

“Understanding the Bible” Lesson 6

Interpretation: “What does it mean?” (continued)

“What does the text mean?” To answer this question, we must discover the author’s intent, that is, “What did the author intend to communicate to his readers at the time he wrote the text?” Discovering the author’s intent is the goal of the grammatical-historical method of biblical interpretation.

As we read the text we must consider the literary form of the text.

Proverbs—The Book of Proverbs is the centerpiece of Old Testament wisdom literature: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

What is a proverb?

Robert Stein—

“A proverb is a short, pithy saying that expresses a wise general truth concerning life. A Biblical proverb is a short pithy saying that expresses a wise general truth concerning life, from a divine perspective.”

Or—

“A proverb is a general observation learned from a wise and careful look at life.”

“A Biblical proverb is a general observation learned from a wise and careful look at life under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

A Proverb is not a promise.

God’s Word is filled with wonderful promises (II Peter 1:4). A promise has no exceptions. It is always true. For example: John 3:16, Romans 10:13, Romans 8:28, I Thessalonians 4:16-17

A Biblical proverb is not a promise; it is a general observation about life. There may be exceptions to that general observation. For example: Proverbs 3:9-10, 4:10, 6:9-11, 13:20 ff, 16:7, 22:6

Outline of the Book of Proverbs:

- I. Introduction 1:1-7
- II. Instruction Concerning Wisdom and Folly 1:8-9:18
- III. Proverbs of Solomon 10:1-22:16
 - There are exactly 375 proverbs in this section.
 - The numerical equivalence of Solomon's name in Hebrew is 375.
- IV. The Words of the Wise 2:17-24:34
 - This section contains 34 sayings of the wise.
- V. Solomon's Proverbs Copied by Scribes of King Hezekiah. 25:1-29:27
- VI. Agur's Proverbs 30:1-33
- VII. Lemuel's Proverbs 31:1-9
- VIII. The Acrostic Poem of the Virtuous Wife 31:10-31