

# PROVERBS: INTRODUCTION

(by Jerry Fite)

## I. WISDOM LITERATURE

- A. The Book of Proverbs along with the Books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon form a special section of our Bibles known as WISDOM LITERATURE.
- B. While all of God's revelation is wisdom from God, these Books provide wise sayings which offer practical direction in everyday living.
- C. The Hebrew mind was geared to find truth for living, not philosophy to simply wonder and talk about.
- D. Wisdom is more than knowledge. It involves proper "DOING."
- E. Wisdom recognizes the principle that "there is a time for every purpose under heaven." (Eccl.3:1).
  - 1. **Proverbs 19:17** - Having pity on the poor is encouraged;  
**Proverbs 11:15** - Becoming surety for neighbor is discouraged.
  - 2. **Proverbs 26:4-5** - Answer not a fool according to his folly...  
answer a fool according to his folly....

## II. PROVERBS

- A. The verb form of the Hebrew noun MISHLE, translated PROVERBS, has a root meaning emphasizing "comparison" - "to make like" or "assimilate."
  - 1. **I Samuel 10:12** - Saul is compared by a proverb to the ecstasy of the band of prophets.
- B. Principle methods of comparison found in the Book:
  - 1. ANTITHETICAL (Contrast) - "But" (10:25, 18:14).
  - 2. SYNONYMOUS (Same) - "And" (11:25, 16:32).
  - 3. COMPLETIVE - "That, " And," "Therefore" (13:14, 16:3, 20:4).
  - 4. COMPARATIVE- "Than" (15:16, 15:17).
  - 5. SIMILE (Imagery) - "So" (11:22, 25:25).

6. NUMERICAL (Measure) (6:16, 30:18).

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**III. THE BOOK**

- A. TITLE: "The Proverbs of Solomon" (1:1).
  1. The Book is a compilation of the many wise sayings of King Solomon (I Kings 4:31-32).
  2. The main section, 10:1-22:16, are attributed to Solomon. Also, Solomon's proverbs are included in 25:1-29 which the men in King Hezekiah's day compiled, some 200 years after the days of Solomon.
- B. The Book also contains "the words of the wise," (22:17, 24:23); "Words of Agur" - (30:1); and "Words of King Lemuel" - (31:1).
- C. New Testament writers quote from the Proverbs as Scripture:
  1. Heb.12:5-6 - Prov.3:11-12
  2. Heb.121:13 - Prov.4:26
  3. James 4:6 - Prov.3:34
  4. Romans 12:20 - Prov.25:21
  5. 2 Pet. 2:22 - Prov.26:11
- D. The Sections:
  1. Fifteen hortatory discourses featuring talks with "my son" or "my sons" (1:7-9:18).
  2. "The Proverbs of Solomon" - a collection of 375 Solomonic Proverbs (10:1-22:16).
  3. "Words of the Wise" - (24:33-34).
  4. "Also sayings of the wise" - (24:33-34).
  5. "Proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out" (25-29).
  6. "The words of Agur" (30).
  7. "The words of king Lemuel" - includes the acrostic ode praising a worthy woman in the last 22 verses corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (31).

**IV. THE PURPOSE: (1:1-6).**

- A. To supply insight and practical guidance for prudent living (v.2-3).
  - 1. Wisdom - "Power of judgment" or "insight".
  - 2. Instruction - "Broad discipline" - guidance and chastisement (cf.3:11).

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- 3. Understanding - Comprehend wise sayings, ability to distinguish between good and evil (Cf. IKings3:9).
  - 4. Doing right, using correct judgment, and manifesting upright demeanor in living with before others.
- B. To give guidance to the inexperienced (youth) (v.4).
  - 1. Prudence - "nakedness," "smoothness," "capacity for escaping from the wiles of others."
  - 2. Knowledge - "insight" - experimental knowledge.
  - 3. Discretion - "thoughtfulness," "caution," "circumspection."
- C. To allow the wise to grow in wisdom as they turn to sound counsel (v.5-6).
  - 1. Increase in learning - lays oneself open to instruction.
  - 2. Able to understand other proverbs and sayings of the wise with their figures and riddles.

## **V. THE ORIGIN AND BASIS OF PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE (V.7, 9:10).**

- A. The fear of Jehovah - Reverential respect for God and His law. This source, this attitude, is where all beneficial knowledge lies and commences.
- B. Its Requirements:
  - 1. Humility (15:33)
  - 2. Consistency (23:17, 24:21)
- C. Its Product and Rewards:
  - 1. Place of refuge (14:26)
  - 2. Depart from evil (3:7, 16:6)
  - 3. Riches, honor, life (22:4, 19:23, 15:16).