



Proverbs – Part #4

This final segment of Proverbs can best be covered by three sections:

- Sayings of the Wise (22:17-24:34)
- More Wise Sayings of Solomon collected by Hezekiah's Men (25:1-29:27)
- Wise Sayings of Agur and King Lemuel (30:1-31:31)

“Sayings of the Wise” implies that this is a separate collection from a group of unknown sages. They may have been royal scribes commissioned to compile useful tenets. Interestingly much of the material in this section is remarkably similar to an ancient Egyptian wisdom book titled *The Teachings of Amenemope*. Even though this book predates Solomon, these proverbs were later shaped and molded by Israelite sages in terms of Israel's historic faith, and thus have become part of God's inspired message.

The second section, “More Wise Sayings of Solomon collected by Hezekiah's Men,” bears many similarities to Proverbs 10-22 which are also attributed to Solomon (ref. part #2). Many of the same themes regarding wisdom versus folly; righteousness versus wickedness; laziness versus hard work are mentioned. Also prevalent are sayings that deal with the poor.

Nothing more is known about the wise man Agur or King Lemuel outside the references to them in Proverbs 30-31, our third section. It is thought that neither is an Israelite, for their names are not Hebrew. Agur's proverbs (chpt. 30) consist largely of observations from nature and social relationships which contain implicit lessons for successful living. The words of King Lemuel (chpt. 31) are a collection of sage advice by his mother to her son (31:1-9), followed by the description of a wife of noble character (31:10-31).

The book of Proverbs is a guidebook for successful living. In seeking to interpret the proverbs and their various applications, one must bear in mind that they are generalizations. Though stated as absolutes, they are meant to be applied in specific situations and not indiscriminately. Knowing the right time to use a proverb is to exercise wisdom.