

# The Wisdom Literature

## Lesson #16

### Wisdom In Our Relationship With God

#### **Introduction**

- Though some view Proverbs as merely practical wisdom designed to produce success in life, it is, "distinctly religious and has for its object the directing of man's life according to his highest interests, so that it is equivalent to 'the fear of the Lord,' that is, practical religion, and is often interchanged with that expression" (*Pulpit Commentary*, Introduction).
- Chapter 1 introduces the purpose of the book and chapter 2, our text, reiterates and explains that purpose (vss. 1-2). In all ages, the pursuit of God and His word, with wisdom and knowledge, is man's prime quest.
  - Wisdom is sometimes called "the skill of living before God." Knowing God and His will is more than factual acquaintance.
  - The Bible sometimes identifies deity as pure wisdom (Luke 11:49; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

#### **Wisdom In Knowing And Trusting God**

- About 100 proverbs mention God and all but a few use the sacred name Yahweh.
  - Yahweh is a derivative of the verb "I Am," the name God used to identify Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:14).
  - God identified Himself as Jehovah in relation to His covenants of promise to Israel (Exodus 6:3).
- The theme of Proverbs can be summed up in three statements: 1) Knowing God's instructions (1:2-5); 2) fearing God (1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7); and 3) acknowledging God in all your ways (3:6; 4:26-27).
  - Knowing God.
    - This is a more intimate knowledge than causal acquaintance. God reveals this knowledge (2:6).
      - Pharaoh denies that he knows God (Exodus 5:2) or that he recognizes His authority over him.
      - Positively, "to know" is paralleled to fear Him (1 Kings 8:43), to serve (1 Chronicles 28:9) and to trust (Isaiah 43:10).
    - The nature of the new covenant says, "they shall all know me ..." (Jeremiah 31:33-34; cf. John 6:44-45).
  - Fearing God.
    - Adam Clarke said, "the fear of the Lord signifies that religious reverence which every intelligent being owes to his Creator; and is often used to express the whole of religion ..."

- Solomon equates the fear of God with a knowledge of God (2:5). To understand the fear of God one finds the knowledge of God. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. Knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (9:10).
- Acknowledging God.
  - This is literally “knowing” God. This implies obedience and trusting God. Faith is more important than either prudence or common sense.
  - Do not rely on human wisdom (3:5). Rely on God; He will providentially care for you (3:6; 29:25).

### ***Wisdom In Realizing The Danger Of Sin***

- The wages of sin is death (10:16).
  - The right concept of sin is based on a right concept of God.
  - The heathen concept of sin is vague. “The transgressions I have committed, I know not, whether one does right or wrong, one knows not” (“Sumerian Prayer to Any God,” *Documents From Old Testament Times*, edited by D. W. Thomas, 1899, pp. 113-114).
  - That God was real to Solomon is confirmed by his concept of the seriousness of sin. Sin must be confessed (28:13), and Solomon recognized that atonement is accomplished through mercy and truth (16:6; cf. 1 John 1:7-10; Acts 8:22; James 5:16).
- Man is accountable.
  - Proverbs declares that man is accountable for his sins and must give an account to God (24:11-12).
  - Personally.
    - Words (10:19; 12:13-14).
    - Never making light of sin (14:9).
  - Nationally (14:34).

### ***Wisdom In A Steady Relationship With God***

- Personal relationships.
  - The adulterous woman who “forgetteth the covenant of her God” (2:16-17).
  - This makes the sin of adultery and fornication so serious. The covenant of God is broken (cf. Malachi 2:14).
- Personal provision.
  - The words of Agur (30:5-6).
    - The God fearing take refuge in God as a shield (cf. Psalm 3:3; 119:114; Ephesians 6:16).
    - Respect for the word is the product of fearing God (vs. 6).

- The wise request (30:7-9).
  - Remove me from vanity and lies (vs. 8; "deception and lies," NASB).
    - Deception comes from within (James 1:22; 1 Corinthians 3:18).
    - Deception comes from without (Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 2:18).
    - Both are extremely dangerous.
  - Give me neither poverty nor riches.
    - Hebrews 13:5.
    - Philippians 4:11.
  - Feed me with the food that is needful for me.
    - Matthew 6:11.
    - 1 Timothy 6:5.
    - Socrates said, "Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty."
- Personal plans (19:21).
- Personal guidance.
  - Protection by God's revealed will -- the majestic and absolute guide for all men (Jeremiah 10:23).
  - To forsake the law (28:4).
    - Is to "praise the wicked."
    - Those who keep it contend with them (cf. Ephesians 5:11; Philippians 1:17; Jude 3).
    - They deprive themselves of prayer (28:9).
    - Those with no "vision" or revelation perish (29:18).

### **Conclusion**

- The proverbs of Solomon are highly practical in application to daily living, but behind all practical applications stands the firm foundation of the true and living God.
- Service to Him is predicated on a knowledge of His will, an abiding fear and reverence in His presence and total reliance on His guidance channeled to all men through His divine revelation.
- Those who are truly wise today need no formal education, nor lofty position in this world, nor fabulous power and wealth -- just a true and devoted reliance upon God Almighty, who will one day call on us to turn in our record of life (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).