

THE BIG READ (42)

Jesus in Proverbs

A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. The Old Testament that Jesus read contained the same 39 books as our English Bibles but was arranged in a different order.

It had three sections – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44)

The final section of the Old Testament is the Writings.

Whereas the Prophets looked back to what happened to Israel and why it happened in order to call the nation to repent and return to God, the Writings looked forward to the hope that was coming to those who repent, through a King like David, and showed those who did, how to live faithfully in all of life’s circumstances as they waited for His arrival.

This means that though the books found in the Writings sections were written at different points in Israel’s history, it was after the Babylonian exile was over, that they were collected together to give the remnant hope and guidance as they waited.

3. In the book of Job, we learnt that to live the wise life is to fear the Lord.

“And he said to man, “The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”
(Job 28:28)

The book of Proverbs, the next book in the Writings, is all about living this wise life.

B. Getting Started with Proverbs

1. The book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings about how to fear the LORD and shun evil.

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.” (Proverbs 3:7)

The majority of these sayings were written by King Solomon – a selection of the 3000 that the wise king spoke.

“God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt... He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.” (1 Kings 4:29-30, 32)

As well as the sayings he spoke, Solomon also collected wise sayings from other sources, and included them in his book.

“Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach.” (Proverbs 22:17)

“The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh – an oracle.” (Proverbs 30:1)

“The sayings of King Lemuel – an oracle his mother taught him.” (Proverbs 31:1)

After the Babylonian exile was over, the book of Proverbs, which had been in existence from Solomon’s day, was included in the section of the Old Testament known as the Writings.

Proverbs was included to give God’s people hope that a King like David was coming by telling them what He will be like, but also teach them how to live as they waited for His arrival.

2. The book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings packaged in memorable ways, which means that they are repeatable.

These sayings are called proverbs.

A proverb teaches a truth by use of comparison, and in this way they are similar to parable.

“For understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.” (Proverbs 1:6)

There are different kinds of proverbs – some complement, some compare, some contrast.

3. The book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings written to prepare the king’s son for becoming the future king of Israel.

“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction.” (Proverbs 1:8)

It is also a resource for Israelite parents to use to teach their children how to live wisely in God’s world.

“For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young.” (Proverbs 1:2-4)

4. The book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings that instruct the king’s son to follow the path of wisdom and reject path of folly.

Wisdom begins with the fear of and trust in God.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:10)

“Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you.” (Proverbs 22:17-19)

Wisdom is expressed by making wise choices between good and evil behaviour according to God’s law.

“To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.” (Proverbs 21:3)

5. The book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings that teach parents how to teach their children how to follow the path of wisdom.

Parents teach their children how to behave in a way that is wise, and warn them about the consequences of disobedience.

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then

Wisdom and folly are personified as two women calling a young man to follow them.

"Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding." (Proverbs 9:1-6)

"The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment." (Proverbs 9:13-16)

The one who sees the value of wisdom will listen to the wise sayings of Proverbs 10 to 31.

3. In Proverbs 10 to 31 we are told how we can live wisely in God's world.

It contains six collections (10:1-22:16; 22:17-24:22; 24:23-34; 25:1-29:27; 30:1-33; 31:1-9) of wise sayings written by or compiled by Solomon.

The individual proverbs are general truths stated in general terms, rather than promises. Life tells us that things do not always work out that way, but normally they do.

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

The book of Proverbs closes with an acrostic poem that gives a description of the wife of noble character. This is a portrait of one who has taken to heart the message of Proverbs and has chosen to live a wise life.

D. Jesus in Proverbs

1. Proverbs is written to the Christ.

As a man, Jesus needed the book of Proverbs, to teach Him how to live a wise and righteous life that was pleasing to His Father.

As a man, Jesus read the book of Proverbs, and was taught how to live a wise and righteous life that was pleasing to His Father.

As a man, Jesus obeyed the book of Proverbs, and grew in wisdom and lived a righteous life that was pleasing to His Father in every way.

"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." (Luke 2:52)

"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

"Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)

Because we are in Christ, Proverbs is written to us.

We need the book of Proverbs, to teach us how to live wise and righteous lives that are pleasing to God.

To live according to instructions of Proverbs is to live like Christ Himself.

2. Proverbs is written about the Christ.ⁱ

As well as showing that Jesus is the wise son, there are other roles of Christ we are shown in Proverbs.

Jesus is the wise teacher who teaches His people how to live a wise life.

"...for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here." (Luke 11:31)

"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." (Mark 1:22)

"Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." (Matthew 13:34-35)

Jesus is the wise host calling sinners to feast with Him (to follow the way of wisdom that will bring them into relationship with Him).

"Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding." (Proverbs 9:4-6)

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests." (Matthew 22:8-10)

Jesus is the wise bridegroom, who views His people as the wife/bride of Proverbs 31 and calls them to live the wise life she is pictured as living.

3. Proverbs is written to show our need for Christ.

Proverbs says we need a Saviour because we cannot live this way.

We need Jesus to show us the way that leads to life – to make us wise for salvation through faith in Him.

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

We need Jesus to give us the wisdom we need to be acceptable to God and to die the death our foolishness deserves.

We need Jesus to give us the Spirit of Wisdom so that we can living a life pleasing to the Lord.

¹ Son, Teacher, Host, Bridegroom headings from Jesus On Every Page by David Murray