

The Messenger



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

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Evangelist and Editor:
Dempsey Collins

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PROVERBS

by Dempsey Collins

The book of Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, which includes the books of Job, Psalm, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

I. Definition

- A. The English word "proverb" comes from the Hebrew word *Mashal*, which means "to represent, be like" (Zondervan Pict. Dict., p. 691).
- B. "A proverb is a short, pithy axiomatic (self-evident) saying, the life of which is antithesis, or comparison." (Halley)
- C. An old and common saying; a phrase often repeated; especially a sentence which briefly and forcibly expresses some practical truth, or the result of experience and observation." (Webster)
- D. "Observations relative to human life...expressed commonly in a short pointed form." (Driver)
- E. "In Hebrew the word has two distinct meanings; one as here to 'represent' the other to 'rule' therefore represents a ruling principle." (A.D. Power, p. 230)
- F. Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, "A short sentence based on long experience."

II. Authorship

- A. Solomon – The second book of the Bible prefaced by the name of the author.
 - 1. Prov. 1:1; 10:1; 25:1 – Solomon is to the Proverbs, what David is to the Psalms. Each one is the principal writer, though not the sole author.
 - 2. Solomon was well known for his wisdom (I Kings 4:29) and the Holy Spirit specifically states that he spoke 3,000 proverbs (I Kings 4:32), only a portion of which are contained in this book.
- B. Other Writers
 - 1. Chapter 30 – written by Agur to his pupils Ithiel and Ucal.
 - 2. Chapter 31:1-9 – Instructions of a mother to her son, King Lemuel; perhaps when he was but a young prince.

III. Time Period

- A. Solomon reigned from 970 – 930 B.C., but at least part of the book was not in its final form until centuries after he died (25:1). The reign of Hezekiah was 715 – 690 B.C.

IV. To Whom Addressed

- A. To the youth
 - 1. The words “Hear my son the instruction of your father” are often repeated.
- B. To all men. The book is universal in its applications. Any man in any time in any level or class of society can appreciate its wisdom.

V. Purpose

- A. Proverbs 1:2 – 6
 - 1. Wise and prudent behavior as a result of wise instruction is the stated aim.
 - 2. While Job and Ecclesiastes deal with the more profound truths of suffering and overall purpose, Proverbs is a collection of more simple and practical aspects of day to day life. It teaches the most difficult of all lessons: how to practice truth.
 - 3. A special purpose of the book is to instruct the youth in morals and proper standards of conduct.
 - a. “As young people begin charting their own course in life, they need to avoid the pitfalls into which many fall. Some make mistakes which affect the entire future course of their lives. Goals may become unattainable because of a few moments of reckless folly. The proverbs are aimed at directing young people away from those pitfalls which may cause poverty, disgrace, conflict or even premature death.” (The Book of Proverbs – Mike Willis)
 - b. The noted Thomas Campbell believed that Proverbs contained so much material that would help a person through life that he had his children memorize the entire book.
 - c. Parents are indeed wise who use the Proverbs as a regular basis of home devotionals thus providing their children with a simple practical and what’s most important, godly standard of conduct.

VI. Use of Book of Proverbs in the New Testament

- A. Romans 12:20 – Proverbs 25:21
- B. Hebrews 12:5-8 – Proverbs 3:11, 12
- C. James 4:6 – Proverbs 3:34
- D. II Peter 2:22 – Proverbs 26:11

VII. Conclusion

The proverbs provide for us practical discipline for eternal truths. They touch upon every facet of life. Time and experience has proven their priceless value. Let us take full advantage of this inspired book to help guide us to heaven.

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16