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Proverbs 31

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Proverbs 31.

Topics.

- This chapter is full of a variety of various Proverbs.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs is a collection of Israelite wisdom literature, that has multiple authors, but most of it is attributed to King Solomon. Chapter one to nine gives readers a framework for understanding the rest of the book. The central concern of the book of Proverbs is practical wisdom for living. We are told that the beginning and essence of wisdom is the fear of the LORD (Prov. 1:7) (Prov. 9:10). It contrasts the benefits of seeking wisdom and the pitfalls of living a foolish life. While the wicked stumble in deep darkness (Prov. 4:19), the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day ((Prov. 4:18). Individual proverbs date from between the tenth and sixth centuries B.C.

KINGS AND ANGELS

The title king is often used throughout the book of Proverbs, it comes from the Hebrew word (*malak*) which can refer to the following four things:

1. A royal king ascending to the throne of royalty and reigning from it.
2. A male sovereign (i.e., a man or boy who rules as a monarch over an independent state.
3. The chief, or the principal leader or ruler of a group (secular or religious).
4. A messenger or ambassador, especially of God, (i.e. an angel, a king, a prophet, a priest or a teacher).
5. The best, the strongest and the wisest of all.

It is interesting to notice in the first verse of proverbs (Prov. 1:1) the word king comes from the Hebrew word (*malak*) and the first mention of an angel in the Bible also comes from the Hebrew word (*malak*) (Gen. 16:7). This means when the title king is used in the book of Proverbs it carries the idea of a wise king that does good unless the context implies otherwise. For further information concerning angels see the title:

Angels (ON WEBSITE MENU).

PROVERBS 31:1

- **Proverbs 31:1:** The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:

Lemuel was an unknown king to whom his mother taught the proverbs. Over the years there has been various ideas of who the name Lemuel may apply to, but it is undoubtedly a symbolical name of Solomon (Proverbs 31:1-9). The word Lemuel comes from the Hebrew word (*L^emuw'el*) the letters ('el) means belonging to God they are a shortened form of the Hebrew word ('ayil) which means strength and mighty. It especially refers

to the Almighty, but it is also used of any deity such as gods and of a great idol this is because it carries the idea of being mighty and powerful so even though an idol has no power if multitudes believe it to be a powerful god then it can apply to such an idol, but the letters (el) is not limited to these since it carries the idea of a mighty and powerful one who belongs to God so it can also be applied to a mighty and strong king who belongs to God.

PROVERBS 31:2-3

- **Proverbs 31:2-3:** What are you doing, my son? What are you doing, son of my womb? What are you doing, son of my vows? ³Do not give your strength to women, your ways to those who destroy kings.

Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24). Bathsheba was the very beautiful wife of Uriah, until King David saw her bathing on a roof and had her brought to him and lay with her (2 Sam. 11:2-4) (2 Sam. 11:3). Much of what Bathsheba tells her son Solomon in this chapter is most likely gained from her own personal experience of being a very attractive and beautiful woman herself. Bathsheba knows first-hand what Solomon's father was like regarding beautiful woman and has probably observed the similiar tendencies in her son Solomon. Solomon was the son of the richest and most powerful king. Bathsheba would know that because of Solomon's fame, riches and wealth he would be desired by many women. In the following verses she is warning him about the dangers of beautiful woman, and teaching him what to look for when seeking a wife.

PROVERBS 31:4-7

- **Proverbs 31:4-7:** It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, ⁵lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. ⁶Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; ⁷let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.

Bathsheba warns Solomon not to drink strong alcoholic drinks or drink excessively because drunkenness has the potential not only to cause the mind to blank out and forget many things, but also has the potential for others (for their own gain and advantage) to cause those in a drunken stupor to say and do things that would bring harm upon the helpless and the afflicted.

NOTE: many churches (especially in the past) have taught that drinking alcohol is a sin before God, the following words of David clearly shows that drinking alcohol is not forbidden, in fact according to David God made it for man to enjoy.

- You O LORD caused the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth ¹⁵and wine to gladden the heart of man. (Psalm 104:14-15).

