

Christ in the Hebrew Poets

“Who Became for Us-Wisdom”—Christ in Proverbs

Introduction: Today return to Poetic Books, looking for Christ in the Poetic Books—Turn our attention to Proverbs

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. John 5:39 NKJV

About Proverbs

— Judah’s rebellion against Jeremiah reveals the understanding of Israel about the way God spoke to them.

They said, “Come, let’s make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not cease, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let’s attack him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says.” Jeremiah 18:18 NIV

NOTE: He had warned that God would stop speaking. Including “counsel from the wise.”

— Proverbs represents this wise counsel, so crucial to God’s voice to His people.

— Various forms of Proverbs—(short, pithy sayings, immediately understood.)

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1 NIV

— Others require some contemplation

Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor. Proverbs 21:21 NIV

— Volatile bursts

Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife. Proverbs 17:1 NIV

— Humor and wit

A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping of a leaky roof in a rainstorm. Proverbs 27:15 NIV

— Wisdom sentences

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18 NIV

— Instruction

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, 2 for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Proverbs 3:1-2 NIV

— Also includes acrostic poems, praise poems, speeches, numerical proverbs

These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19 NKJV

- Today's text—a speech from wisdom personified (will return)
- Various authors: Solomon, Agut, Lemuel, “the wise”, men of Hezekiah
- Dates of Solomon to Hezekiah (pre-exile 970-700 BC)

Interpretive Considerations of Proverbs

1. Begins with vertical acknowledgement but focuses on horizontal relationship and activity.
2. Context is pretty insignificant
3. Principles not promises

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6 NKJV

Christ in Proverbs

I. Is Christ legitimately seen in Proverbs?

A. Some argue it is entirely void of legitimate correction to or allusions of Christ

1. After all, no references to Messiah
2. Argue, any attempt is disrespectful to Old Testament and fails to let Old Testament text stand at face value.

NOTE: Jesus seems to connect all the Old Testament to history at some level.

Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." Luke 24:44 NKJV

B. Legitimate connections between Proverbs and Jesus

1. Proverbs and the ministry of Jesus

a. At age of 12 in the temple debating

And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. Luke 2:47 NKJV

b. At end of this account

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:52 NKJV

- c. Taught in parables—translation of Hebrew word “masal”—a teacher of wisdom
- d. His teaching like no other

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Mark 1:21-22 NKJV

And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, "Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Mark 6:2 NKJV

2. Proverbs and the Gospel of Jesus

a. Two paths are clear in Proverbs

Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. 11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. 13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life. 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on. 16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. 18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. Proverbs 4:10-19 NKJV

b. The Gospels present two paths

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV

c. Paul portrays the same

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 NKJV

Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Romans 1:22-23 NKJV

3. Proverbs and the Risen Christ

a. Promised wisdom after His resurrection

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. Luke 21:15 NKJV

b. Played out in Peter (Pentecost)

Stephen

Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. Acts 6:3 NKJV

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Acts 6:10-11 NKJV

Paul

And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you. 2 Peter 3:15 NKJV

c. Wisdom continues

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, Ephesians 1:7-8 NKJV

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5 NKJV

II. Is Christ seen more specifically in Proverbs?

- A. Some have suggested “ontological” Jesus—that is He is the embodiment and personification of wisdom.
- B. Proverbs 8 and New Testament witness of Christ compared

When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, 29 When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him. Proverbs 8:27-30 NKJV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. John 1:1-4 NKJV

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. John 1:10 NKJV

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. Hebrews 1:1-2 NKJV

NOTE: Jesus clearly intimately involved as the architect at original creation event.

- C. Despite the compelling texts, great caution must be used here.

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. Proverbs 8:22 NKJV

"The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old. 1 Corinthians 1:30 NIV

1. Jesus was NOT part of creation
2. In the beginning was the Word—all things made by Him
3. Arius—3rd Century—Christ did not always exist—subordinate to the Father because God created Him

NOTE: Error of Unitarians, Mormons, Jehovah Witness

III. Christ is not the personification of wisdom but rather the origin and source of wisdom.

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 1 Corinthians 1:30 NIV

A. Context—Greek Corinthians sought after wisdom as means of salvation

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. 1 Corinthians 1:17-30 NKJV

B. They thought human wisdom would get them to Heaven—eternal life.

NOTE: Our world today

C. Christ is the true wisdom

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:2-3 NKJV

D. True wisdom from God is knowing Christ, being in Christ

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. 1 Corinthians 1:30 NKJV

(Who is our righteousness/standing, holiness/purity, redemption/purchased out of slavery)

- E. To the Corinthians—there is wisdom alright, but it comes from God—found in Christ

IV. So, is Christ, as the wisdom of God, found in Proverbs.

- A. Wisdom in His nature (as is power, and purity, transcendence, immanence)
- B. Wisdom was present at creation

When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, Proverbs 8:27-28 NKJV

Because in Him (Christ/Creation) dwell all wisdom.

C. Credentials of Wisdom

1. To seek wisdom is to seek the Lord because wisdom dwells in Him.

"Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. 33 Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Proverbs 8:32-34 NKJV

2. To truly find God's wisdom is to find Christ.

For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 8:35 NKJV

Conclusion:

We Can Still be Clueless

A recent advertisement by Cars.com tells the fictional story of a wonder child named Timothy Richman. From his earliest years, Timothy displayed an amazing level of confidence, and his confidence came from knowledge.

As a toddler in his high chair, he saw a pan of food cooking on the stove catch fire. Knowing somehow that baking soda puts out fires, Timothy calmly threw his rattle at a box of baking soda located on a shelf above the flaming pan, knocking over the box, which poured the soda into the pan and extinguished the flames.

As a boy about to learn to ride a bike, Timothy stands straddling the bike as his dad prepares to put on the training wheels. Timothy says, "Balance, momentum, and a low center of gravity," and with that knowledge fully absorbed, before Timothy's dad can get the training wheels on, Timothy pedals the bike away.

In junior high, Timothy confidently walks up to a teen on an Italian beach who has been stung on the leg by a jellyfish and acting on his knowledge of first aid he pours vinegar on the inflamed skin. He explains in perfect Italian that vinegar can neutralize jellyfish stings.

As a high school student on safari in Africa, he uses his knowledge of veterinary obstetrics to deliver a baby Bengal tiger that was breeched.

As an adult, Timothy gets out of his car on a highway as a tornado approaches a bus full of cheerleaders. Using his knowledge of storm cells and tornadoes, he explains to the cheerleaders that they will be safe if they exit the bus and lie in a low-lying depression beside the road. Just as the cheerleaders and Timothy jump safely into the ditch, the bus rises in the air and is carried away by the tornado.

The narrator explains, however, as Timothy stands with a scared look on his face in a new car lot, "When it came time to buy a new car, he was just as nervous as the rest of us."

Then Timothy sees a Cars.com sign and pulls out his cell phone. The narrator concludes, "So Timothy Richman got his knowledge at Cars.com, regained his confidence, and got the perfect car at the perfect price."

This commercial entertainingly illustrates the fact that no matter how much knowledge and confidence we have in many areas of life, we can still be clueless in another important area of living. The fact is, no matter how smart we are, apart from God's help we are clueless about important spiritual truths.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. Jude 24-25 NKJV