, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Connecting Psalm 19:9a and 119:89 with Deuteronomy 17:18-19 and Isaiah 11:1-9 gives the expectation of the future King forever fearing Yahweh. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Rude, Terry Lee. “Imperative and Response: A Theology of Deuteronomy,” (PhD diss, Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC, 1979), 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Zoltán Schwáb, “Is Fear of the LORD the Source of Wisdom or Vice Versa?” *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 652, 662. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Job Y. Jindo, “On the Biblical Notion of Human Dignity: ‘Fear of God’ as a Condition for Authentic Existence,” *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011): 435. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid, 451. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. C. Hassell Bullock, “Wisdom, The 'Amen' of Torah,” *JETS* 52, no. 1 (March 2009): 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jaroslav Pelikan ed, *Luther's Works Volume 9: Lectures on Deuteronomy*, Vol. 9 of 55, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 170-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, The New International Biblical Commentary, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah Vol. 1,* Translated by John Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Bakerbooks, 1948), 377-388. John Calvin believes that this passage fits with Jesus’s first and second coming not just on earth, but also at the Messiah’s judgment seat in heaven. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 280-84. Oswalt believes the prophecy is figurative, though not allegorical like what Calvin wrote. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Victor Buksbazen. *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 2008), 181. Buksbazen agrees with Calvin on a future rule but disagrees with Calvin’s allegorical interpretation of the peaceful creatures like the future new nature of man. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 278-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid, 277-178. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Interesting how the King’s followers are in a similar progression with their Master (1 Pet. 2:21-25, 4:13-5:11): all Christians have not held a permeant royal position on earth until the resurrection where they reign on the earth with the Messiah (Rev. 20:6, 22:5). The King’s righteous followers will also be the means of God satisfying His royal law (Rom. 8:4, 1 Cor. 6:1-6, Eph. 1:22-23, Jam. 2:8). God is still Omnipresent, yet He will still be ruling over His creation through His image-bearers, who are all under the Ultimate Image-Bearer (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Col. 1:15). The dominion mandate will finally be completed and perfectly maintained. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Interview with Dr. Casillas. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Peter T. O’Brien. *Colossians and Philemon*, Vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary, (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Even if Prov. 8 is not a poetic description of Jesus, Jesus does satisfy the conditions and commitments to being wise and have many similar characteristics to Lady Wisdom in Prov. 8. The purpose of Solomon writing about Lady Wisdom is first to appeal to Solomon’s sons to seek wisdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. I thank Dr. Leedy for pointing out Jesus probably not speaking in hyperbole but understating how destroying the flesh does not produce righteousness. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Interesting not just how death is understood in Scripture, but how death is used and accomplished by God: sin used the law to destroy life (Rom. 7:8-12, 1 Cor. 15:56), but God used death to destroy sin (Rom. 5:15-21, 8:3-4) and to bring His followers closer to Him (Phil 2:21-23). Death is not just the punishment for sin, but the alternative and antidote against sin and its death. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Gordon D. Fee. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Rev. ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 190-191. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,* Translated by John Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Charles J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the* *Corinthians*, (Andober, England: W.F. Draper, 1889), 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Don Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Rev. ed., Vol. 9 of 13, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Grant R. Osborn, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament Series. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 428. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Thathathai Singsa, "Matthew's Wisdom Christology in its Jewish and Early Christian Contexts," PhD diss, Australian Catholic University, Fitzroy, Victoria, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid, 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid, 191-192. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Darrell L. Bock. *Luke, Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Edited by Silva Moisés Silva, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Interesting how the first recorded words of Jesus on earth demonstrates His perfect growth of wisdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid, 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)