The apostle Paul wrote:

- Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart. (Ephes. 5:18-19).

Debauchery carries the idea of self-indulgence, immorality and shamelessness. Paul is not saying, "Do not drink at all, but do not drink to excess to be merry, but rather be merry in the Lord." The Bible does not teach total abstinence, nor does it teach that drinking alcohol is a sin, but it does warn against drinking an excess of alcohol many times for the following reasons:

- It weakens the will and can lead to a lack of moral fortitude.
- It can be dangerous since it often leads to violence and drunken driving.
- It has the potential to lead to alcoholic addiction and destroy marriages and lives.
- It results in behavior that is often regretted when the drunken state of the mind sobers up and returns to normality.

Clearly excessive amounts of alcohol can lead to many sins, even the secular world understands this truth and that drunkenness can result in behavior that is often regretted the next day. For this reason, it is obviously better to abstain altogether, nevertheless those who do drink in moderation cannot be accused of committing any sin. Even the focus of Bathsheba's advice to her son is upon strong drink and drinking to excess to get drunk and forget one's misery.

PROVERBS 31:8-9

- **Proverbs 31:8-9:** Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.
⁹Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Bathsheba's words of wisdom shine a brilliant spotlight upon the following two things:

1. Bathsheba become a very wise mother and spent many hours teaching her son wisdom not only concerning the temptations he would face, but also how to honour God as a king and rule over the people with justice and fairness.
2. Bathsheba as Queen cared about the poor, the afflicted and the less fortunate in her kingdom.

PROVERBS 31:10-12

- **Proverbs 31:10-12:** An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. ¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. ¹²She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

It should be mentioned here that these verses are not, "Thus saith the LORD." This is a mother who deeply cares about her son and wants the best for him, and especially desires that he finds a good wife (as all mothers do). It is almost certain that Bathsheba had seen Solomon flirting with many beautiful women and no doubt being enticed by them. Bathsheba being a most beautiful woman herself would understand that most young men do not see past the beauty and the hot body, and from this understanding is teaching her son what qualities to look for in a woman who he intends to take for his wife.

It should be highlighted here that the focus of Bathsheba is not upon a wife whose husband would boast is a good and wonderful woman, wife and mother, but upon an excellent and perfect wife. This is why the following qualities for a wife to attain to are extremely high. This no doubt is why she says, "An excellent wife who can find?" Having said that Bathsheba not only gives some very good guidelines and principals, but also blows apart much of what traditional religious teaching says about a woman's role as a wife and a mother. Added to this she shifts the focus of men looking to take a woman for a wife from physical beauty and sensual attraction to looking at the character, personality, temperament and spirit of the woman.

More precious than jewels: the testimony of every husband on planet earth who has a wife that he deeply loves will agree with the statement, "A good wife is more precious than jewels." There is no treasure or riches in this world that a husband who has such a wife would trade for her. A man who has a wife who he can trust to never betray him, by having an affair with another man or hurt him in any other way and who will not squander and drain the family budget by spending money on unnecessary material possessions or by living a self-indulgent lifestyle is of more worth than all the gold and silver in the world and should be valued and treated as such.

PROVERBS 31:13-19

- **Proverbs 31:13-19:** She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. ¹⁴She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. ¹⁶She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. ¹⁸She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. ¹⁹She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

These verses fly in the face of all who teach that God's only calling for all mothers is to be in the kitchen and at home to care for the children. Such religious teaching brings condemnation upon mothers who:

- Are talented with a brilliant skill or amazing talent and desire to make a career of it.
- Work to help her husband provide financial support for the family.
- Are gifted in business and love working.

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Certainly it is the calling of a mother (as it is of the father) to care for her children and raise them in the right way to go, but many women worldwide do this and still manage to have a very successful working career or pursue their brilliant gift or amazing talent with the world or with the global Kingdom of God. Some examples of this would be women gifted with:

- A singing voice that the global world enjoys.
- An amazing athlete that competes in the Olympics.
- A unique aptitude to play musical instrument in an orchestra.
- A brilliant business mind that is able to create work for hundreds of employees.
- A woman who is gifted at teaching and is able to help many students.

