

Books of the Bible – Old Testament

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Week 14 - Proverbs



What is a Proverb?

- “A short popular saying, usually of unknown and ancient origin, that expresses effectively some commonplace truth or useful thought”
- The Hebrew term “mashal” (proverb) adds to this definition the words “mockery” and “satire” (Is 14:4)
- It is a short saying, often given to excessive moralism, that expresses truths about human actions and attitudes



Are the Proverbs of Divine Origin?

- 2 Tim 3:16 – *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”*
- Even though the book of Proverbs is considered to contain the wisdom of the wise, we still need to take into account that the true author is the Holy Spirit
 - Those who say it is “secular” deny the truth of scripture
 - Many of these proverbs are quoted by the world, without knowing their roots



God's Wisdom vs. Man's Wisdom

- There are two categories of wisdom:
 - Wisdom that comes out of human experience
 - Wisdom that comes from God
- The book of Proverbs contains divine wisdom
- The book of Ecclesiastes contains human wisdom



Purpose of the Proverbs

- A proverb is used to:
 - Illustrate a declaration
 - Terminate an argument
 - Lend authority to an admonition
 - Teach practical wisdom:
 - Especially to the youth
 - The phrase “my son” exists 23 times in the book of Proverbs



Purpose of the Proverbs

To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;
³ To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;
⁴ To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

- Proverbs 1:2-4



Foundation of the Proverbs

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

- Proverbs 1:7



God in the Proverbs

- The fear of the Lord is the way to peace & security (3:5, 9:10; 22:4)
- Trust in the Lord (3:5)
 - Don't trust in yourself (28:26)
- He gives to us of the tree of life (3:18; 11:30; 13:12)
- Even though Jesus isn't mentioned by name in the book of Proverbs, all wisdom comes through Him.
- Even though the Holy Spirit isn't mentioned in the book of Proverbs, it is He who teaches us wisdom.



The Proverbs Speak of God

- Even though the book of Proverbs is known as a book of wisdom, it says much about God:
 - He created everything (16:4)
 - He knows all (15:3)
 - He is the creator (14:31)
 - He gives us the “anchor” for all that is moral and just (10:29)
 - He is the ultimate judge (17:3)



Authors

- Even though King Solomon is commonly referred to as the author of Proverbs (1:1), he didn't write it all.
- Some of the proverbs are called “the proverbs of the wise” (22:17; 24:23)
- Some of the proverbs were transcribed (probably from common knowledge) by the scribes in the court of King Hezekiah (of Judah) (25:1)
- The last two chapters were written by Agur & Lemuel (30:1; 31:1)



King Solomon as Author

- Although the book starts by declaring that Solomon is the author, some theologians aren't so sure.
 - They think that others might have written parts of the book, and Solomon is receiving credit
 - Another possibility is that some of the proverbs he wrote were common in his day, and he only recorded them
- However, Solomon is known as “the wise one of Israel”
- Ultimately, we must accept that the Holy Spirit is the true author



King Solomon as Author

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.³⁰ And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.³¹ For he was wiser than all men...³² And he spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

- Proverbs 4:29-32



Outline of Proverbs

- Introduction (1:1-7)
- Recommendations of a wise one (1:8-9:18)
 - Exhortations and warnings to youth (1:8-33)
 - Benefits in obtaining wisdom (ch 2-4)
 - Warnings against imprudence (ch 5-7)
 - Adultery (ch 5)
 - Finances (6:1-5)
 - Purity (6:12-19)
 - The immoral woman (6:20-27)



Outline of Proverbs

- Discourse on wisdom (ch 8)
- Contrast between wisdom and foolishness (ch 9)
- The “great collection” of proverbs (10:1-22:16)
 - The just and godless (10:1-22)
 - The fear of God prolongs one’s days (10:23-32)
 - The bad and the righteous (11:1-23)
 - He who scatters (11:24-31)
 - Instructions (ch 12-13)
 - A series of wise sayings (ch 14-15)



Outline of Proverbs

- Proverbs related to life and conduct (16:1-22:16)
- The words of the wise (22:17-24:22)
- More sayings of the wise (24:23-34)
- Sayings collected by the servants of king Hezekiah (ch 25-29)
 - Moral lessons (ch 25-26)
 - Proverbs about various subjects (ch 27-29)



Outline of Proverbs

- Sayings of Agur (ch 30)
- Sayings of King Lemuel (31:1-9)
- Eulogy to the exemplary woman (31:10-31)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Wisdom according to Proverbs
 - Doctrine (teaching, or instruction)
 - Know prudent thinking (understanding, perception, and discernment)
 - Prudence (good sense, practical wisdom)
 - Sagacity, good sense (discretion, reflection)
 - Understand, capacity (apprenticeship)
 - How to obtain wisdom



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The characters (personalities) of Proverbs
 - The fool (the opposite to the wise)
 - The simple (naive) (one who is easily deceived)
 - The harsh fool (fool with a mind closed to receiving instruction)
 - The mocker (makes fun of values, morals & ethics)
 - The lazy (doesn’t want to do anything)
 - The good friend (he with whom you can have a good relationship)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The characters (personalities) of Proverbs
 - The good friend (he with whom you can have a good relationship)
 - Characteristics of a good friend:
 - Faithfulness
 - Frankness & sincerity
 - Help & counsel
 - Consideration & tact



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The excellence of self-control
 - In general
 - Rest
 - At the table (eating)
 - Not drinking strong drink
 - Anger
 - Control of one's temper
 - Anger should only be used against what is bad (not against self, but against God and His kingdom) to correct, or to protect family and self.



