

BIBLE SYNTHESIS III (Bible Survey)

Introduction to Proverbs

In Psalms we find the Christian on his knees.
In Proverbs we find the Christian on his feet.

The Psalms are for the Christian's devotions
The Proverbs are for the Christian's walk.

The Psalms are for the closet of prayer.
The Proverbs are for the business place and playground

—*Scripture Panorama Series*, Baptist Publications, Denver,
page 127 [Discontinued material].

The Jews likened *Proverbs* to the *outer court of the temple*; *Ecclesiastes* to the *holy place*; *the Song of Solomon* to the *holy of holies*.

—*Ibid*, pages 127–128

This book is filled with words of wisdom. There is one terse saying after another. Men have tried to add to them and failed. A brilliant lawyer tried it once. He thought he could write a few before breakfast. He came away from his task humbled and baffled and glorying in the marvelous wisdom of God.

—*Ibid*, pages 127–128

1. *Antique Method of Teaching*

Proverbial teaching is one of the most ancient forms of instruction. From the earliest historical times every nation has had its proverbs. This method of teaching was well adapted to the times when books were few and costly, because the clear crisp sentences were so easy to memorize. But even today, in this age of learning, proverbs are household sayings, and they exert a mighty influence.

2. *The Home of Proverbs*

Without doubt, the East is the original home of proverbs. Educated men say that nearly all the proverbs of Europe can be traced to the East. The finest and grandest collection of proverbs in the world is the book bearing that name in the Bible. And the Bible is an Eastern book. But this Book is more than a collection of human wisdom. It is Divine wisdom intended to rule our daily life. And we neglect it at our peril. It is designed to teach us how intensely practical godliness is.

As we read Proverbs, it will be evident to him that Solomon gathered from many sources. He was the editor of all and the author of some. Some Bible students have noticed that there is a change of the person of the pronouns from second to third. They conclude that the proverbs written in the second person were taught him by his teachers, while those written in the third person were written by Solomon himself.

There is a difference between the proverbs in the book of Proverbs and proverbs in other writings:

1. In the book of Proverbs we can find no unscientific statements or inaccurate observations.

2. Proverbs are on a high moral plane. The best that can be said of other writings is that they are unmoral.

3. The Proverbs do not contradict, while man's proverbs are often in opposition to each other. Example: "Look before you leap," vs. "He who hesitates is lost."

1. Name of the Book:

Proverbs —

"A proverb is a short sentence conveying a moral truth in a concise and pointed form." — "Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience."

2. Author:

This book was written by inspiration of God mostly by Solomon, but possibly with many human writers.

Notice how the book opens: "The proverbs of Solomon" —1:1. Solomon the king was famous for his wisdom and riches. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (see I Kings 4:31–32).

The greater part, if not all, of this book was written by Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1; cf. II Chronicles 1:10; Eccl. 12:9; I Kings 4:32). *Agur*, "collector" (30:1) may well be another name for Solomon, and *Lemuel*, "devoted to God" (31:1) is a symbolic name for Solomon [see Strong's Concordance].

Many years after Solomon, the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, made further selection from that vast store of proverbs (Prov. 25:1). The book of Proverbs was then complete as we have it today.

3. Date:

Dates of Writing: Would be during the lifetime of Solomon. Solomon reigned from around 971 to 931 B.C.

4. Analysis of Proverbs:

(1) Solomon *set in order* (Eccl. 12:9). Is there any order to be discerned in this book? There is no *disorder* in the book of Proverbs.

- Three divisions are marked by the phrase: "The Proverbs of Solomon" (1:1; 10:1; 25:1).
- The book tells a story. It presents a picture of a young man starting out in life. His first lessons are given in 1:7. Two schools offer him their services, and both of them send him their literature. One is the school of *Wisdom*, while the other is the school of *Folly*, the school for fools. (From J. Vernon McGee)
- Somewhere among the Proverbs in this book is a Proverb which gives a thumbnail sketch of every character of the Bible. In the same manner, there is a thumbnail sketch of all of our friends and acquaintances.

(2) Structure — The literary structure is mostly in the form of couplets. The two clauses of the couplet are generally related to each other by what has been termed Parallelism. See Introduction to the books of Poetry, pages 6 – 8.

- 1. Synonymous Parallelism
- 2. Antithetic Parallelism
- 3. Synthetic Parallelism

6. Theme of Proverbs:

Godliness is intensely practical.