The list of course is endless, every woman should note that though it is true that the Christian faith calls her to be a good mother to her children and raise them in the right way to go it does not demand that she cannot live her dream and fulfil the passion of her heart. There are literally hundreds of examples throughout history and in our age of women who have been faithful wives, good mothers and achieved amazing things. These women are able to share their faith and the Gospel with men and women that most in the Kingdom of God would never come in contact with.

Bathsheba says an excellent wife:

- Knows what merchandise is profitable and what is not.
- Is a successful business woman bringing food from faraway places.

- Not only buys fields with established fruit trees, but also plants vineyards.
- Is strong and willing to work long hours to provide food for her household.

This is not only a picture of an enormously successful wife and mother, but also of a very successful business woman.

PROVERBS 31:20-22

- **Proverbs 31:20-22:** She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. ²¹She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. ²²She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Not only is this woman an enormously successful wife, mother and successful business woman, but she also cares for the poor and the less fortunate and makes sure her family has warm clothing for winter and nice clothing for herself.

PROVERBS 31:23-27

- **Proverbs 31:23-27:** Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. ²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. ²⁶She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

An excellent wife also has an excellent husband, in that he is respected by all those who know him. Though this woman makes beautiful clothes for herself her true beauty is in her strength of character, her dignity, wisdom, kindness and her positive outlook for the future and her willingness to work to enhance the life of her family. These verses also shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that the underlying motivation of this woman is not driven by pride, ego and self-glory, but to fulfil her own hearts passion and to enhance the life of her family.

PROVERBS 31:28

- **Proverbs 31:28:** Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

A mother with these qualities will be spoken well of by her children all the days of their life, and her husband will enthusiastically boast of her good qualities and achievements and openly express his love, approval and admiration for her.

PROVERBS 31:29

- **Proverbs 31:29:** Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.

Worldwide and in every nation, there are millions of wives and mothers who are of a very high quality and have given their heart wholeheartedly to their husband and family and are greatly loved by their husbands and done extremely good as mothers, but a woman with all the above qualities surpasses them all. No doubt this is why Bathsheba began this teaching lesson to her son with the words, "An excellent wife who can find?" Bathsheba's description of an excellent wife could be likened to a Christian

describing what an excellent Christian would look like the only one who would attain to such an excellent description of a Christian would be the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because an honest description of what every Christian should look like would have to be the perfect ideal. Now we all know that not one faithful believer no matter how devoted attains to this perfect excellence (this is why God daily showers us with His grace in Christ), but it is the desire of the heart to do so. Likewise, Bathsheba sets out the qualities of a perfect wife (it is unlikely any woman attains to her perfect ideal), but just as God gives us grace to cover our shortfalls the husband of a faithful wife will cover her shortfalls with the same grace.

PROVERBS 31:30-31

- **Proverbs 31:30-31:** Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. ³¹Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

This verse obviously does not apply to every beautiful woman on planet earth; it is not a blanket statement. What Bathsheba is saying is in the context of Solomon's life and by extension any man who has been influenced by the beauty of a woman to turn away from their goals and what is right, proper and good. Bathsheba is warning her son that a woman's beauty and attractiveness gives her the power to delight, attract and influence men so as to obtain something from them by using her powers of flattery and sensual seduction.

A humble woman who fears the LORD: carries the idea of a woman who is modest, respectful in attitude and behaviour and is willing to listen to and accept wisdom and right judgments of her husband and of others and treats all people justly and fairly. The reason a person is told to fear the LORD is because all humans have sinned and will one-day be judged by God. This fear should motivate all of us to seek God and his eternal salvation and forgiveness. This is why the Bible says the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom it motivates a person to seek God and His forgiveness.

The apostle John in his letter wrote:

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10).

