

Divine Wisdom

Memory Text: “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.” (Proverbs 8:22)

Illustration/Setting The Stage: Fundamental to learning and practicing what is right and wrong (as biblical wisdom teaches the difference between right and wrong and applies the right to the life) is the acceptance of the fact that there is a right and wrong. And if there is a right and wrong (and there is) then we live in a world of absolute truth. It’s hard to get around the fact that reality is reality. Gravity teaches us that truth is not subject to multiple choice. We cannot choose our own reality, especially if we care about the results.

The idea of absolute truth butts head with today’s thinking that says, “If it feels right, then it must be right.” Drinking some Jack Daniels might feel right at the time (although I don’t know why anyone can say that when it burns like crazy going down) because it numbs the pain a person might be going through, but it’s not right (kills brain cells, has potential to create further pain, liver problems, etc.). There might be a time when a person comes to the point where they feel it is right to steal because they want something badly, but it doesn’t ever make it right. Where does one draw the line on this idea?

The fact is that truth is not relative, contingent, or cultural with one persons truth being different from someone else’s. Truth is absolute. And if anyone comes along and tells you that there is no such thing as absolute truth, then ask them whether their claim that truth isn’t absolute is an absolute truth or their opinion. The very statement in and of itself is a statement of absolute truth.

Sunday – Wisdom Cries Out

Proverbs 8:1-21; Matthew 16:26

What is the value of biblical wisdom? People are willing to pay big bucks for things they consider valuable. They'll pay for speed and convenience, a “done for you” component, an awesome experience and status, a competitive advantage, and access (multi-thousand dollar per plate fundraiser to see Obama, or hundreds paid on concert ticket to go backstage).

They will also pay big bucks for a football coach (University of Michigan signed a six-year, \$48 million contract with Jim Harbaugh, former 49ers coach) and for an ad spot during the Super Bowl (according to *Forbes*, advertisers will pay \$4 million for a 30 sec. ad and \$8 million for a 60 sec. ad). None of these things can give you what biblical wisdom can.

1. She is concerned about your wellbeing and eternal good (**Prov. 8:1-6**) – Why “her” (Prov. 1:20)? Wisdom is personified as a noble, virtuous woman to stands in stark contrast to the “other” woman (women) who seek to trap and ruin a persons life.
Wisdom “cries out” – Wisdom must be heard by everyone for it is a matter of life and death (cp. Deut 5:22; Ezek. 9:1; Matt. 27:46; Rev. 7:2; 14:7, 9). God has inducements everywhere to lead us toward righteousness and wisdom.
2. She always speaks the truth (**v. 6-9, 14**) – You may not like the truth but embracing it will not only save you from embarrassment (food between the teeth), but more importantly, save your life.
3. She is more valuable than the finest jewels (**v. 10, 11, 18, 19, 21**) - You can't put a price tag on living a life that not only brings temporal rewards, but eternal ones also.
4. She honors those who honor her (**v. 15-21**) - v. 18 indicates that wisdom offers three rewards to those who seek for her with all their hearts – riches,

honor, and enduring riches (treasures laid up in heaven). If a man sows wisdom then he'll reap the benefits of wisdom.

How much are you and I willing to pay to acquire biblical wisdom (see v. 17)? It may require some inconvenience, the price of a friendship, the cost of being labeled narrow and extreme. What is the cost to carry a cross? Perhaps the question could be asked a different way. Jesus asked: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26)

According to Jesus, in turning our backs on biblical wisdom we stand to lose a whole lot more than a few things we might have to give up when we choose wisdom over foolishness. Actually, we gain eternal life when we acquire true wisdom. In light of that we actually don't lose anything at all!

Monday – Wisdom & Creation

Proverbs 8:22-31; Genesis 1:6-8

Read Prov. 8:22-31. How is wisdom related to creation? First, there is an obvious parallel in this passage to the work of the Son of God at creation; after all He was the Word Who created all there is. But we must be careful we don't strain the allegory for more than was intended by the original writer.

Some have even used this passage to suggest Christ was created at some point, but that would be an obvious misinterpretation of the scriptures. See John 1:1-3; Micah 5:2, and also consider the following: "*In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.*" (Desire of Ages, p. 50) There is no doubt this is a reference to Christ. Here He is presented in the figure of wisdom much like Satan was presented under the figure of the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28.

How is wisdom related to creation? The wise man is relating wisdom to creation for the purpose of communicating the need for us to use wisdom in our everyday affairs, as God did in the creation of the world. How is wisdom expressed in creation?

