

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 17

Proverbs

This week we will take a quick look at the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a significant book of wisdom writings by a variety of people over several hundred years. It is often mistakenly assumed that Proverbs is solely a collection of Solomon's wisdom; this is not the case, as we will see in our study this week. Similar in construction to the book of Psalms, the book of Proverbs is a collection of writings by several people over a long period of time. The result of this work is what God provides to the Jews as a book of leadership - a King's Manual if you will - a leader's book on how to rule and reign.

As Christians, Proverbs teaches us how to be leaders and how to deal with situational ethics and the "gray areas" of life that confront us on a regular basis. As we study this book, we will quickly see that the book of Proverbs uses real life examples, and the contrasts of wisdom and folly, to show us the key to living "the good life" in God's eyes.

To get a head start on the questions below, you may wish to skim the book of Proverbs in advance (or not).

1. Read Proverbs 1:1-4 and verse 6. For what purposes was the book of Proverbs created, as presented in these verses?
2. If we want to gain knowledge and wisdom, God promises that we can have it; but what does Proverbs 1:7 tell us is the first step? What do Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10 also tell us regarding "wisdom"?
3. We can deduce from the variety of proverbs and authors contained within the book of Proverbs that it was written over several hundred years. For example, we know that Solomon died after reigning as King for forty years, in approximately 920 BC. What then does Proverbs 25:1 tell us about the potential length of time covered by all of the proverbs in the book?
4. While the book of Proverbs contains a wealth of wisdom, it is not easily applied to every situation. The proper application of the writings in the book requires wisdom -- wisdom that can only come from God, not man. This difficulty is addressed in Prov. 3:5-8, and man's wisdom is described in Prov. 26:12. Summarize below what these verses teach us:

5. There are eight divisions, or groups, of writings contained with Proverbs. The following groups are defined by the verses listed. Look up the first verse in each group and see if in it, or above it, you can infer the name of that division.
 - a. Chapters 1:8-9:18
 - b. Chapters 10:1-22:16
 - c. Chapters 22:17-24:22
 - d. Chapter 24:23-34
 - e. Chapters 25:1-29:27
 - f. Chapter 30:1-33
 - g. Chapter 31:1-9a
 - h. Chapter 31:9b-31
6. Read the following groups of verses: Proverbs 1:8, 5:1-23, and 6:1-35. Identify the topic that they addressing.
7. What are the eight steps that lead to wisdom identified in Proverbs 2:1-5?

As we can see from our brief study, the book of Proverbs has a wealth of wisdom for us, but it requires God's wisdom to understand and apply. And, as our last question shows us, gaining that wisdom is possible, but not easy. It requires us to seek out God's wisdom above all else, and to seek it with the same intensity and zeal that we would use in looking for something of extreme value. Then, when we acknowledge and fear God, He will reward our search by granting us wisdom.

I can personally attest to God's faithfulness in hearing our calls to Him for wisdom, and I imagine that many of you can as well. I can also attest to the fact that once you have God's wisdom, you will not want, or need, yours. God's wisdom is so great, and it goes so far beyond our own understanding, that we cannot comprehend it. When God grants me His wisdom, I am in awe of it, and of Him. What a great and glorious God we serve! May He grant you His wisdom and multiple blessings as a result of your study of Proverbs this week.

Have a great weekend everyone!

In Christ,

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