7. Key Verse:

Proverbs 9:10 [You should know this verse.]

See also Proverbs 3:13.

Note: When considering Wisdom in Proverbs, relate this to I Corinthians 1:30. Wisdom is personified in Proverbs 8. Who is the Person?

BIBLE SYNTHESIS III
(Bible Survey)

Outline of Proverbs

- Introduction** —Prov. 1:1–19
- 1. Wisdom Calls** —Prov. 1:20 — 9:18
- (1) Wisdom’s first call — to salvation —Prov. 1:20 — 4:27
- (1) *Folly’s first call —to condemnation* —Prov. 5
- (2) *Folly’s second call —to poverty* —Prov. 6
- (3) *Folly’s third call —to death* —Prov. 7
- (2) Wisdom’s second call —to wealth —Prov. 8
- (3) Wisdom’s third call — to life —Prov. 9
- 2. Wisdom Contrasts** —Prov. 10 — 15
- A series of Proverbs contrasting wisdom and folly.*
- 3. Wisdom’s Counsels** —Prov. 16 — 31
- A series of Proverbs on practical matters that are not stated in contrasts as a whole.*
- From W. W. Wiersbe

Supplemental Outline #1

- 1. Introduction** —Prov. 1:1–5
- (1) Object and result of a study of this book
- (2) Who will take heed?
- 2. Proverbs FOR a Son** —Prov. 1:6 — 9:18
- (Fatherly Counsel, advice) —Fourteen addresses, all introduced by, “My son”:
- (1) Prov. 1:8
- (2) Prov. 1:10
- (3) Prov. 1:15
- (4) Prov. 2:1
- (5) Prov. 3:1
- (6) Prov. 3:11
- (7) Prov. 3:21
- (8) Prov. 4:1

- (9) Prov. 4:10
- (10) Prov. 4:20
- (11) Prov. 5:1
- (12) Prov. 6:1
- (13) Prov. 6:20
- (14) Prov. 7:1

- 3. Proverbs BY Solomon** —Prov. 10:1 — 19:19
 Wiersbe calls these “Wisdom’s Contrasts.” Notice that it does not use the second person (*Thy, Thee*) but the third person (*He, Him, His, They, Them*).
- 4. Proverbs FOR a Son** —Prov. 19:20 — 24:34
 (Again, Fatherly Counsel, advice) —Six addresses beginning with, “My Son”:
 (1) Prov. 19:27
 (2) Prov. 23:15
 (3) Prov. 23:19
 (4) Prov. 23:26
 (5) Prov. 24:13
 (6) Prov. 24:21
- 5. Proverbs BY Solomon** —Prov. 25:1 — 26:28
 Copied by the men of Hezekiah from the royal library.
- 6. Proverbs FOR a Son** —Prov. 27:1 — 29:27
 Begins without any formal introduction.
 Note again, “My Son,” in Prov. 27:11.
- 7. Proverbs by Agur (“collector”)** —Prov. 30:1–33
 Agur means “collector.” It could refer to Solomon as a collector of Proverbs.
 Prov. 30:4 is “God Almighty’s great question spoken out of eternity into time.”
- 8. Proverbs by a Mother** —Prov. 31:1–31
 Assorted bits of wise advice, and also praise for the virtuous wife.
 —Adapted from *The Outlined Bible*, by Robert Lee, London

Supplemental Outline #2

(Notice the differences between the outlines. Proverbs is not easy to outline.)

- 1. Wisdom and Folly Contrasted** —Prov. 1 — 9
The boy in the home starting out in life —Prov. 1.
The boy begins to grow up and moves beyond the circle of the home —Prov. 2.
Although the child is not a boy who has entered the big, bad and mad world, he is still counseled to remember the instruction of his father —Prov. 4.
The young man is counseled to live a pure life for the sake of his home —Prov. 5 — 7.
The young man is ready to go to college. The school of Wisdom and the school of fools bid for his application —Prov. 8.
The young man matriculates in the school of Wisdom —Prov. 9.

- 2. Proverbs of Solomon** —Prov. 10 — 24
Written and set in order by himself
The school bell rings. Notice the guidelines for the young student —Prov. 10.

- 3. Proverbs of Solomon** —Prov. 25 — 29
Set in order by men of Hezekiah

- 4. Oracle of Agur, Unknown Sage** —Prov. 30

- 5. Proverbs of a Mother to Lemuel** —Prov. 31