

**The Wisdom Literature:
Proverbs- Wisdom of the Ages Proverbs 1:1-31:31**

A proverb has been said to be, "A short sentence drawn from long experience." The use of proverbs is as old as mankind. They date back in written form to about 2700 BC. in Egypt according to *Unger's Bible Handbook*. Today we have proverbs all around us. We call them old wives tales, puns, and find them in fortune cookies, etc. There are however several differences between man's proverbs and Gods. Man's proverbs contain unscientific statements or inaccurate observations. God's does not. Man's speaks and gives advice concerning immoral lifestyles, God's are on a high moral plane. Man's proverbs contradict themselves because men see the world differently. Examples of this are, "A rolling stone gathers no moss" contradicted by "A setting hen does not get fat." And, "Look before you leap" verses, "He who hesitates is lost." While man's proverbs contradict each other, God's proverbs never contradict themselves.

It is said that Billy Graham noted there are thirty-one proverbs which is one for each day of the month and he reads one each day.

The book of Proverbs is a compiling of the proverbs of Solomon and others. This is not a complete work of all the proverbs of Solomon. *I Kings 4:32* says he spoke three thousand proverbs and one thousand songs. Proverbs contain only a small part of these. From *10:1- 22:16* there are only 375 proverbs of Solomon.

The other authors of these include men named Agur (*30:1*) and Lemuel (*31:1*). The scribes of Hezekiah compiled *Proverbs 25-29*.

All aspects of moral and ethical instructions are included in this book. It speaks especially to the walk and character of the godly. The "**Upright**" and "**Righteous**" are referred to over fifty times in *Proverbs 10-29* alone.

The key verse is *Prov 1:7*, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...**" The key word is wisdom. There are many purposes of this book. We will discuss these later.

The New Testament quotes from the book of Proverbs on numerous occasions. (*Pro 1:16* in *Rom 3:15*; *Pro 3:11-12* in *Heb 12:5-6*, *Rev 3:19*; *Pro 3:34* in *Jam 4:6*, *I Peter 5:5*; *Pro 4:26* in *Heb 12:13*; *Pro 10:12* in *I Pet 4:8*; *Pro 11:31* in *I Pet 4:18*; *Pro 25:21-22* in *Rom 12:20*; and *Pro 26:11* in *II Pet 2:22*.)

The literary form of Proverbs needs to be understood. They are written in what is known as Parallelism. The two clauses of the couplet are generally related to each other in the tradition of Hebrew. There have been four types of Parallelism found in this book.

1- Synonymous Parallelism.

The second line restates what is said in the first. Ex: *Prov 19:29*

" (1) **Judgments are prepared for scorners** (2) **And stripes for the back of fools.**"

2- **Antithetic Parallelism.** The truth stated in the first line is contrasted or made stronger by in the second by an opposite truth. Ex: *Prov 13:9* " (1) **The light of the righteous rejoiceth**, (2)

But the lamp of the wicked shall be put out."

3- Synthetic Parallelism. In this type the second clause continues the thought and develops it. Ex: ***Prov 20:2*** "(1) ***The terror of a king is as the roaring lion-*** (2) ***He that provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own life."***

4- Emblematic Parallelism. One line illumines the other by a simile or a metaphor. Ex: ***Prov 10:26*** "(1) ***As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,*** (2) ***so is the sluggard to them that send him."***

The best way to study this book is by topics. We will do this but the following expanded outline will be helpful in understanding the overall picture.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

- I- *Prov 1:1-7* Introduction.**
Notice the following purposes:
- 1- To know wisdom and instruction and perceive understanding. (1:2)**
 - 2- To receive instruction in wisdom, justice, judgment and equity. (1:3)**
 - 3- To give young men knowledge and discernment. (1:4)**
 - 4- To attract the wise men, to increase learning, and to help attain to wise counsel. (1:5)**
 - 5- To make know the words of the wise in proverbial form and express dark saying. (1:6)**

II- *Prov 1:8- 9:18* Wisdom from a Father to a Son.

This son is presumed to be Rehoboam and the father is Solomon. "*My Son*" occurs at least

seventeen times in this section. The contrast is between wisdom and foolishness.

III- *Prov 10:1- 22:16* Proverbs of Solomon 1.

These proverbs were written and compiled by Solomon.

V- *Prov 22:17-24:34* Words of the wise men.

This section is comprised of proverbs from unknown author or authors. They do not in any way contradict the others.

V- *Prov 25:1- 29:27* Proverbs of Solomon 2.

These proverbs were compiled by the scribes of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was instrumental in completing this work.

VI- *Prov 30:1-33* Proverbs of Agur

This chapter is the proverbs of a man named Agur of which we know nothing.

VII- *Prov 31:1-31* The proverbs of Lemuel.

In this section is the well know discourse on the "*Virtuous woman*."

Topic Study:

As we stated the best way to study Proverbs is by topic. Allow me to offer the following for our study and you personal study as well. These topics we will study now are certainly not an exhaustive list. We will look at only a few. While the proverbs speak on the family, death, life, discretion, eating, enemies, the fear of the Lord, the fool, friendship, God, the heart (or mind), the home. As well as the king, knowledge,

