

# Books of The Bible

## A Survey of Proverbs - Part 1

### Introduction

When the Aga Khan came to Vancouver in May 1018, some 20,000 people went to hear him speak on moral conduct and his philosophy on life. They wanted to tap into his “great” wisdom. Some 2700 years ago a Queen traveled across the hot dusty desert, the scriptures call it a waste howling wilderness, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Apart from the obvious, one was a King and the other a head of a religion. There is another marked distinction. The Aga Khan has the wisdom of men, but the wisdom from Solomon was from God. The wisdom he here speaks of is not that of the wisdom of this world, but of God.

- a) “And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment” (1 Kgs. 3:28).
- b) “Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God” (1 Chron. 22:12).
- c) “And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart” (2 Chron. 9:23).

If I had presented the 20,000 people with the choice, “Come and hear the Aga Khan speak on earthly wisdom” or “Come and hear the wisest man who ever lived, endowed with the wisdom of God” both of which are speaking on the same themes, I wonder how many would come to hear the latter? The world has no desire for the wisdom of God and under Satanic domination, it lives in spiritual darkness (1 Cor. 1:21, 24).

It has been reported that Augustus Caesar read the works of men of learning that he might use that which would be beneficial to him in his government. It was a characteristic we can learn from for we have in our hands not the words of men but the principles for life by the Spirit of God. The Greeks and Romans had very great thinkers but even if we combined all the greatness of their wisdom, none would compare to the wisdom of God for in our Lord “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

Yet when we open the Scripture of truth and begin to read Proverbs, we are listening to God speaking through not only Solomon, but several other godly men as well. Sad to say this book is often ignored and therefore we remain in spiritual ignorance ignoring the teachings of God. Sadly, many today and in ages past would rather read the anti-God writings of men on evolution etc., than the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

While Proverbs is loosely called, “The proverbs of Solomon,” it is not precisely correct for there were other writers of wisdom which God included in the book. It is my understanding that King Solomon begins by speaking to his son, and though we are not informed as to which “son,” the instruction of wisdom is wise counsel to any son, or for that matter any daughter.

### The Authors

- 1) There can be no doubt that King Solomon wrote chapters 1:8-9:18; 25:1-29:27, with chapters 25:1-29:27 being copied by the men of Hezekiah (ch. 25:1).
- 2) Chapters 10:1-24:34 are the proverbs of Solomon but they were written by an unknown editor.
- 3) Chapter 30:1 introduces us to a new wise man, Agur, who spoke words of wisdom to Ithiel and Ucal, and this continues to chapter 31:33.
- 4) Chapter 31:1 introduces us to King Lemuel who gives the guidance his mother taught him concerning the characteristics of the ideal wife and mother.

King Solomon is the principal writer of Proverbs. Solomon's name appears in ch.1:1, 10:1, and 25:1. We may also presume Solomon collected and edited Proverbs other than his own, for he also wrote, “Not only was the preacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs” (Ecc. 12:9).

# Books of The Bible

## A Survey of Proverbs - Part 1

### The Recipients

While the “letter” was a recording of the words spoken and musings to a son, yet its wisdom is a series of guidelines for every father’s instruction to his sons in any age. As I read Proverbs it is my understanding that the father is speaking to a youthful son. The father has seen and known the pit traps of living and the dangers of ungodly persons, and seeks to guide his son in the ways of wisdom and understanding.

From the references to “my son,” it is evident that these were words spoken to Rehoboam, Solomon’s only recorded son (1 Kgs. 11:43; 1 Chron. 3:10). The scriptures records two daughters, “Taphath and Basmath (1 Kgs. 4:11, 14, 15). We know not of any other sons or daughters.

Furthermore, it would be with a viewing of him being the future king of Israel and as such, the legal and moral governor of the nation under God. It was a very heavy responsibility.

It is my understanding that Solomon spoke these proverbs to his son while still a youth at the age of sexual awareness and then of marriageable age (else there is little value in the instruction of the virtuous woman ch. 31:10-31) and the warning against loose living woman (ch. 7:5-23). The son is later viewed as a father for then Solomon, as the grandfather, gives instruction to his son, now a father himself, or at least in all probability becoming one.

