

4. Divine Wisdom (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

Biblical material: Prov. 8:1–21, Matt. 16:26, Prov. 8:22–31, Gen. 1:31, Prov. 8:32–36, Prov. 9:1–18.

Quotes

- If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway... The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway... Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway. *Kent M. Keith*
- Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world. *Desmond Tutu*
- Let the first act of every morning be to make the following resolve for the day: I shall not fear anyone on Earth. I shall fear only God. I shall not bear ill will toward anyone. I shall not submit to injustice from anyone. I shall conquer untruth by truth. And in resisting untruth, I shall put up with all suffering. *Mahatma Gandhi*
- It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result. *Mahatma Gandhi*

Questions

How do we determine what is “divine wisdom”? Can we trust our judgment, or do we need more? Is good inherently good, or just because God said so? How do we make sure this is more than just mental knowledge? How does divine wisdom change our priorities? What does this say about the whole cosmic conflict?

Bible summary

Proverbs 8 makes clear that wisdom came before everything—in other words, concepts of good and evil, right and wrong are supreme and have their own intrinsic character. Good cannot be changed to evil by some decree—not even by God. Good is inherently good, and so wisdom is derived from that simple truth—and we do well to pay attention! Prov. 8:35, 36 NIV explains the inherent aspects of our choice regarding wisdom: “For those who find me find life and receive favor from the LORD. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death.” This is not external reward or punishment, it is simply the natural consequence of our choice. In the same way that God explained how distrusting him would lead inevitably to death, so disregarding wisdom brings its own results.

Proverbs 9 expands on this, showing that the way the moral universe operates is not arbitrary but inherently consistent. Consequently, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Prov. 9:10 NIV. Recognizing the truth behind God's instructions leads us to come into agreement with the way God thinks and acts. This is no arbitrary rulership by imposed decree—this is a consensus government based on agreeing with God that right is right and wrong is

wrong, *because that is their very nature* and not just because God says so. This is the meaning of “divine wisdom”—because it makes such clear sense!

Jesus asks his disciples, “What benefit is it for you to gain the whole world, yet lose your life? What would you give in exchange for your life?” Matt. 16:26 FBV. Material gain at the expense of who you are—your life for eternity—is foolish. Whatever God makes is good—for he is the God of good (see Genesis 1:31).

Comment

Jesus made it clear that his words were not his own—they came from above. His was a divine wisdom that expresses the nature and character of God—for he was and is God, and came to reveal God to us.

We should not confuse this wisdom with mere religious knowledge. It is even more than acting on what we believe. Divine wisdom is a whole philosophy of life—the reason we live as we do.

This is why Jesus could say that he came to bring abundant life (John 10:10). This is more than physical salvation—it is a transforming of the way we think, how we see the world and our place in it. This is life as God intended we should live—not as some temporary experience that is soon over, but as beings designed to live and grow forever. However, this can only now happen through God’s gift of himself to us, to change and renew us into the divine image once more—to think and to act as wise beings who know the difference between good and evil.

We need to become “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15) which only happens as we seek for, accept, and live this divine wisdom summed up in Jesus Christ. We can live only through him—not merely following him as our example but understanding that he is saving us: healing us and remaking us so we can live forever.

Ellen White Comments

Before the entrance of sin, Adam and Eve in Eden were surrounded with a clear and beautiful light, the light of God. This light illuminated everything which they approached. There was nothing to obscure their perception of the character or the works of God. But when they yielded to the tempter, the light departed from them. In losing the garments of holiness, they lost the light that had illuminated nature. No longer could they read it aright. They could not discern the character of God in His works. So today man cannot of himself read aright the teaching of nature. Unless guided by divine wisdom, he exalts nature and the laws of nature above nature's God. This is why mere human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God's word. But for those who receive the light of the life of Christ, nature is again illuminated. In the light shining from the cross, we can rightly interpret nature's teaching.

He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God's word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. {MH 461-2}

If the followers of Christ were but earnest seekers after wisdom, they would be led into rich fields of truth as yet wholly unknown to them. He who will give himself fully to God will be guided by the divine hand... As he treasures the lessons of divine wisdom, a sacred commission will be entrusted to him; he will be enabled to make his life an honor to God and a blessing to the world. {AA 283-4}

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