

PROVERBS READING PROJECT:

Chapter 30 Commentary

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Proverbs 30

¹*The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance.*

This man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal:

This is another distinct section of Proverbs originally written by a non-Israelite man called Agur who was likely one of “the men of the east.” Solomon was not an arrogant thinker who spurned true wisdom written by others. In fact, he searched for such gems of wisdom there and in the incredible creation of all God has made...

I Kings 4:29-34 – “*And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. ³⁰ Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. ³² He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. ³³ Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. ³⁴ And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.”*

Notice the reference that his wisdom excelled the wisdom of the men of the East, etc. A true wise man or wise woman listens to people and collects the bits of wisdom that they hear or read. That’s a great lesson for us. Notice also, Solomon was an expert naturalist, analyzing the lessons of creatures and plants. An important source of God’s own wisdom can be learned from the way He created things. The more we study God’s handiwork, the wiser we can become.

Some proverbs in the Book were “coined” by Solomon as inspired by God, but others were the product of the minds of both his ancients and contemporaries. God inspired that collection process.

As you study wisdom, keep your eye and ear open for how others express a point of true wisdom. Collect those as added layers of evidence of the inspired wisdom God guided Solomon to seek out.

Notice points of wisdom that attracted King Solomon’s attention:

²*Surely I am more stupid than any man,
And do not have the understanding of a man.*

³ *I neither learned wisdom
Nor have knowledge of the Holy One.*

A foundation of humility leads to wisdom, and by contrast, arrogance blocks wisdom. Notice that Agur, though likely not a Hebrew, recognized the existence of God.

⁴ *Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has bound the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is His name, and what is His Son's name,
If you know?*

A profound question expressing a truth know fully only when Jesus Christ was born as the Son of God in New Testament times. This amounts to a prophecy about Christ.

⁵ *Every word of God is pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*

⁶ *Do not add to His words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.*

The great thinker that Solomon studied understood the power of God's words—and later His complete Word we know as the Bible. How much do we appreciate the entire Word of God in our lives?

⁷ *Two things I request of You
(Deprive me not before I die):*

⁸ *Remove falsehood and lies far from me;
Give me neither poverty nor riches—
Feed me with the food allotted to me;*

⁹ *Lest I be full and deny You,
And say, "Who is the Lord?"
Or lest I be poor and steal,
And profane the name of my God.*

This profound section of Agur asks God to help him be a man of truth, to live a life of contented moderation and to always honor God's name. Do we so honor our God today?

¹⁰ *Do not malign a servant to his master,
Lest he curse you, and you be found guilty.*

The context changes as it appears that Solomon sought Agur's proverbs that struck a positive chord in his life and times and the challenges he was facing as a prince and then as king. Lesson, speak well, as far as you can, of about everybody.

¹¹ *There is a generation that curses its father,
And does not bless its mother.*

¹² *There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes,
Yet is not washed from its filthiness.*

¹³ *There is a generation—oh, how lofty are their eyes!*

And their eyelids are lifted up.

*¹⁴ There is a generation whose teeth are like swords,
And whose fangs are like knives,
To devour the poor from off the earth,
And the needy from among men.*

This “generation” section applies to every generation of mankind. Each one has a dark side. There was clear application among the Baby Boomer generation as they came of age, and likewise to all generations before and after. This is true for all the proverbs of God’s wisdom, they are timeless.

*¹⁵ The leech has two daughters—
Give and Give!*

The “leech” refers to the blood-sucking amphibian that doctors of old used to take blood from a sick person. It is like the way of man that wants others to give and give, so it can take and take. Herbert Armstrong summarized God’s way as the way of Give and Satan’s (and mankind’s) way as the way of Get.

*There are three things that are never satisfied,
Four never say, “Enough!”:*

*¹⁶ The grave,
The barren womb,
The earth that is not satisfied with water—
And the fire never says, “Enough!”*

Using the numbers of “three things” and “four” describes how life goes from one thing to another. It alludes to the desire for children (ref. to the barren womb) and the process of living and dying from the Garden of Eden on. It’s a statement of the way things are, but anticipates when eternal life in the Kingdom of God will become the ultimate “enough.”

*¹⁷ The eye that mocks his father,
And scorns obedience to his mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,
And the young eagles will eat it.*

Even gentile cultures understand elements of God’s law, the lesson here being “Honor your father and mother...”

*¹⁸ There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Yes, four which I do not understand:*

*¹⁹ The way of an eagle in the air,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea,
And the way of a man with a virgin.*

Before our technology gave us a clue to how an eagle (or other bird) found its way across the sky; before man learned how a snake with no arms or legs could climb a rock; before the landlubber could figure out how a sailor could navigate his ship in the vast ocean... there was

always that mysterious and “wonderful” thing called “true love.” The whole proverb was constructed to create the wonder for the fourth point. And it still stands true today!

*²⁰ This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
And says, “I have done no wickedness.”*

In contrast to the last proverb, this one expresses the perverted, evil aspect of human nature regarding adultery. Nobody naturally wants to admit guilt (see Adam and Eve near the two trees in the Garden of Eden). The true wisdom is that we all have that same carnal, selfish nature which we, however, are striving to thoroughly overcome!

*²¹ For three things the earth is perturbed,
Yes, for four it cannot bear up:
²² For a servant when he reigns,
A fool when he is filled with food,
²³ A hateful woman when she is married,
And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.*

“For three things and for four” ... is a literary technique to highlight, in this case, the way things should not be. Although they happen in this “present, evil world,” they will not in the Kingdom of God on earth.

*²⁴ There are four things which are little on the earth,
But they are exceedingly wise:
²⁵ The ants are a people not strong,
Yet they prepare their food in the summer;
²⁶ The rock badgers are a feeble folk,
Yet they make their homes in the crags;
²⁷ The locusts have no king,
Yet they all advance in ranks;
²⁸ The spider skillfully grasps with its hands,
And it is in kings’ palaces.*

A classic lesson in drawing wisdom from aspects of God’s creation. Study nature and learn that the wisdom is applicable to today and every age. God made all creatures and gave them characteristics which are enlightening for mankind in every age of history.

*²⁹ There are three things which are majestic in pace,
Yes, four which are stately in walk:
³⁰ A lion, which is mighty among beasts
And does not turn away from any;
³¹ A greyhound,
A male goat also,
And a king whose troops are with him.*

Three animals—the male lion, the greyhound (or a strutting rooster depending on how it’s translated) and a strutting he-goat—that give the appearance of a king with his troops – those

who enable him to project power. Thus, there is a great dignity and honor in God who has all power.

*³² If you have been foolish in exalting yourself,
Or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth.*

*³³ For as the churning of milk produces butter,
And wringing the nose produces blood,
So the forcing of wrath produces strife.*

Like milk to butter and a twisted nose to bleed so comes the downfall and misery of arrogance and vanity. Conclusion: be humble and learn the incredible wisdom of God's Word!