### Its Relevance For Today

When the scriptures inform its readers that sin is never stationary but always follows a downward slope, it is a truth we see all around us in this age. There was a time when wisdom was seen as a blessing, music had harmony, artists had great skill, and there was a reverence for God and His ways. That has all changed. This world which “lieth in wickedness” and like a baby lying quietly in a mothers arms, so this entire world politically, economically, musically, inventively, and intellectually is in a state of spiritual degenerating, ever decaying faster than time can almost keep up with. Paraphrasing that which Mr. J.N. Darby wrote, “The book of Proverbs gives us the blessing of the divine wisdom of He who that created the Heavens and earth, to avoid the world of satanic foolishness and corruption and live life in the wisdom of the Almighty (1 Chron. 22:12). Thankfully the Lord has not only informed us of the characteristics of divine wisdom in pithy precepts, but also in its characteristics. James wrote, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jam. 3:17). Thus the individual, whatever their age chronologically, or in whatever age they live of earth’s history, they have the criteria for wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

There is a recurring promise throughout Proverbs, which is:

- a) Those who choose wisdom and follow God will be blessed in numerous ways: with long life (ch. 9:11); prosperity (ch. 2:20-21); joy (ch. 3:13-18); and the goodness of God (ch. 12:21).
- b) Those who reject Him, on the other hand, suffer shame and death (ch. 3:35; 10:21). To reject God is to choose folly over wisdom and is to separate ourselves from God, His Word, His wisdom and His blessings.

### Key Words

It is difficult to read Proverbs without observing the repetition of words and sentiments. The oft repeated words are:

Words	No of verses
Wicked	Found in 87 verses

# Books of The Bible

## A Survey of Proverbs - Part 1

Words	No of verses
Righteous	Found in 54 verses
But	Found in 243 verses
Life	Found in 39 verses
Death	Found in 18 verses
Wisdom	Found in 54 verses
Instruction	Found in 26 verses
Understanding	Found in 53 verses
Knowledge	Found in 41 verses
Discretion	Found in 6 verses
Son (without the words "my son")	Found in 17 verses
"My Son: without the word "son"	Found in 245 verses
Sluggard	Found in 6 verses

### Clarification

- 1) Knowledge is nothing more than an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them.
- 2) The word "Proverbs" comes from the Latin: pro (for) and verba (words). It refers to statements which contain few words but says a whole lot.

### Key Verses

- 1) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).
- 2) "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth" (Prov. 4:5).
- 3) "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov. 8:13).
- 4) "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Prov. 18:13).
- 5) "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him" (Prov. 26:40; "lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Prov. 26:5).
- 6) "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29:1).
- 7) "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30).

### The Date of Compiling

The proverbs Solomon wrote were likely written during His 40 year reign, which was at best that can be computed was from 920 B.C. to 880 B.C. There was approximately a 265 year period when the Proverbs of chapter 25:1-29:28 were known and verbally used in conversation, then the men of Hezekiah who reigned from

# Books of The Bible

## A Survey of Proverbs - Part 1

615 B.C. to 588 B.C. wrote them out. Consequently, the book was not composed until some time between 615 B.C. and 588 B.C.

### Title

In most English translations the title is the translation of the Hebrew title, “Mishle Shlomo” which means, “The Proverbs of Solomon” which was at some point of time shortened to “Proverbs” and thus carried into our Bibles.

After reading proverbs numerous times and if asked to put a title on this book, it would be “Instruction for godly living in a Godless world”.

### Purpose For The Writing

Proverbs is one of the few books which tells us its purpose - (Prov. 1:2-6). That purpose was:

- a) To know and instill in the unlearned wisdom and instruction (ch. 1:2)
- b) For the student to receive teaching in wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity (ch. 1:3)
- c) To help the unaware due to youthfulness, knowledge and discretion (ch. 1:4)
- d) To exhort the student to increase in learning and to acquire skill in understanding (ch. 1:5)
- e) To understand Proverbs and their practical lessons (ch. 1:6)
- f) The immediate and long term blessings is to learn the fear (reverential) of the Lord (ch. 1:7)

---

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia