

# **Proverbs**

## **Divine Wisdom**

Lesson #4 for January 24, 2015

Scriptures: Proverbs 8:1-21,22-31,32-36; 9:1-18; Matthew 16:26; Genesis 1:31.

1. In this lesson we will discuss a new kind of wisdom. And this wisdom is particularly exciting. It seems to be consistent with truth and even a personification of truth. The idea that truth could be absolute is not widely accepted in contemporary thinking. Many people in our day believe that truth is relative, culturally determined and dependent upon one's background.
2. But, from a biblical perspective, truth is absolute. There is only one truth. We may have different views of truth; but truth, ultimately, is consistent for the entire universe. And truth can never be inconsistent with itself. If we could see it for ourselves, would we know the truth?
3. How do we discover truth and wisdom? Does truth speak to us in some way? How does that happen? Do we learn truth through experience? Through God's Word? How do we actually determine what is truth?
4. Read Proverbs 8:1-21. Wisdom promises a great deal. It promises to make the immature mature and to make the foolish wise. It claims to be well-informed and plain to those who think clearly. It is more valuable than gold or silver. Those who honor God will hate evil. Wisdom hates pride, arrogance, evil ways, and false words. Wisdom gives wealth to those who love it, filling their houses with treasures.
5. So, what is the relationship among wisdom, truth, and salvation? Proverbs 8 suggests to us that wisdom—as the personification of the Son of God—is crying out in every possible way to communicate with human beings. Jesus indicated that getting to know the truth about Him is a matter of life and death. How well are we doing at getting to know God?
6. In our days of mass communication through radio, television, social media, etc., why is it that so many people still live in ignorance, folly, and darkness? Read Matthew 16:26. Some of these people may be very wealthy; but, no earthly treasure of any kind can buy salvation.
7. Read Proverbs 8:22-31. Wisdom—best expressed through God's Word—was there when the world was created. There are many similarities in Proverbs 8 to the creation account in Genesis 1-2. Didn't God Himself use wisdom in the creation process? Therefore, if wisdom is a fundamental part of the universe and necessary for existence, shouldn't we do our best to learn as much as possible about it? Does *wisdom* mean to do what is right because it is right?
8. Would it be correct to say that wisdom is a part of the very nature of God Himself? If wisdom existed before the universe was created, Who was present? Father? Son? Holy Spirit? Angels? Could it be possible that *wisdom* in this context is a code word for Jesus Christ Himself?
9. So, how are we supposed to gain this wisdom? Is it something we can get by working at it? Or, is wisdom acquired only through Revelation? John 1:9 tells us that Jesus is the true Light. Symbolically understood, *light* could be parallel to *wisdom* because it illuminates what we are looking at, and it helps us to understand things.
10. Following each day of creation as described in Genesis 1, God saw that "it was good," (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31) and in verse 31 after the creation of humans, God said, "It was very good." (KJV) The word *good* there implies a relationship and the idea of enjoyment. So, God paused to enjoy His creation. (Genesis 2:1-3) Does that teach us anything about how the Sabbath is to be experienced? Aren't we supposed to enjoy the Sabbath?
11. Read Proverbs 8:30-31. Notice that Wisdom also rejoiced over the creation of the human race. If we have worked diligently during the week—faithfully caring out our responsibilities, would it be correct for us to rejoice as we look back with joy, pleasure, and satisfaction on our work?
12. There are numerous passages in the Bible suggesting that Jesus Christ was involved in creation. See Colossians 1:15-17; 2:3; Revelation 3:14; and John 1:1-14. We know that

mankind has become shorter and smaller and has deteriorated since leaving the Garden of Eden. Aren't you encouraged to know that the One who created us in the beginning has creative power to restore us to the Eden-like condition at the second coming?

13. Read Matthew 6:33. What does it mean to "Seek first the kingdom of God"? How do we do that? Do you find that when you try to follow God, He continues to bless you?
14. What was Christ's role in creation?

The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." John 1:1-2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. . . . And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22-30.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.1; *Christ Triumphant* 7.4-6.

