

Lesson 21 - Proverbs

Key Verse: *"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers."* (6:16-19)

PROVERBS is classified in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament; the other two books classified in this category are Job and Ecclesiastes. Teaching by proverbs is one of the most ancient forms of instruction. The age of David and Solomon is characterized by its poetic and wisdom writings. As David is related to the Psalter, Solomon is related to the **Proverbs**.

A proverb is *"a brief, pithy saying"*. The book of **Proverbs** is a compilation of wise statements containing moral truths. Psalms is a book of devotion while Proverbs is a book of practical ethics.

WISDOM is extolled in the book of Proverbs. Solomon did not seek riches, but he humbly prayed to God for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9). Because of Solomon's humble request, God not only gave him "a wise and understanding heart" but also riches and honor (1 Kings 3:12-13). Solomon's wisdom was the wonder of the age. When the queen of Sheba visits Solomon she tries him with hard questions, and seeing all of his wisdom and wealth of which she had been told, she said to him: "...the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard" (1 Kings 10:7). He spoke 3,000 proverbs and his songs were 1,005 (1 Kings 4:32). All the kings of the earth came to hear his wisdom (1 Kings 4:34).

All may read the Proverbs with profit: fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, children, masters, and servants. They will receive wise instruction as to their respective roles.

We must distinguish between the time of the actual writing of the Proverbs and the time of their being compiled and edited. Some were copied during the time of Hezekiah (Prov. 25:1) and it is possible that some editing was done by Ezra. There is no doubt that most of the Proverbs are from Solomon.

I. DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

- A. A series of short poems, practical lessons (Chapters 1-9)
- B. The actual beginning of Proverbs (Chapters 10-22:16)
- C. Renewed admonitions on the study of wisdom (22:17-24)
- D. Proverbs copied by men of Hezekiah, king of Judah (Chapters 25-29)
- E. The words of Agur and Lemuel (Chapters 30-31)
 - 1. The book closes with a description of "The Worthy" ("Virtuous" KJV) woman. This is an ideal of womanhood.

II. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

To inspire a deep reverence for God. To instill a fear of His judgements and a love for wisdom and virtue.