

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

THE CALL FROM WISDOM, PROVERBS 8:1-36

- A. Wisdom's appeal (1-3), ***Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:***
1. Two rhetorical questions - wisdom openly seeks those who will receive.
 2. Contrast to chapters 6 and 7, Sid Buzzell, *Whereas the seductress' ways are secretive and deceptive, wisdom's ways are open and honest.*
- B. Wisdom's importance (4-21)
1. She is for everyone (4), ***To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man.***
 - a. Wisdom is not for just the naive and the foolish but for the children of man.
 - b. Psalm 49:1-2, *Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together!*
 2. She is beneficial and true (5-9)
 - a. Her call is for the hearer to gain prudence and sense (5-6), ***O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right,***
 - 1) Prudence is knowledge for wise living.
 - 2) Sense is understanding for wise living.
 - b. Wisdom proclaims truth and righteousness to those who receive it with understanding (7-9), ***for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.***
 - 1) Psalm 37:30, *The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.*
 - 2) Proverbs 14:6, *The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.*
 - 3) Sid Buzzell, *wisdom's words correspond to reality; therefore they are right.*
 3. She is more valuable than material wealth (10-11), ***Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.***
 - a. That the value of wisdom is greater than silver, gold or precious jewels is expanded in verses 18-21.
 - b. Cyril of Alexandria, *Wisdom, which is better than precious jewels, is an incomparable blessing that comes to us from above by means of holy Scripture.*
 4. She has proper insight (12-14), ***I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength.***
 - a. Ecclesiastes 7:19, *Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.*
 - b. David Atkinson, *She is a close colleague of prudence, knowledge, and discretion...These abilities flow from the fear of the Lord.*
 5. She has authority (15-16), ***By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly.***
 - a. Leaders need wisdom in order to rule justly.
 - b. Venerable Bede, *Even kings and rulers have nothing without wisdom.*

6. She grants wealth and honor (17-21)
 - a. Her love is for those who seek her (17), *I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.*
 - 1) Psalm 91:14, *Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.*
 - 2) James 1:5, *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*
 - b. True wealth comes from wisdom which is godly living (18-21), *Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries.*
 - 1) Proverbs 3:16, *Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.*
 - 2) Psalm 112:3, *Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.*

C. Wisdom's role in creation (22-31)

1. She was before creation (22-23), *The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.*
 - a. Psalm 104:24, *O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*
 - b. Basil, *The primary function of our minds is to know God, as much as the very small can know the infinitely great.*
 - c. L. D. Johnson, *Wisdom is pictured as being, not just an attribute of God (such as His justice and mercy) but the "first-born" of His creation.*
 - d. David Atkinson, *...there has been considerable controversy as to whether Wisdom in this passage is a true Person, or rather the personification of one of God's attributes.*
2. She participated in creation (24-29), *When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,*
 - a. Sid Buzzell, *Wisdom is being presented in a manner that exalts it to the rank of a divine agent in creation...In the same vein is that beautiful poem on wisdom found in Job 28.*
 - b. Wisdom was with God during His creative acts
 - 1) Heavens set in place - Genesis 1:1-5, *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*
 - 2) Waters separated making clouds and oceans - Genesis 1:6-8, *And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*
 - 3) Dry land appeared - Genesis 1:9-10, *And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*
3. She rejoiced in creation (30-31), *then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.*
 - a. David Atkinson, *The climax of this section celebrates Wisdom's joyous delight in being God's intimate associate.*
 - b. This is a beautiful addition to the description of Creation - the excitement of God at His creative work.

4. Understanding the role of Wisdom in Creation

a. Who is Wisdom? Proverbs 1:20-33

1) Christ is the wisdom

- a) When the Logos is compared to wisdom many of the attributes are the same.
- b) Wisdom seems to be somewhat independent of God.

2) Wisdom is an attribute of God

- a) Wisdom writers used personification - ascribing personal traits to inanimate objects or to abstract ideas and principles.
 - 1] Isaiah 55:12, trees “clapping their hands”
 - 2] Ezekiel 36:8, God addressing the “mountains of Israel”
 - 3] Psalm 85:10, “righteousness and peace kiss”
- b) He makes wisdom known and available to man.
- c) Athanasius, *The One Word of God is distinct from the Words of God’s Commands*.

b. Wisdom was the cornerstone of Creation, Proverbs 3:19-20

1) God is at the creative center of all things

- a) Wisdom is understood as an attribute of God in the Old Testament.
- b) Wisdom is an instrument of God, a tool in His hand.

2) Wisdom and the Person of Jesus Christ

- a) In the New Testament God’s tool is not an attribute but a Person, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1:1-3a, *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*
- b) Can we determine that Jesus is the Wisdom of the Old Testament?
 - 1] No, there is a parallel but we need not take it that far. Jesus is not an attribute of God. He is God.
 - 2] Old Testament descriptions of God are accurate but they are much clearer in the New Testament because Jesus is the exact representation of the Father.

c. Wisdom’s role in Creation, Proverbs 8:22-31

- 1) Sid Buzzell, *Saying that God’s work is characterized by wisdom does not suggest that wisdom itself was the designer. God was the designer...If God involved wisdom in His creative work, then certainly people need wisdom...It is preferable to see wisdom spoken of here figuratively as a personification of God’s attribute of wisdom.*
- 2) John 1:1-4, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
- 3) Colossians 1:15-18, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*
- 4) Hebrews 1:1-3, *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

D. Wisdom’s exhortation (32-36), ***And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.***

- 1. Listen to her (32-33)
- 2. Those who receive wisdom find life (34-35)
- 3. Those who do not, face death (36)

CONCLUSION

- A. David Atkinson, *The central thrust of this paragraph is that before and behind our human searchings after wisdom, Wisdom is searching for us.*
- B. John of Damascus, *Knowing everything and providing what is beneficial for each person, God revealed what was profitable for us to know.*
- C. Augustine, *My soul is constricted. Expand it so that You can enter in.*