

# *Proverbs*

## *"The Call of Wisdom"*

### **Background Information**

The word "Proverbs" means "to be like," showing the comparison of common images and life's most profound truths.

About 513 individual proverbs are contained in the book, written or collected by Solomon. Likely, the book was not finalized until the time of Hezekiah.

The book is meant to be seen as an older man (father) instructing a younger person in the ways of wisdom.

### **Time Covered and Outline**

The book does not contain any major stories, therefore no real "time" is covered.

Also, the book is not meant to be strictly outlined, since many of the verses stand alone as sayings of truth. A very simple outline would be:

- I. The importance of seeking wisdom (chapters 1-9)
- II. Various instructions to the young on wise living (10-16)
- III. Study for wisdom and seek understanding (17-24)
- IV. Proverbs copied by "men of Hezekiah" (25-29)
- V. Proverbs from two other kings (30-31)

### **Major Themes**

While wisdom is the ultimate theme of the book, there are regular themes under that major concept.

- 1. Man's Relationship to God (22:19; 3:34; 1:7; 10:25; 28:13; 6:23; 12:28; 17:3; 10:22; 15:11)
- 2. Man's Relationship with Himself (20:11; 1:5; 26:10-11; 18:21; 6:9-11; 3:3; 11:4; 27:1; 29:11; 13:4)
- 3. Man's Relationship to Others (8:17; 17:17; 19:27; 23:23; 20:19; 20:7; 31:2-9; 31:10-31; 3:1-3; 4:1-4; 22:6)

Other than Solomon, two people are credited with penning one chapter each.

Agur is called the "Son of Jakeh" (30:1). This is all we know of this man.

Lemuel penned the "words his mother taught him" (31:1). Most scholars and Jewish tradition suggest this is Solomon himself, writing under a penname. If so, the "mother" is none other than Bathsheba!

## God's Character in Proverbs

Merciful (28:13)

Omniscient (5:21)

Providence (3:6; 16:3; 16:9; 16:33; 19:21; 20:24; 21:30-31)

Wise (3:19; 15:11)

## Jesus in Proverbs

The wisdom of Solomon was simply a glimmer compared to the full wisdom that Jesus would reveal. Colossians 2:3 states the Jesus is "the knowledge of God's mystery."

## Key Words in Proverbs

Wisdom (Hebrew *chokmah*) "daily application of practical knowledge" 1:2; 4:5; 9:10; 14:6; 16:16; 18:4; 23:23; 31:26

Foolish (Hebrew *'ivvelet*) "absence of wisdom" 14:1; 12:23; 14:24; 15:2; 15:14; 19:3; 22:15; 24:9; 27:22

## Elsewhere in the World...

During the time of Solomon, Peking became a true "city" in China. It would later be renamed Beijing.

## Elsewhere in Scripture...

The wisdom of Solomon filled his reign. The dozens of proverbs that are divinely included in this book, however, represent only a fraction of the ones he penned. 1 Kings 4:32 states that "he...spoke 3000 proverbs." This could mean he wrote that many, or that he had 3000 memorized and could say them at a moment's notice.

### One Important Reminder

Though each proverb in this book is there because God inspired its inclusion, we must remember the nature of a proverb. These are statements of *general* truth and describe an overall picture of one who is walking a wise path. Following these proverbs does not guarantee perfect outcomes in life, but generally, following these statements will lead to prosperity and a life of hope.

In reality, when we live by these statements, it will help us reflect on the perfect wisdom of God.