15. If Wisdom is to be associated with creation, what does that imply about those who believe in evolution? Scientists believe that by studying astronomy and biology and by using particle accelerators to tear apart atoms, they can discover where we came from. By contrast, the Bible says that we can only learn about our origins through the revealed will of God. How many important things can you think of that we would not know anything about if it were not for God's revealed will in Scripture? Is there any way we could discover the meaning of Christ's death on the cross? Is it obvious from nature why we should worship on the seventh-day Sabbath? Could we guess that there is going to be a second coming of Christ?
16. If God was really happy and really enjoyed that Sabbath at the end of the creation week, does that tell us anything about how we should observe the Sabbath?
17. After studying Proverbs 8, do you think it is fair to consider the divine Wisdom mentioned there as a reference to Jesus Christ Himself, the Co-Creator with the Father? Try to imagine what it would have been like to watch the three Members of the Godhead creating our world. How did the Father work with and through the Son and the Holy Spirit?
18. Seventh-day Adventists have come to believe that Christ has always been the Mediator between the infinite God and His creatures. He walked among angels as an Angel—Michael the Archangel. He walked on this earth as a Human Being—Jesus—among humans. What does this tell us about His mediatorial role? How did Jesus Christ relate to Adam and Eve before the fall? Was He truly *Immanuel*, that is, "God with us"? Do you think together They—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—and all the angels had a wonderful time on that first Sabbath? The Hebrew in Proverbs 8 implies a vibrant, even playful, joy and fellowship among the Members of the Godhead at creation. Does your picture of God allow for that kind of enjoyment?
19. Many of us have not thought of Proverbs 8 as referring specifically to Jesus Christ Himself. However, in the early centuries of Christianity, many of the early church fathers thought that Proverbs 8:22-31 was referring to Christ. That interpretation persisted until modern times.
20. Read John 1:1-3. In the New Testament, Christ is referred to as "the Word." What is the relationship between "the Word" and the Divine Wisdom in Proverbs 8? Think of the process by which a word works. An idea is formulated in one person's mind; a word is formed by his throat, tongue, and mouth. Vibrations pass through the air to the ear of a second person, and those vibrations are interpreted by his brain and may become a thought. Thus, communication takes place. In how many ways has Jesus Christ facilitated communication between God and His creatures?

21. In Proverbs 1-7, wisdom is extolled and sometimes even personified. But, a careful reading of Proverbs 8 suggests that it can only apply to the Second Person of the Godhead. And that application begins with His existence before this world was created.

22. Again read Proverbs 8:12-21 and also consider 8:32-36.

The references to Wisdom in Proverbs 8 denote the second member of the Godhead at the time of Creation. This is clear, first, because Wisdom is described with the very prerogatives that are, elsewhere in Scripture, reserved for Yahweh alone: (1) Giver of life and death (*vss. 35, 36; compare 14:27*); (2) Source of legitimate government (*vss. 15, 16; compare, for example, Num. 11:16, 17*); (3) the One who is to be sought after, found, and called (*vs. 17; compare Deut. 4:29*); (4) the One who loves and is to be loved (*vs. 17; compare, for example, Neh. 13:26*); (5) the Giver of wealth (*vss. 18-21; compare 1 Chron. 29:12*); and (6) the Source of divine revelation (*vss. 6-10, 19, 32, 34; compare 29:18; 30:3-5*). (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, page 50*)

23. In Proverbs 8:12, the first phrase states, "I am Wisdom." This is grammatically parallel to the Hebrew name *Yahweh* used frequently throughout the Old Testament. (See Ezekiel 12:25; 35:12; Zechariah 10:6; Malachi 3:6.) So, here we see an expression such as *wisdom* being referred to as if it were a defined, distinct Personality or Person. Once again, Ellen White clearly understood that the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 referred to the pre-incarnate Son of God.

"Before Abraham was, I am." [John 8:58] Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. The message He gave to Moses to give to the children of Israel was, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." [Exodus 3:14] The prophet Micah writes of Him, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, tho thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of Thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." [Micah 5:2] Through Solomon Christ declared . . . [Proverbs 8:22-30 quoted]. In speaking of His preexistence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900 par 13-15; *Ev* 615.2; *FLB* 46.3; *LHU* 17.7; *7ABC* 440.4; *TA* 24.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

24. Again read Proverbs 8:32-36. In these verses, *wisdom* takes on a very solemn but happy note. If we seek wisdom, we will find life and we will be happy. But, those who hate wisdom love death. Does it make you happy to obey God? The word *blessed* means happy. Compare Psalm 119:1-2. But, we need to recognize that these are not one-time events. When we talk about keeping God's ways, this requires continuous effort. Daily study of God's Word and looking unto Jesus is our assignment. Read Luke 11:28.