The fear of the LORD has the following two aspects:

- 1 An eternal aspect: wisdom teaches that mankind is separated from God because of sin and without God a person has no hope of eternal life and will be judged accordingly. The fear of the LORD in this context is wisdom because it motivates a person to seek God and eternal life.
- 2 An aspect for the present moment: the fear of the LORD in the present moment motivates mankind to obey God's Ten Commandments which are all designed to protect the innocent from harm, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally and spiritually (summed up they mean do-good and not harm). The fear of the LORD in this context is also wisdom because if everyone feared the LORD humanity would live in harmony with each other. Sadly, there is very little fear of the LORD in the world today and so we see rampant rebellion, violence, crime and wars in most countries.

The fear of God and Christians: those in Christ look to the bloodstained cross of Calvary and understand and experience Christ's great love and God's grace in their hearts and minds and no longer act from fear, but from love in the same way that a man in love with a woman does not do things to please her from fear, but from the love dwelling in his heart. Likewise, it is with the faithful who belong to the Lord's global family.

- The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. (Prov. 8:13).

The fear of the LORD is hatred toward evil: it is having a hatred of everything that harms another human physically, financially, sexually, emotionally, or spiritually and having a strong dislike of anything that destroys the planet and of whoever treats animals cruelly. God loves humans He gave his only Son to die for them. The fear of the LORD is about protecting and preventing harm to other humans. It is about knowing we are all going to stand before Him one day and give an account of our actions. The fear of this judgment should motivate a person to do the right thing and treat others with respect.

CONCLUSION: sadly, Solomon didn't listen to the good advice of his mother Bathsheba, but instead acquired a collection of seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines and allowed them to turn his heart away from his father David's God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to other gods. He built places of worship for the false gods his heathen wives believed in to satisfy their desires. Solomon's rule was quiet and peaceful, but the LORD was angered at Solomon's failure to keep His commands and announced to him that there would be a rift in the kingdom which would take place in the reign of his son.

In the book of Kings, it is written:

- When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. (1 Kings 11:4).

How sad it is that a man who had such wisdom, fame and power and a mother and father who loved God fell so far away from God and his ways. Clearly Solomon's fall evidences the power of a beautiful and sensual woman.

NOTE: though it is true man's eyes are drawn to the beauty and sensuality of a woman this cannot be used as an excuse for a man who had betrayed his wife. Every man has this same nature hidden behind the eyes yet not every husband succumbs to the beauty, the blinking eyelashes and the hot body. The root problem does not lie in the lust of man's eyes or the sensual beauty of a woman (it is their nature to look attractive to men), but in the lack of a man's integrity toward his wife and toward God.

WISDOM EMBRACES THE FOLLOWING NINE ASPECTS

1. Having a clear thoughtful, rational, discerning, discriminating, sharp, and discreet mind.
2. Being cautious in character as opposed to being impulsive.
3. Being sensible and practical with the skills and talents that a person has.
4. Making choices that considers others and that will be fair and just.
5. Studying, reading and learning to acquire mental knowledge that helps in making right decisions for the present moment and for the future.
6. Being able to see the future danger of a decision, choice or action.
7. Having the ability to make good choices and decisions in the present moment that will end in the best result and a good outcome in the future.
8. Being able to perceive the end result or ramifications (good or bad) of the underlying message a speaker is teaching.

9. Wisdom will protect a person from making decisions and choices in the present moment that will lead to hurt or calamity in the future for themselves and for others.

NOTES ON PROVERBS

The main theme of the book of Proverbs contrasts the benefit of wisdom with the way of a fool it teaches that a person's integrity and righteousness will guide them and deliver them from trouble and lead them to eternal life, whereas the wicked person's lust, pride and greed will guide them into trouble and lead them to eternal death. Proverbs are all about gaining wisdom so that a man and a woman is able to walk in good character, because the LORD is more interested in character and integrity than success, riches and wealth.

The book of Proverbs teaches the following two paths:

1. One path is for the godly person that does what is right, it leads to eternal life.
2. The other path is for the way of those who do wrong it leads to the lake of fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total destruction and utter extinction). For further information concerning eternal death see the title, "Lake of Fire," in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.