

## Wisdom Literature

Series: The Bible

May 15, 2022

Thank you again for being part of worship.

I came across this story on Wednesday; I wish I had found it the previous week.

The story goes of a pastor who entered a Sunday School class as the lesson was in progress and asked, "Who broke down the walls of Jericho?"

A boy answered, "Not me, sir."

The pastor turned to the teacher and asked, "Is this the usual behavior in this class?"

The teacher replied, "I believe this boy is an honest boy, and I really don't think he did it."

Leaving the room, the pastor sought out a deacon and explained what had happened. The deacon said, "I have known both the boy and the teacher for several years, and neither of them would do such a thing."

By this time the pastor was heartsick and reported the incident to the Christian Education Committee. They said, "We see no point in making an issue out of this thing. Let's pay the bill for the damage to the walls and charge it to upkeep. Anyway, our insurance may even cover it."<sup>1</sup>

What's funny about this? It highlights the lack of biblical literacy among even church folks. "Who broke down the walls of Jericho?" Myra did when she was backing up her car.

Today, we continue our series "The Bible" as we look at the entirety of the Canon, recognizing the overarching themes and message of Scripture.

On page 4 of your bulletin is a graphic representation of the Bible. Like a bookshelf, the Bible has many sections: Law, History, Poetry, the Prophets (both Major and Minor) are in the Old Testament. In the New Testament are the Gospels, a single book on Church History, then the Letters written by Paul, followed by General Letters, and concluding with the Book of Revelation.

Today, we are going to take a 30,000 foot look at the third section, Poetry, or what is commonly called Wisdom Literature. We will ask three questions: What are the mega themes of the section? What is the key verse of that section? And how does it point to Jesus, the Son of God? I am so glad you have joined us on this spectacular journey!

The Wisdom Literature includes 5 books of Scripture that are very unique in the Bible. The dates of the writings are not as certain as the other sections. The section does not span a time period

Let's review them:

First, we have Job.

Job, the book, deals with the problem of suffering as it tells the story of Job, the man of God. It is a gripping drama of riches-to-rags-to-riches, a theological treatise about suffering and divine sovereignty, and a picture of faith that endures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Downloaded from sermoncentral.com

<sup>2</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Job Introduction

Job is the first of the poetic books in the Hebrew Bible. Some believe this was the first book of the Bible to be written, as its events may have occurred during the time of the patriarchs, approximately 2000-1800 B.C.

Second is the Book of Psalms, the hymnal of the Bible. It is filled with poetry for the expression of praise, worship, and confession to God. David wrote almost half of the 150 psalms,<sup>3</sup> including the most famous psalm, Psalm 23.

48 hymns in our hymnal are inspired by or based on the Psalms, including our opening hymn “O Worship the King,” as well as our chorus during this series “Thy Word is a Lamp unto My Feet,” “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” and “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.”

The third book of Wisdom Literature is of course. Proverbs. Solomon wrote most of this book, with two other guys<sup>4</sup> contributing some of the later sections. The purpose of Proverbs is to teach people how to attain wisdom, discipline, and a prudent life, and how to do what is right, just, and fair – in short, to apply divine wisdom to daily life and to provide moral instruction.<sup>5</sup>

Next is Ecclesiastes. Also written by Solomon, it is meant to spare future generations the bitterness of learning through their own experience that life is meaningless apart from God.<sup>6</sup>

The Wisdom Literature section concludes with the Song of Songs, also called the Song of Solomon. Another book by Solomon, it tells of the love between a bridegroom (King Solomon) and his bride, to affirm the sanctity of marriage, and to picture God’s love for His people.<sup>7</sup>

There are 7 Mega Themes from the Wisdom Literature that I want to highlight.

### **First, Suffering**

In the story of Job, through no fault of his own, he lost his wealth, children, and health. Even his friends were convinced that Job had brought this suffering upon himself. For Job, the greatest trial was not the pain or the loss; it was not being able to understand why God allowed him to suffer.

We feel the same way when we endure suffering for unknown reasons. It is a very difficult matter to understand when God permits affliction or loss to come into our lives. Our humanity wants to cry out, “Why me God? I love you and faithfully serve you. Why did you permit this sorrow to happen to me?”

Suffering can be, but is not always, a penalty for sin, but another reason for affliction is to make us into instruments which will be of greater use to God. For example, a lump of iron ore is violently ripped from its comfortable place in the earth, shipped to a place far away, exposed to melting heat, poured out into a mold, squeezed by rollers, smashed and pounded in a forge, subjected to electric shock to bond other metals to it and later scraped against grindstones to give it a final shape. The resulting screwdriver or exquisite piece of tableware could never have existed except for the difficult experiences it endured along the way.

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<sup>3</sup> 73 psalms. Asaph wrote 12; the sons of Korah wrote 9; Solomon wrote 2; Heman (with the sons of Korah), Ethan, and Moses each wrote one; 51 psalms are anonymous. The New Testament ascribes two of the anonymous psalms (Psalms 2 and 95) to David (see Acts 4:25; Hebrews 4:7).

<sup>4</sup> Agur and Lemuel

<sup>5</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Proverbs Introduction

<sup>6</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Ecclesiastes Introduction

<sup>7</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Song of Songs Introduction

Those who love God are not exempt from trouble. Although we may not be able to understand fully the pain we experience, it can lead us to rediscover God.

**The second Mega Theme is Satan.**

Few passages in the Bible talk about Satan. The Book of Job gives us insights into the deceiver's work, who attempted to drive a wedge between Job and God by getting Job to believe that God's governing of the world was not just and good. In Job, we learn that Satan was limited to what God allows.

