

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Proverbs of Solomon and Sayings of the Wise

Readings: Proverbs 22:17-21; 1:1-7; 25:1

By topic:

- Fear of the Lord – 9:10-12; 10:27; 14:2; 14:26,27; 15:33; 19:23; 28:14
- Trust in God or Self – 3:5-8; 14:12; 16:3, 20, 25; 18:2, 4, 10; 19:3; 20:24; 21:22; 26:12; 28:26; 29:25
- Divine Providence – 15:3; 16: 1, 4, 9, 33; 19:21; 21:30-31; 22:12; 27:1
- Insight and Ignorance:
- Wisdom and Folly – 13:14; 14:24; 15:24; 16:22; 17:12; 24:7; 24:13-14
- Dealing with Fools – 26:4-11; 27:22; 29:9
- Discernment and Understanding – 10:13; 10:23; 13:5; 14:6,8,15,33; 15:21; 16:16; 17:24; 19:8; 20:5,12
- Knowledge – 10:14, 13:16; 14:18; 15:14; 18:15; 19:2; 20:15; 21:11; 23:12; 24: 3,4

Reflections:

- The fear of the Lord is closest to the notion of faith in the Old Testament. It is not being afraid of God but rather holding him in deep respect, honor and reverence. Although it is close to the idea of faith, it is not ultimately the same. Fear of the Lord is a posture of submission and honor where faith includes both of these and adds a stronger relational dependence and confidence.
- This next section describes what it means to trust in God. Here we find one of the most significant passages in Proverbs. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” This means: “Invest all of your heart in complete faith and trust in the Lord and do not rest your confidence on your own perspective or understanding of a

situation or decision; in every circumstance look for God and find him for he is there right in the middle of your life and as you depend on him this way, moment by moment, he will guide you straight into his highest purposes for your life.” We see here again a clear indication that God is all about relationship. Every genre of Scripture, every major text points to the fact that God really only wants relationship. Notice that it doesn’t say, “Make sure you keep the sacrificial system so you can be wise” or “Make sure you keep the law and punish wrongdoers so that you can be wise.” It focuses on relationship with God and trust.

- The contrast to trusting in God is trusting in your self. This is viewed as complete foolishness and setting yourself up for repeated failure. Closely aligned next to trusting in God is trusting in his control of our lives and circumstances. The next set of proverbs reinforces and teaches God’s control in each and every situation in life.
- We continue on with proverbs dealing with wisdom, folly and fools. The gaining of wisdom and knowledge here will find a parallel in the New Testament with the idea of renewing your mind. Thinking as God thinks is essential to discovering God and living the life God has for us. In this context it focuses on gaining the wisdom of God. In the New Testament after Christ, it will focus on actively seeing our thought processes renewed and transformed so that we don’t simply fall into unhealthy thinking patterns. This renewing of our minds is one part of the inside out transformation that Christ will bring through the work of God’s Spirit in our lives.