

1. The Call of Wisdom (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

Biblical material: Proverbs 1–3, Gen. 1:1, Exod. 19:16, 20:20, Prov. 11:30, 13:12, 15:4.

Quotes

- Wisdom stands at the turn in the road and calls upon us publicly, but we consider it false and despise its adherents. *Khalil Gibran*
- Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. *Thomas Jefferson*
- By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and Third by experience, which is the bitterest. *Confucius*
- The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing. *Socrates*
- Turn your wounds into wisdom. *Oprah Winfrey*
- Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance. *George Bernard Shaw*

Questions

Why is the fear of the Lord only the beginning of wisdom? Why should we seek wisdom? Why do so few respond to wisdom’s call? How do we determine what is wisdom and what is not? In the context of the great controversy what is true wisdom? How do we relate this back to the God of wisdom?

Bible summary

It’s hard to summarize all the aspects of three chapters of the Bible! Proverbs 1-3 sets the scene for the book. The intention is to provide these proverbs “for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young” (Prov. 1:2-4 NIV) and so on. The caution is: don’t follow the thinking of this world and to give in to peer pressure, but to listen to wise words of advice. (Prov. 1:8-19). Wisdom is personified through the book, beginning in Prov. 1:20-33. The advice to “the son” continues in Prov. 2 and 3. If you look for wisdom, the advice states, then “find the knowledge of God.” Prov. 2:5 NIV. Wisdom saves you from sins, (foolishness and adultery are specifically mentioned), and leads to a deeper experience of God in your life (Prov. 2 and 3). For “The wise inherit honor, but fools get only shame.” Prov. 3:35 NIV. Gen.1:1 identifies the source (God the Creator), the one with great power (Exod. 19:16). The wise save lives (Prov. 11:30), and when our hope is fulfilled this is a “tree of life” (Prov. 13:12, 15:4).

Comment

Proverbs are a common part of all cultures—those pithy sayings that sum up a particular situation. Of course, everyday proverbs can often be in opposition: “Many hands make light work” as opposed to “Too many cooks spoil the broth”!

Sometimes common sayings can appear to be profound, yet are really just truisms—something that is obvious: “It is what it is.” Then there are those proverbs that really don’t add anything or are just plain obscure. I had an aunt who talked in proverbs, though they were often more like riddles! Such obvious statements as “every sparrow has its nest” or

“there’s not a tree without branches”—which did little to add to my childhood wisdom... Then there were the ones that to this day I still haven’t worked out: “A fish in a field eats no grass.” “Misty mornings, happy yawnings.” “Apples know not that they are not pears.” “Chestnuts and hazelnuts do not siblings make.” “Foxes and rabbits share good habits.” I would try and try to find some deep meaning, but in the end I had to admit defeat. Some “wise observations” are nothing at all.

But when it comes to the Biblical book of Proverbs, though some may require some deep thinking, they are there to help us gain some wisdom to help us in life. Most of all we are looking for spiritual meaning and purpose that can help us in the practice of living Christian lives. While philosophy may be interesting, the wisdom found in Proverbs is essentially designed for practical use.

As we take an in-depth look at these words of wisdom, may we pay special attention to God’s wise instructions to us and come into a deeper relationship with him.

Ellen White Comments

There are two classes of educators in the world. One class is those whom God makes channels of light, and the other class is those whom Satan uses as his agents, who are wise to do evil. One class contemplates the character of God and increases in the knowledge of Jesus, whom God hath sent into the world. This class becomes wholly given up to those things which bring heavenly enlightenment, heavenly wisdom, to the uplifting of the soul. Every capability of their nature is submitted to God, and their thoughts are brought into captivity to Christ. The other class is in league with the prince of darkness, who is ever on the alert that he may find an opportunity to teach others the knowledge of evil. {CG 303-4}

There is much wisdom with worldly men, but with all their wisdom they behold not the beauty and majesty, the justice and wisdom, the goodness and holiness, of the Creator of all worlds.... The work of Christ’s disciples is to shine as lights, making manifest to the world the character of God. They are to catch the increasing rays of light from the Word of God and reflect them to men enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. The servants of Christ must rightly represent the character of God and Christ to men. {TMK 98}

The most desirable education is a knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. He who serves the world sees not the great things of eternal interest prepared for the one who opens his heart to the light of heaven. But he who enters this path of knowledge and perseveres in his search after the hidden wisdom, to him heavenly agencies teach the great lessons which through faith in Christ enable him to be an overcomer. Through this knowledge spiritual perfection is reached; the life becomes holy and Christlike. {CT 399}

It is proper and right to read the Bible; but your duty does not end there; for you are to search its pages for yourselves. The knowledge of God is not to be gained without mental effort, without prayer for wisdom in order that you may separate from the pure grain of truth the chaff with which men and Satan have misrepresented the doctrines of truth. Satan and his confederacy of human agents have endeavored to mix the chaff of error with the wheat of truth. We should diligently seek for the hidden treasure, and seek wisdom from heaven in order to separate human inventions from the divine commands. {FE 307}

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