

Survey of the Old Testament

Proverbs

1. It is important to remember that a proverb is an axiomatic saying (adage, maxim, axiom). That is, it is something that is generally true, but not necessarily always true. There could be exceptions to it (e.g., 10:3-4).
2. The proverbs were written mostly by Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1). Thus they had to be written in the 10th century B.C. (the 900's). Solomon wrote about 3000 proverbs (1 Kgs. 4:32). There are about 800 proverbs in this book.
3. At least some of the proverbs were copied by the men of Hezekiah (25:1), which would make the copying and compiling of these proverbs in the 700's B.C.
4. Some of the proverbs are attributed simply to the “wise men” (22:17; 24:23).
5. Some of the sayings are attributed to Agur, the son of Jakeh (30:1), about whom we know nothing.
6. Some are attributed to King Lemuel (31:1-9), about whom we know nothing. We do know that he was not a king in Israel. The acrostic about the virtuous woman (31:10-31) seems to be set apart from the sayings of Lemuel. Some suggest that he did not write it.
7. The theme or motto of the book of Proverbs is that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (1:7) and the beginning of wisdom (9:10).
8. 1:8 – 9:18 consist of longer, connected lessons rather than short, pithy sayings. This material seems to fall into two sections: instructions of a father to his son and wisdom personified. These two parts are interspersed
9. There is a significant contrast between the fool and the wise throughout the book. Things are a little more complicated than that, as a consideration of the terms for the foolish are considered more closely: (Caution is needed, since these terms can be interchangeable). Note 1:22.
 - a. The simple ones are those who do not know the right path to take, and like it that way (cf. 7:7; 14:15).
 - b. The fools are those who know the right path, but refuse to take it. They are not ignorant; they simply choose to disobey that which they know (cf. 15:5).
 - c. The scorners are those who know the right path and refuse to take it. Further, they mock the right way, and they try to upset the faith of the faithful (21:24; 22:10).