

THE BOOKS OF PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES AND SONG OF SOLOMON

PROVERBS

Last week we spent time going over the devotional readings of the Psalms. This week we turn our attention to the practical wisdom of the Proverbs. I believe that this Book is meant to be to our practical life what the Psalms are to our devotional life. This is a Book of Divine wisdom applied to earthly conditions.

In our English language a proverb is a brief saying instead of one using many words; short statements drawn from long experiences. A proverb does not argue; it assumes.

THE AUTHOR

Solomon probably gathered together many wise sayings along with his own, but he is generally credited with the authorship of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. According to 1 Kings 4:32 he wrote 3,000 proverbs. We only have 917 in this Book.

The central message of the Book seems to be "The Wisdom of God". Please compare 1 Corinthians 1:30 for the New Testament application in Christ.

The Structure of the Book

1. WISDOM AND FOLLY - Chapters 1-9.
2. PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (written and compiled by him) - Chapters 10-24.
3. PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (compiled by men of Hezekiah) - Chapters 25-29.
4. WORDS OF AGUR - Chapter 30.
5. WORDS OF A MOTHER - CHAPTER 31.

The Book of Proverbs says things, as we have mentioned, in short repeat or "back up" statements. This is called "parallelism". We can quickly pick out three types:

1. SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM - The second clause restates what is given in the first clause. Example: Proverbs 19:29.
2. CONTRAST PARALLELISM - A truth stated in the first clause is made stronger in the second clause by contrast with an opposite truth. Example: Proverbs 13:9.
3. SYNTHETIC (COMPLETIVE) PARALLELISM - The second clause develops the thought of the first. Example: Proverbs 20:2.

The Spiritual Value of the Proverbs for us Today

The Book of Proverbs was Divinely inspired and placed in the Holy Scripture for our benefit. When we read these proverbs as compared to some of our modern day proverbs (sayings) we begin to see their value to us. Examples: He who hesitates is lost; Look before you leap; The best things in life are free.

Compare those sayings to the proverbs God gives us: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths" (3:6) and "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (9:10).

In Proverbs 6:16-19 you will notice seven things God hates. Please make note of these.

We will close our look at Proverbs with 8:22-26 where we see the Eternal son of God.

ECCLESIASTES

The Book of Ecclesiastes is God's record of a man's argument about life; specifically, this man's reflection and experience in life while out of fellowship with God. "Ecclesiastes" comes from the Latin form of the Greek word meaning "Preacher".

According to Ecclesiastes 1:1 we know that Solomon identifies himself as the author. You will also find this information in 1:12, 16; 2:9; 12:9.

The central message of the Book is the emptiness of everything apart from God. **Vanity** is used 37 times and is not just talking about foolish pride, but that emptiness I just mentioned of being apart from God. 1 JOHN 2:15-16 tells us how to avoid this pitfall. MATTHEW 6:19-21 also speaks to this.

The Structure of the Book

- THE THEME - "All is vanity" (empty) 1:1-3.
1. SEEKING SATISFACTION THROUGH LIFE - 1:4-12:12.
 - Through nature and science - 1:4-11.
 - Through wisdom and philosophy - 1:12-18.
 - Through pleasure - 2:1-11.
 - Through materialism - 2:12-26.
 - Through fatalism and self-centeredness - 3:1-4, 16.
 - Through religion - 5:1-8.
 - Through wealth - 5:9 - 6:12.
 - Through morality - 7:1 - 12:12.
 2. A SPIRITUAL ADMONITION - 12:13-14.

The Ten Vanities of Ecclesiastes

1. Vanity of human wisdom - Wise and foolish both die. 2:15-16.
2. Vanity of human labor - Laborer and wise both die. 2:19-21.
3. Vanity of human purpose - Man proposes, God disposes. 2:26.
4. Vanity of envy - Success brings envy, not joy. 4:4.
5. Vanity of greed - You get more and remain empty. 4:7.
6. Vanity of fame - Popular one day, forgotten the next. 4:16.
7. Vanity of wealth - Money does not satisfy. 5:10.
8. Vanity of coveting - Wanting creates more wanting. 6:9.
9. Vanity of frivolity - Time wasted brings a sad end. 7:6.
10. Vanity of recognition - The bad are often honored by men. 8:10, 14.

The one lesson that we MUST learn from this Book is: A life lived for self and this world and without God is vanity, and nothing under the sun can ever satisfy the human heart except the Lord Jesus, the Son of God.

Read PSALMS 90:12.

THE BOOK OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The Jews called it the Holy of Holies of Scripture and Jerome tells us that the Jews would not permit their young men to read it until they were 30 years old. It is a part of our Divinely inspired Scripture and therefore a valuable resource from God.

According to 1:1 we know that Solomon is the author. According to 1 KINGS 4:32 he was the author of 1,005 songs, but we have only this one in the Bible.

The central message of the Book may be found in 2:16: "My beloved is mine, and I am his". This is the union between Christ and His redeemed people which is best expressed in a marriage union.

The Structure of the Book

1. Initial love - 1:2-2:7.
2. Faltering love - 2:8-3:5.
3. Growing love - 3:6-5:1.
4. Transforming love - 5:2-7:13.

5. Mature love - 8:1-14.

Please be sure to look at these "loves".

Teaching of Scripture with Scripture

Psalm 45 should be read with the Song of Solomon since it is a "Song of Loves" and a royal marriage hymn referring to Solomon. While the primary reference is Solomon, the ultimate reference is to Christ as taught in HEBREWS 1:7-8.

In Psalm 45 we see an address to the royal bridegroom (2-9) and an address to the royal bride (10-17).

The Song of Solomon along with Psalm 45 teaches us what Paul teaches in II CORINTHIANS 11:1-2 and also in EPHESIANS 5:25-27. The Song of Solomon speaks then of our (the church) relationship to the Heavenly Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus.

The Song of Solomon is written in "parabolic" or "allegorical" form.

NEXT WEEK

READ THE BOOK OF ISAIAH