We must learn to recognize but not fear Satan's attacks, because Satan cannot exceed the limits that God sets. Don't let any experience drive a wedge between you and God. Although you can't control how Satan may attack, you can always choose how you will respond when it happens, especial when we know "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."<sup>8</sup>

**Third, Trusting**

God alone knew the purpose behind Job's suffering, and yet He never explained it to Job. In spite of this, Job never gave up on God—even in the midst of suffering. He never placed his hope in his experience, his wisdom, his friends, or his wealth. Job focused on God.

Job showed the kind of trust we are to have. When everything is stripped away, we are to recognize that God is all we ever really had. We should not demand that God explain everything. God gives us himself, but not all the details of his plans. We must remember that this life, with all its pain, is not our final destiny.<sup>9</sup>

**The fourth Mega Theme is Praise.**

Psalms are songs of praise to God as our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Praise is recognizing, appreciating, and expressing God's greatness. Focusing our thoughts on God moves us to praise Him. The more we know Him, the more we can appreciate what He has done for us.<sup>10</sup>

**Fifth is Thankfulness.**

We are grateful to God for His personal concern, help, and mercy. Not only does He protect, guide, and forgive us, but His creation provides everything we need. When we realize how we benefit from knowing God, we can fully express our thanks to Him. By thanking Him often, we develop spontaneity in our prayer life.<sup>11</sup>

**The sixth Mega Theme is Emptiness.**

Solomon shows how empty it is to pursue the pleasures that this life has to offer and the futility of our own efforts, abilities, and wisdom in this life. Instead, we must seek to have a relationship with the eternal God and have faith in Him as the only sound basis for living. The search for pleasure, wealth, and success is ultimately disappointing, and there is no lasting reward or benefit in hard work without God.

Nothing in the world can fill the emptiness and satisfy the deep longings in our restless hearts. The cure for emptiness is to center on God. His love also can fill the emptiness of human experience. Fear God throughout your life, and fill your life with serving God and others rather than with selfish pleasures.

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<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4:4 (KJV)

<sup>9</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Job Introduction

<sup>10</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Psalms Introduction

<sup>11</sup> Life Application Study Bible Psalms Introduction

As for work, work accepted as an assignment from God can be seen as a gift. God gives you abilities and opportunities to work so that you can use your time well.<sup>12</sup>

**The final Mega Theme is Wisdom.**

God wants His people to be wise. Two kinds of people portray two contrasting paths of life. The fool is the wicked, stubborn person who hates or ignores God. The wise person seeks to know and love God. When we choose God's way, He grants us wisdom. His Word, the Bible, leads us to live right, have right relationships, and make right decisions.<sup>13</sup>

There are a number of key verses we could highlight in the Wisdom Literature. I almost picked the last verse of Psalms:

*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.*<sup>14</sup>

But, instead, I picked the next to last verse in Ecclesiastes, and I like how Eugene Peterson paraphrased it in the Message Bible:

*The last and final word is this: Fear God. Do what he tells you.*<sup>15</sup>

Just two things: Fear God and Do what He says.

To fear God means to know who He is, revere Him, and love Him. To do what He says, to keep His commandments, is to obey the Great Commandment: Love God and love people.<sup>16</sup>

The final question we are asking in this series is How Wisdom Literature points to Jesus. These books of Scripture speak a great deal about the coming Messiah. Let's review 5.

**First, the Messiah would be rejected by his own people.**

Psalm 69:8 reads:

*I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons;*<sup>17</sup>

John's Gospel says:

*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*<sup>18</sup>

Later in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, it says that Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him before His resurrection.<sup>19</sup>

**Second, the Messiah would be betrayed.**

Psalm 41:9 predicts:

*Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely, the one who shared my food, has turned against me.*<sup>20</sup>

We know that Judas betrayed Jesus during the Last Supper. In fact, Jesus gave him food just before he left to retrieve the guards.

**Third, the Messiah would be falsely accused.**

Psalm 35:11 reads:

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<sup>12</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Proverbs Introduction

<sup>13</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Proverbs Introduction

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 150:6 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:13 (MSG)

<sup>16</sup> See Mark 12:28-31

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 69:8 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> John 1:11 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup> See John 7:5

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 41:9 (NLT2)

*Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about.*<sup>21</sup>

During Jesus' trial:

*...the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could put him to death. But they couldn't find any. Many false witnesses spoke against him, but they contradicted each other. Finally, some men stood up and gave this false testimony: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.'" But even then they didn't get their stories straight!*<sup>22</sup>

If Jesus was tried in any other court, He would have been acquitted and released.

**Fourth, the Messiah would be given vinegar to drink.**

Psalm 69:21 reads:

*... [they] gave me vinegar for my thirst.*<sup>23</sup>

Only God could predict what the Roman soldiers would do hundreds of years later on Calvary.

*A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.*<sup>24</sup>

**Five, the Messiah would be resurrected from the dead.**

Psalm 16:10 says:

*For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.*<sup>25</sup>

Psalm 49:15 adds:

*But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of the grave.*<sup>26</sup>

Psalms predicted the resurrection of Jesus.

Now, I know there is a 6<sup>th</sup> line. On that line, I want you to write **Psalm 22**. I want you to hear these words in the context of the crucifixion, those hours Jesus hung on the cross. Now, listen to what David wrote a thousand years before:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?... All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: [Those who mock me say,] "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a [sunbaked clay], and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.*<sup>27</sup>

A thousand years before it happened, David wrote about Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for you and me.

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<sup>21</sup> Psalm 35:11 (NLT2)

<sup>22</sup> Mark 14:55-59 (NLT2)

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 69:21 (NIV)

<sup>24</sup> John 19:29 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 16:10 (NLT2)

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 49:15 (NLT2)

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 22:1,7-8, 14-18 (NIV)