Genesis 1:6-8: “Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.” (cp. Prov. 8:27).

Atmosphere. His creation needed air to breath (78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, and the rest in other gases). A little less oxygen and we would suffocate. A little more and one spark would have set the world on fire. The birds needed to fly or they would be earthbound. Plants, flowers, and trees would need nitrogen to grow.

Atmosphere was needed or raindrops would fall to the earth like bullets.

If wisdom existed at the time that God was only present, and existed in the creation of the universe, then that makes wisdom is a part of the nature of God and therefore something that does not originate with us but rather something that is revealed to us. Hard news to swallow! I like what Albert Einstein said. “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” His point is to change one’s thinking, but the problem is we are prone to make the same silly mistakes because it’s inherent. That’s why we need help from outside ourselves.

What are some examples of important truths that we would never know other than being revealed by divine inspiration? Salvation, second coming, sanctuary, spirit of prophecy, state of dead, Sabbath, etc.

Tuesday – Rejoicing In Creation

Proverbs 8:30, 31; Genesis 1:31

Read Proverbs 8:30, 31. Why was wisdom rejoicing? If wisdom is a part of the nature of God, then wisdom’s rejoicing reflects God’s rejoicing. What was this rejoicing centered on? **Read Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25** – “it was good.”

Genesis 1:31: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” – God rejoiced in the crowning act of creation - mankind (although we can agree that God saved the best till last when He created Eve, we can also agree that what God created each day became more complex than what He created the day before, therefore making women the most complicated things created!).

The Hebrew word for “good” carries the idea of enjoyment and implies relationship. At the end of creation God pauses to fully enjoy His creation as enters into a relationship with mankind on the sixth day of creation. This is what the wise man highlights. What an awesome thought to know that God was absolutely delighted with the human race...that He loves us as much today.

As we look at the creation week we learn a few things about true wisdom: 1) Each 24 hour day was marked with the declaration “and it was good,” thus signifying that nothing more or less was required on that day. Wisdom accepts the biblical account of fiat creation and doesn’t need millions of years to explain what happened. 2) Wisdom benefits others just as God benefitted the human race by preparing a world to live in. 3) Wisdom always hits the pause button and rests on the Sabbath to reflect and rejoice in the work of its hands. As God did, we do.

Wednesday – Wisdom’s Appeal

Proverbs 8:32-36; 1 John 5:11, 12

Read Proverbs 8:32-36. I came across a little cartoon of a mother dog giving her child dog some advice. Talking of their owners she said, “They give you a lot of treats while training you, so play dumb for as long as you can.” There are no benefits to playing or being dumb in real life.

What happens when we embrace wisdom? We are blessed (or find happiness), we become wise, we find life, and find favor with the Lord. What happens when we disdain wisdom? We are miserable, we become fools, we invite death, and while the Lord would still love us, He would strongly disapprove of and be disappointed with our destructive choices. There are a lot of smart people in the world, but they’re fools for not hearing instruction and applying wisdom to their lives. They are also unhappy.

People are searching for happiness in all the wrong places. God says that happiness is found in obedience to Him. To find wisdom (and therefore life) is to surrender yourself to the work of the Holy Spirit which makes it possible for God to work on us, in us, and for us the marvels of His grace.

Romans 11:33: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

2 Timothy 3:15: “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 1:30: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

1 John 5:11, 12: “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” If you have Jesus, then you have wisdom unto salvation.

Thursday – Either/Or

Proverbs 9:1-6; 13-18

So it comes down to two choices: wisdom or foolishness. The wise man holds out to the reader two options in parallel verses – Prov. 9:1-6 & Prov. 9:13-18 – and asks, “What would you rather have?” What are the differences between the two?

Wisdom is competent (v. 1-3) while foolishness is incompetent (v. 13, 14). Wisdom provides what she has prepared (v. 5) while foolishness provides nothing but stolen goods (v.17). Wisdom cares and progresses (v. 6) while foolishness is complacent and changeless (v. 18). What would you rather have?

How do both parties respond to the instruction of wisdom? **Read Prov. 9:7-9.** The wise gladly receive instruction, while the foolish despise instruction. The key to wisdom is humility – a recognition of the lack of one’s understanding and desire to be benefitted and grow. Socrates said, “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” Others decline wisdom because of their empty confidence in their own superiority – pride. Again, who would you rather be, the wise or foolish?

Appeal: Proverbs 8 & 9 reveals a loving Creator Who has a tender care for His creation and has condescended to make us “wise unto salvation” through the gift of Divine Wisdom, Christ. Won’t you embrace wisdom – Christ – today and each day?