

Proverbs

Summary

Almost every society shares its values by using folk stories and phrases to teach lessons about behavioral norms. For example, in our modern-day world, we have all heard wise sayings such as "The early bird catches the worm" or "Do unto others" - phrases that help us know how to get along in the world and get along with others. The book of Proverbs is a collection of hundreds of these timeless sayings, an anthology of wisdom. Proverbs is 31 chapters long, each chapter containing 20 to 35 wise sayings in the form of two-line poems or couplets. It is part of the Bible's "wisdom literature," focusing on practical advice to instruct the reader on the conduct of many aspects of daily life. The moral and religious advice in Proverbs was probably handed down orally from generation to generation before being written in the collection and preserved for us to read and apply today.

Authors

The book of Proverbs is attributed primarily to Solomon, King of Israel from 970-931 B.C., who has been called the wisest man who ever lived, who collected many of the individual proverbs. However, other writers almost certainly contributed to the collection of wise sayings and like Solomon, they were probably more compilers rather than authors. The "men of King Hezekiah" are credited with collecting Proverbs 25-29. Agur and King Lemuel are generally assigned authorships of Proverbs 30 and 31, respectively.

Date

The date given by most scholars for much of the book of Proverbs is around the tenth century B.C., which corresponds to the life and reign of King Solomon, the third king of Israel. Proverbs was expanded by other authors but was probably completed around the late eighth to early seventh century B.C.

Primary Characters

Wisdom and Folly (Proverbs 1-31)

The Wise Man and the Fool (Proverbs 1-31)

Major Theological Themes

Fear of God - Proverbs teaches that the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. If we truly understand God's power, it should humble us to obey and follow Him through our actions and the way we worship.

God's Justice - The authors of Proverbs constantly remind us that there are consequences for those who act foolishly and disobey His will; God's justice will prevail in the end.

Lessons Learned from Proverbs

God Desires for Us to Act with Wisdom - The book of Proverbs offers practical advice about how to live in harmony with others and to prosper in the world. It teaches that it is important to live a prudent life of moderation in all things while avoiding excesses such as drunkenness, sexual impurity, gossip, indiscretion, envy, anger, and laziness. One should strive to be truthful and loyal, to prepare in advance for the future, and to choose your words with care and consideration. Also, one should honor and revere one's parents.