

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 6.5.2022

## THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Why are we studying Proverbs?
- It's God's Word. 2 Tim. 3:16
- We're commanded to 'get wisdom' and to 'ask for wisdom'.  
Proverbs contains godly, practical wisdom.
- To correct misunderstanding and misapplication of Proverbs and to learn how to rightly read it.
- Ultimately we will get a more glorious picture of Jesus Christ.
- *“In a world bombarded by inane clichés, trivial catchwords, and godless soundbites, the expression of true wisdom is in short supply today. The church stands alone as the receptacle and repository of the inspired traditions that carry a mandate for a holy life from ancient sages, the greatest of whom was Solomon, and from the greater than Solomon, Jesus Christ. As the course and bulk of biblical wisdom, the book of Proverbs remains the model of curriculum for humanity to learn how to live under God and before humankind. As a result, it beckons the church to diligent study and application.”* Bruce Waltke, The Book of Proverbs, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.

### **PROVERBS 1:1-7**

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

2 To know wisdom and instruction,

to understand words of insight,

3 to receive instruction in wise dealing,

in righteousness, justice, and equity;

4 to give prudence to the simple,

knowledge and discretion to the youth—

5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning,

and the one who understands obtain guidance,

6 to understand a proverb and a saying,

the words of the wise and their riddles.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;

fools despise wisdom and instruction.

## II. INTRO TO PROVERBS

V1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

The **first verse** of the book tells us a **few important things**.

### 1. Its literary genre

- “The proverbs of Solomon...”
- We’re told how the message of this book is going to communicate to us —via proverbs.
- Proverbs falls under the Biblical category of wisdom literature and poetry along with Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
- What are proverbs?
- We think of proverbs as pithy sayings, short truth statements, or universally accepted truisms.
- The Hebrew noun we translate as proverb is, “māšal”. It means sayings, with the sense of a condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken true by many people.
- The word is related to a Hebrew verb that means “*to represent or to be like*”.
- A proverb then is a verbal representation of some aspect of life.
- A biblical proverb is meant to be pondered, studied, meditated upon, as it reflects to us something about our lives before we actually experience it.
- These wisdom sayings give us a glimpse of real life so that we can order our life according to God’s way.

### 2. Its declared author

- V1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.
- Solomon’s words are not the only words contained in the book, he is not the only author.
- Proverbs is a collection of collections.
- There are seven collections divided by headings (1:1; 10:1; 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1).
- Most proverbs are directly attributed to Solomon
- There are proverbs of Solomon that were copied and collected by King Hezekiah’s men.
- Sayings of the Wise
- The Words of Agur
- King Lemuel
- Unnamed author of the section we call the Proverbs 31 woman.

### Why is it largely attributed to Solomon?

- Proverbs connects itself with the monarchy of ancient Israel.
- Solomon was the king of Israel, David’s son and successor.
- Solomon was the last king to rule over a unified Israel. After him the kingdom was split into the northern and southern kingdoms.
- Solomon is the person the Bible sets forth as the greatest sage, the wisest person who has ever lived.
- **1 Kings 4:29-34** And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, 30 so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. 33 He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the

hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. 34 And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

- The source of Solomon's wisdom is God.
- The Scripture makes that clear. Read 1Kings3. Solomon loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of David his father.
- The king was required by God to write for himself a copy of the law, approved by the priests, and he was to keep that with him, read it all the days of his life, so that he would learn to fear the Lord and obey God (Deut. 17).
- At Gibeon the Lord appears to him in a dream.
- The Lord says to him, "Ask what I shall give you."
- Solomon's response is remarkable.
- He rehearses God's faithfulness in keeping the promises of the covenant God had made with David his father.
- He knows he is leading God's chosen people, a great people vast in number according to the promises of the covenant God made with Abraham.
- **1 Kings 3:9** Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"
- It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked for wisdom and discernment so he grants him that and much more.
- God declares that there will be none like him who had come before and none like him who come after he was long gone.
- God gets the credit for Solomon's great wisdom.
  
- A demonstration of Solomon's wisdom--1Kings 3
- **1Kings 3:28** And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.
  
- Solomon wrote thousands of Proverbs. He took sayings of the wise, adapted them, and compiled them.
- So while Solomon is not the exclusive author, we can rightly call him the author of the Book because God's Word declares him to be so.

### 3. Its intended audience

- Three primary original audiences are in view:
- Courtiers in training
- Youth of Israel
- All of God's people

### 4. It's structure and style

- Ch 1-9 contain a series of poetic lectures in the style of a father's instruction to his son.
- This first part of the book tells us why we should care about getting wisdom and walking in the way of wisdom.
- Ch 10-31 contain the proverbs themselves.

