



Overview for Proverbs

Purpose: To give maxims, practical advice, and counsel of a moral nature to the Hebrew people, instructing them on how to conduct themselves in light of God's principles of order.

Author: Internal evidence names King Solomon as the primary author (see Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1). The "men of Hezekiah" (Proverbs 25:1) seemingly compiled the material found in chapters 25 through 29, and the final chapters were contributed by Agur and Lemuel.

Date Written: Probably over a period of time during Solomon's reign, approximately 970 to 931 B.C.

History: During Solomon's reign, the nation of Israel reached its apex spiritually, politically, culturally, and economically. As Israel's reputation spread, so did King Solomon's, and dignitaries from throughout the known world traveled great distances to learn from the wisdom of this monarch. In 1 Kings 4:29-34, Solomon is credited with writing three thousand proverbs and over one thousand songs.

Key Verse: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7)

Special Features: The Book of Proverbs is a collection of moral and philosophical statements and wise sayings which employ contrast—a common Semitic literary device—to present its message. Other literary techniques incorporated in the book include parables, pointed questions, poetic couplets, and personification.

The book is built around the theme of wisdom; the words *wise* and *wisdom* occur at least 125 times in its 31 chapters. The wisdom extolled goes far beyond just a high degree of intelligence; it is based upon moral virtue, and is synonymous with righteousness. Perhaps the greatest error in a correct understanding of Proverbs comes when the maxims are regarded as mere secular commentary rather than divinely-inspired instruction.

Setting: In the society of ancient Israel, the family played an important role in the upbringing and education of children. Some internal evidence suggests that the Proverbs were used in a family setting; the phrase "my son" appears some twenty times throughout the book, while the role of the mother is alluded to ten times. Although wisdom is the primary theme of the book, it covers a wide range of topics based on common experiences in the everyday world: morality and immorality, diligence and sloth, self-control and intemperance, wealth and poverty, child discipline, and discernment in choosing friends.

Summary: Unlike many other books of the Bible, there is no plot or storyline found in the Book of Proverbs, nor are there principal characters. Throughout the book, wisdom is compared and contrasted with foolishness, and the wise (or righteous) man with the fool (one who is devoid of morality and uninterested in correction). The wisdom of Proverbs rightly places God at the center of man's life, and establishes that even in down-to-earth matters, true wisdom is living in harmony with His divine purpose.

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Introduction (1:1-7)
 - A. The author of the book (1:1)
 - B. The purpose of the book (1:2-4)
 - C. The theme of the book (1:5-7)
- II. The superiority of the way of wisdom (1:8—9:18)
 - A. The teachings of wisdom (1:8-33)
 - B. The value of wisdom (2:1-22)
 - C. The rewards of wisdom (3:1-35)
 - D. The advice of wisdom (4:1-27)
 - E. The warnings of wisdom (5:1—7:27)
 - F. The worthiness of wisdom (8:1-36)
 - G. The invitation of wisdom (9:1-18)
- III. The sayings of the way of wisdom (10:1—31:31)
 - A. The 375 proverbs of Solomon (10:1—22:16)
 - B. The words of the wise (22:17—24:34)
 - C. The words of Solomon arranged by the men of Hezekiah (25:1—29:27)
 - D. The words of Agur (30:1-33)
 - E. The words of Lemuel (31:1-31)