

WISDOM LITERATURE

I. Wisdom

- A. “Broadly speaking, the Wisdom of the Hebrews covers the whole domain of what we should call Science and Philosophy. It is the consistent effort of the human mind to know, to understand, and to explain all that exists. It is, to use the modern phrase, the search for truth...Mystery might hang over the details, but one thing was plain: the whole universe was an intelligent plan of God; the mind might be baffled in understanding His ways, but all that existence is of His choosing and His ordering was taken as the axiom with which all thought must start. Thus there is a unity in the Hebrew Wisdom; the unity is found in the thought of the Creator; all the facts of the physical world, all the problems of human life, are referred to His mind; objective Wisdom is God’s Being, which includes in its circle everything; and subjective wisdom, wisdom in the human mind, consists in becoming acquainted with His Being and all that is contained in it, and meanwhile in constantly admitting that He is, and yielding to Him the rightful place in our thought.” - Expositor’s Bible
- B. “Wisdom is always the exercise of godly reason and understanding in the face of, and with trust in, what God is doing in our time. Grant Osborne writes that, “Its goal is to use properly God’s creation and to enjoy life in the present under his care”. Wisdom is a vital skill for life and a necessary complement to Torah (“instruction” or, more commonly but perhaps misleadingly, “law”). The Law of Moses contains many commandments, but it can never cover every possible situation or decision that needs to be made. The only way to face every aspect of life with faithfulness to God is to develop wisdom. Wisdom, in a sense, fills in the gaps between the Law, or perhaps we should say it guides the choices of the God-fearing person within the limits prescribed by the Law.” - Dr Paul B Coulter
- C. The writers of Wisdom Literature, “often used their observations of the natural world as well as their lived experience to share common sense thinking and practical solutions.” - Compelling Truth

II. The books - Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes

- A. Psalms - relates to wisdom as its primary emphasis is worship towards the One in Whom all wisdom exists
- B. Job - wrestles with the age old questions of how can God be good and yet allow so much suffering as well as why do the righteous suffer?
- C. Song of Songs - provides a godly perspective of the love between a man and woman. Compared to God’s ideal, our shortcomings, sin, and failures become evident.
- D. Ecclesiastes - Edgy, a downer, unlike the more affirming books of the Bible. Ecclesiastes contain the observations of the futility of a life lived apart from God
- E. Proverbs
 - 1. Know the author - Solomon
 - a) Incredibly wise King of Israel - 1 Ki. 3:4-14
 - (1) Desired the ability to make accurate judgments in government affairs
 - (2) Desired discernment between that which was “good and bad”
 - (3) God answered Solomon’s prayer - “*I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.*” - v. 12

- b) Solomon was an observer of men, one with a keen understanding of human nature and experiences common to all
- 2. Know the audience - Israel under the Mosaic Covenant
 - a) Solomon wrote specifically to his son - Prov. 1:8
 - b) Solomon's writings were also relevant to the entire nation of Israel whose relationship to God was tied to their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant
- 3. Know the purpose
 - a) *"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; 2 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 subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5 A wise [man] will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: 6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. 7 The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of knowledge: [but] fools despise wisdom and instruction."* - Prov. 1:1-7
 - b) The Law was Israel's wisdom - Deut. 4:5-6
 - (1) Proverbs provided Israel with practical observations of how they might live in light of God's covenant relationship with the nation
 - (2) *"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. 6 Keep therefore and do [them]; for this [is] your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation [is] a wise and understanding people."* - Deut. 4:5-6
 - c) The Fear of God
 - (1) *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* - Prov. 1:7
 - (2) Fear - *yare*
 - (a) Isaac feared for his life because of his wife's beauty, Israel feared Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea, Israel feared God at Mt. Sinai
 - (b) The Law provided Israelites dire consequences for not taking their covenant with God seriously
 - i) *"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD [men] depart from evil."* - Prov. 16:6
 - ii) *"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee... Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth [cometh] knowledge and understanding."* - Pro. 2:1, 5-6
 - (c) The dread of God's judgment directed men to seeking wisdom about how to apply God's instruction to their lives
- 4. Know that Proverbs are NOT Promises
 - a) Proverbs are wise observations about man's nature and common experiences
 - b) Proverbs are truisms, or something that is typically true
 - c) It is dangerous to consider Proverbs to be a collection of promises
 - d) It is dangerous to believe that ALL Proverbs apply to the believer in Christ

5. Know the Themes
 - a) Open your eyes and ears to the God's wisdom
 - (1) Wisdom personified
 - (2) Literary technique by and for a poetry loving people
 - b) The Sluggard
 - c) The Fool
 - (1) *"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."* - Prov. 26:4
 - (2) *"Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."* - Prov. 26:5
 - d) Friends and Companions
 - (1) *"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."* - Prov. 15:1
 - (2) *"The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."* - Prov. 15:2
 - e) Parents
 - (1) Correction - "the rod"
 - (a) *"Foolishness [is] bound in the heart of a child; [but] the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."* - Prov. 22:15
 - (b) *"Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."* - Prov. 23:14
 - (2) Training
 - (a) *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* - Prov. 22:6
 - f) Life or death - emphasis is physical life and death while the NT emphasizes the spiritual life and death
 - g) Poverty and Riches
 - (1) *"By humility [and] the fear of the LORD [are] riches, and honour, and life."* - Prov. 22:4
 - (a) *"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe [and] to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. ... 4 Blessed [shall be] the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 5 Blessed [shall be] thy basket and thy store. 6 Blessed [shalt] thou [be] when thou comest in, and blessed [shalt] thou [be] when thou goest out. 7 The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. 8 The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. ..."* - Deut. 28:1-2, 4-8 (also v.9-11; Deut. 11:11-15)
 - h) If the believer in Christ made any such promises of material prosperity?
 - (1) *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, [even] the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain."* - 1 Ti. 6:3-6

i) Dangers of Drunkenness

(1) *“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. 20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: ... 29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, [when] it moveth itself aright. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35 They have stricken me, [shalt thou say, and] I was not sick; they have beaten me, [and] I felt [it] not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.” - Prov. 23:19-20, 29-35*

(a) While the drinking of wine (biblical wine) is not prohibited, the writer warns his son against drunkenness (sin)

(b) Tarrying long at wine causes the senses (soul) to be discombobulated

(c) The soul is incredibly susceptible to the sin nature's attacks - 1 Pe. 2:11

j) Love and Lust: Different Desires

k) The Exhortation to Love Wisdom