## III. THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS

- V2-4 tell us the purpose of Proverbs:

2 To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight,

3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity;

4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—

#### **a. Know Wisdom**

- The purpose of Proverbs is to know wisdom.
- There are other related words and ideas connected to wisdom we will see shortly.
- Knowing wisdom is not just about gaining knowledge.
- We're going to see that as we go through Proverbs, wisdom has a huge ethical and moral component to it.
- Wisdom is the Hebrew word, "ḥokmâ".
- It is largely used in the Bible to refer to technical skill, experience, ability, aptitude.
- **Exodus 31:1-5** The Lord said to Moses, 2 "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.
- Wisdom is a skill. It is the skill of living life.
- We can define wisdom generally as the skill of living rightly.

#### **b. Know Instruction**

- Also translated as discipline or correction.
- Discipline is the threat of punishment or the application of punishment if the instruction is not obeyed.

#### **c. To understand words of insight**

- It is the ability to recognize the true nature of a situation. That is what insight means.
- This is a key component in the toolbox of wisdom because the wise person will know how to speak and act appropriately.

#### **d. To receive instruction in wise dealing**

- NIV - Prudent behavior, CSB - prudent instruction,
- NLT - Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives
- To what end?
- To do "...righteousness, justice, and equity."
- To do what is right, just, and fair.
- These are ethical and moral terms. They are actions that we can only do when we possess wisdom.

#### **e. To give prudence to the simple**

- This phrase tells us the target audience of readers.
- Simple doesn't mean dumb. It means naive, ignorant, immature.
- It is someone who, if not put on the right path, can easily be deceived into taking the wrong path.
- That's why the book is aimed at the young person.
- Proverbs give prudence, knowledge, and discretion to the simple.
- It develops them as a people along the right path.

#### **f. To impart the ability to the wise to interpret proverbs.**

5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning,

and the one who understands obtain guidance,

6 to understand a proverb and a saying,

the words of the wise and their riddles.

- This is the other target audience of the book—the wise. These are the mature ones.
- The wise person, because they possess the skill of wisdom, will grow wiser as they listen to these proverbs.
- The wise person is the one who knows when and how to apply a particular proverb.
- Some of the proverbs are difficult sayings. They are filled with imagery. Some are enigmas.
- The wise person understands them and knows that they are context-sensitive.
- Proverbs makes the claim that they will enhance the wise person's ability to interpret and to rightly apply the words.

## IV. THE THEME OF PROVERBS

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- This is the key verse of the whole book.

### THE FEAR OF THE LORD

- “The fear of the Lord,” is a phrase that will be repeated several times in the book.
- Proverbs contains the covenant name of God — Yahweh.
- That's why this verse is the theological foundation of this book.
- It is written exclusively for a covenant people.
- It is for a people who are in relationship with I AM.
- Apart from covenant relationship with God, you cannot truly know wisdom, you cannot truly be wise.
- It means that wisdom is not a 'natural' quality. You aren't born with wisdom.
  
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.
- Knowledge and wisdom are sometimes used interchangeably.
- Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
- 'Beginning' doesn't mean the starting line or commencement of wisdom.
- It means it is the essence of wisdom, it is the sum of what it means to have wisdom.
  
- Fear of the Lord doesn't mean being afraid of God.
- It is having the right view of God, a reverence for the holiness and perfection of God.
- A person who has the fear of the Lord is a person in proper relationship with him.

### THE FOOL

"fools despise wisdom and instruction."

- The fool is excluded from getting wisdom because the fool despises wisdom and instruction.
  - The fool rejects God.
  - Ps. 53:1 The fool says in his heart, “there is no God.”
  - Who is the fool that is contrasted with the wise person in Proverbs?
  - The fool is the one who hates God and hates his law.
  - The fool is the one who hates knowledge and does not choose the fear of the Lord.
  - Folly is seen as wickedness, as evil, as a perversion of the right way.
  - Wisdom cries out, “Don’t be a fool!”
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- Do you fear the Lord?
  - If so, you are in a position to receive wisdom. To learn wisdom. To grow in the skill of living.
  - Do you lack wisdom?
  - It is the Lord who gives wisdom. Ask him for it!
  - James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

## THE GOSPEL IN PROVERBS

- The approach that we are going to take in our study of proverbs is to help us see that wisdom is not a what it is a who.
  - Wisdom is a person. That person is Christ.
  - The wisdom Proverbs points us to is the person who is the sum of all wisdom, and the one that we must embrace in order to become wise.
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- As wise as Solomon was, he did not finish well. He is not the model we look to.
  - **1 Kings 11:1-4** Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.
  - The story of Solomon created a longing in the heart of God’s people for a king who was not only wise but who would always remain faithful to the Lord.
  - **Isaiah 11:2-5** And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.
  - Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophecy.
  - Jesus himself declared he is the better Solomon, the true fulfillment of the covenant promise.
  - Matthew 12:42 The queen of the South (Sheba) will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
  - Proverbs created a prophetic expectation in God’s people for a son who fulfills the book.

- Jesus embodies the book of Proverbs. He is the ideal king. He is the faithful son.
- He is the one we need to have a relationship with in order to be wise.
  
- It's not a surprise for us then to read in the NT that Christ is the wisdom of God, he is wisdom from God, and that in him are hidden all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (1Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3).
- You cannot know wisdom apart from him.
- To know Christ is to know wisdom.
- And to know wisdom is to know Christ.