Controlling One's Temper

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

- Matthew 5:22



Controlling One's Temper

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

- Proverbs 16:32

A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

- Proverbs 19:19



Controlling One's Temper

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

- Proverbs 14:29

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

- Proverbs 15:1

The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

- Proverbs 19:11



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The tongue & our words:
 - The power of our words:
 - "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (18:21)
 - Good words:
 - Persuade – "...and a soft tongue breaketh the bone" (25:15)
 - Bless – "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted..." (11:11)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The tongue & our words:
 - Good words:
 - Preserve life – *“A true witness delivereth souls...”* (14:25)
 - Heals – *“...but the tongue of the wise is health”* (14:25)
 - Satisfies – *“A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth...”* (12:14)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The tongue & our words:
 - Bad words:
 - Penetrate – *“they go down into the innermost parts of the belly”* (18:8)
 - *“grievous words stir up anger”* (15:1)
 - *“hideth hatred with lying lips”* (10:18)
 - Hurts – *“There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword”* (12:18)
 - Destroy friendships – *“A foward man soweth strife”* (16:28)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The tongue & our words:
 - Bad words:
 - *“Provoke contention”* (18:6)
 - *“perverseness in words is a breach in the spirit”* (15:4)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Riches, poverty & charity
 - The value of riches:
 - Prosperity is the payment for hard work, dilligence, and good management (10:4-5)
 - Money gives a certain sense of security (10:15)
 - *“The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it”* (10:22)
 - *“By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honor, and life”* (22:4)
 - Even though money is valuable, it is much less valuable than other values.



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Riches, Poverty & Charity
 - Even though money is valuable, it is much less valuable than other values:
 - *“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold...”* (16:16)
 - *“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold”* (22:1)
 - Integrity is better than riches (28:6)
 - *“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith”* (15:17)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Riches, Poverty & Charity
 - Warnings about riches:
 - It is dangerous to be greedy for riches – *“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house”* (15:27)
 - Pride – *“The rich man is wise in his own conceit”* (28:11)
 - Hard heart – *“The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly”* (18:23)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Riches, Poverty & Charity
 - The responsibility that the rich have towards the poor:
 - Poverty isn't God's curse – *"Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich"* (28:6)
 - Help the poor – *"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD"*– (19:17)
 - *"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard"* (21:13)
 - The generous will prosper – *"The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself"* (11:25)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Family:
 - The book of Proverbs probably gives us more counsel about how to have a godly, happy family than any other book of the Bible.
 - Family problems don't change through time; the problems we have in our families today are the same problems that the Israelites had in Biblical times.



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Marriage:
 - Marriage was created by God for our benefit
 - Even though polygamy was practiced in Biblical times, especially amongst the kings, it was never part of God's plan
 - *"rejoice with the wife of thy youth... let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love"* (5:18-19)
 - *"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD"* (18:22)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Marriage:
 - It is interesting to note that there are more verses that speak about the wife's behavior, than there are which speak about the husbands behavior:
 - *"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones"* (12:4)
 - *"Every wise woman buildeth her house"* (14:1)
 - *"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house"* (21:9)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Marriage:
 - The wife:
 - *"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman"* (21:19)
 - *"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike"* (27:15)
 - Proverbs, as in the rest of the Bible, is very negative about sexual sin
 - Ch 7 – the whole chapter is a warning against adultery



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Parents & children:
 - The responsibility of training your children– *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (22:6)
 - *"My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother"* (6:20)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Parents & children:
 - Rebellion:
 - *“to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (San 4:17)
 - Submission is giving up your will, to submit to another; rebellion is the opposite
 - “I don’t want to do it”
 - Whining, crying, begging
 - Temper tantrums
 - External obedience, but with a bad attitude



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Parents & children:
 - Rebellion:
 - Partial obedience is rebellion
 - Slow, or late obedience is rebellion
 - What are we to do with one who has a rebellious heart?
 - According to the law, we are to stone them to death (Deut 21:18-21)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- Parents & children:
 - Necessity of correction & discipline:
 - *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”* (22:15)
 - *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him quickly”* (13:24)
 - *“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”* (19:18)
 - *“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”* (29:15)



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:
 - She is valuable – vs 10
 - Can trust in her – vs 11
 - She is a blessing – vs 12
 - She is a worker – vs 13
 - She seeks our great deals – vs 14
 - She is not lazy – vs 15
 - She is wise in business – vs 16-19, 24
 - She is generous – vs 20



Important Themes in Proverbs

- The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31
 - She prepares for the necessities of the future – vs 21
 - She is well dressed – vs 22
 - She helps and supports her husband – vs 23
 - She has a beautiful character – vs 25
 - She is wise – vs 26
 - She is a good administrator – vs 27
 - She is honored – vs 28