25. The first phrase of Proverbs 8:30 further describes Wisdom as an Architect or Master Craftsmen. This is further evidence that it is referring to Christ as the Co-Creator with the Father. Didn't Christ help to design and even build this universe?

26. Was Proverbs 8 specifically being considered by New Testament writers in places like John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:24,30; Colossians 1:15-16; and Hebrews 1:1-4? There seemed to have been no doubt in the minds of the New Testament writers that Christ was intimately involved in the process of creation.

27. Read Proverbs 8:22-26. A superficial reading of these words might suggest that Christ was at some time literally born. However, the Hebrew, does not give that implication. The Hebrew form used there refers to Someone being installed or placed in a new role. Psalm 2 suggests that Christ would become the everlasting King of the universe after His incarnation? As we have seen, Proverbs 8 seems to point backwards to the pre-incarnate Christ installed in a new office at the beginning of creation. What was Christ's new role at the beginning of creation? Surely, it must have been His role as Mediator or Friend to God's creatures, both angels and humans.

28. While Ellen White spoke quite extensively about Christ's work with angels as Michael the Archangel, are there passages in the Old Testament that support this idea? Did Jesus ever appear as an *angel* or *messenger* of the Lord even here on this earth? See Genesis 16:13; 18-19; 22:24; 48:16; Exodus 23:20-21; 32-33; and Judges 13:3,13,17,18,22, and so forth.
29. After studying this lesson, have you been able to grasp the idea that the only true wisdom is that which comes from God Himself?
30. Would things be different if the Father had come to our earth to live among us instead of the Son? (See John 14:9.)

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, veiling His glory and humbling Himself, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed in unfolding its record of His own condescending grace. In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. But language seems to be so feeble! I refrain, and with John exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" [1 John 3:1].—*Letter 83*, 1895; *21MR* 393.1; *TMK* 338.4. [Content in brackets is added.]

31. Read Proverbs 9:1. Are the seven pillars in the house an allusion to the seven days of creation week? Proverbs 30:4 also alludes to God's Son. Isn't that another clue?
32. Contrast Proverbs 9:1-6 with Proverbs 9:13-18. Notice the stark differences between wisdom and folly.

1. Wisdom is efficient and is involved in Creation: seven verbs are used to describe her actions there (*vss. 1-3*). The seven pillars she has hewn (*vs. 1*) allude to the seven days of Creation. Folly, in contrast, sits and does nothing, just pretending to be someone when in fact "she is simple, and knows nothing" (*vs. 13, NKJV*).

2. Although wisdom and folly call the same audience (*note the identical vss. 4 and 16*), what they provide is essentially different. Wisdom invites her guests to eat the bread and drink the drink that she has prepared (*vs. 5*). Folly offers nothing to eat or drink; she simply boasts about stolen provisions (*vs. 17*).

3. Wisdom calls us to forsake foolishness and, therefore, to live. Folly is more tolerant; she does not demand that we forsake anything, but the result is death. Those who follow wisdom will be advancing; they will "go in the way of understanding" (*vs. 6, NKJV*). Those who follow folly will be static, and they will "not know" (*vs. 18, NKJV*). (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, January 22.)

33. Read Proverbs 9:7-9. Is it clear from these verses why the wise are wise and the wicked are foolish? The wise learn. The key to wisdom seems to be humility. Is that why Jesus exhorted us to become like little children? (See Matthew 18:3.) The most important characteristic of a child is his capacity to grow and learn. Biblical *obedience* means a humble willingness to listen and learn.
34. Someday, we will be able to see a panorama showing the process by which God created our world. It will be a marvelous revelation. But, for now, try to imagine what it might have been like. Do you think God was enjoying Himself? The Hebrew word for *rejoice* in Proverbs 8:30-31 can imply laughing, sport, or even play. Does your picture of God allow for that?

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