

Job - Finding Wisdom

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 January 2015

Preacher: Andrew Reid

[0 : 0 0] such as the Exodus, we don't hear about the settlement in the land, we don't hear about the kings and so on. There's some books of the Bible where there's no mention of Jews at all, where no one mentions, there's no mention of the law, the sacrifices, temples, prophets, priests, and so on.

Some of these books even have contributions in them by people who aren't Jews. I wonder if you can think which books I'm speaking about. What are they? Consider them for just a moment.

The books I'm talking about are books such as the book of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. These are books written by a group of people called the Wise People and they are called wisdom books by scholars.

Now there are four things that distinguish these sorts of books. This is a long introduction to our chapter. Nevertheless, you'll see why in a moment. There are four things that distinguish these sorts of books.

The first is they are immensely practical books. And that's one of the reasons I think we as Christians love reading them. They tell us about how to live practically. In my own Bible reading, I normally work just consecutively through the Old Testament and the New.

[1 : 1 1] And last year I got to Proverbs in my reading. And Proverbs is great stuff, isn't it? It's full of good practical things. Proverbs tells us how to manage our money, how to live with our parents, our spouse, our children, how to do business, how to use tools, how to act towards our neighbour and all of those sorts of things.

And we read it and we think, yes, that applies today just as well as it did then. Books such as Proverbs are full of timely bits of everyday helpful advice. They're immensely practical, immensely helpful books.

And those books of the Bible tell us that a wise life is a practical everyday life. Wise living, sort of practical living. It's about living in this world in a realistic and practical way.

Second, these books of the Bible are books about sensible living. You see, the wise people of the Old Testament had an aim. And their aim was to try and understand what life was all about by observing it.

Having observed it, they then say to us, look, I've had a good look at the world. I've had a good look at life. And having observed it, I've worked out that this is how life works.

[2 : 2 0] If you want to be happy, if you want to be successful in life, then live life this way. So a wise living is sensible living. And a wise life is a sensible life.

Third characteristic of wisdom literature is a concern for right living. So the wise men and women of the Old Testament were interested in right behavior, not just sensible and wise behavior, but right behavior concerned with how to live rightly in God's world.

They wanted to advise people about right living in the world and with their neighbor. And they tell us that, you know, wise living is right living. Wise, a wise life is a right life.

But the fourth and last characteristic of the wise people of the Old Testament is that they were interested in godliness. That is, they wanted to make sure that people believed that the world was a created world.

And they tell us, look, there is a creator behind this world that we live in. And wise living is living in the light of this. Wise living is living in the light of the fact that there is a God who created the world and sustains the world.

[3 : 30] So a wise life is a godly life. Wise living is godly living. And so that's the value of wisdom and of wisdom literature. It teaches you about practical, everyday living, sensible living, godly living, right living.

Now, the book of Job is a wisdom book. It's fundamentally concerned with wisdom. And it has one special passage that addresses the whole question of wisdom.

And that passage is the one we read out today, Job 28. So in your Bibles, please open with me at Job 28. This is addressing the question of how we get wisdom.

It's page 521 in your Bibles. 521. Now, the first section is found in verses 1 to 11. And these verses proclaim and praise human technical skill.

And they do it by looking at the amazing process which humans use to mine precious metals. I think if I was writing Job in these days, I'd add two things to it. Not only how people mine precious metals, but how we drill for oil in the middle of a sea.

[4 : 40] Or how we are thinking about even trying to go and explore Mars and how we've sent. So those sorts of things. This is an ancient exploration of those sort of incredible things that humans do.

And just an exaltation in human technical skill. Look at it in your Bibles. It's a marvellous piece of poetry, isn't it? There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined.

Iron is taken from the earth and copper is smelted from ore. Mortals put an end to the darkness and they search out the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness. You get this impression of this hole in the ground and people going into it.

Far from human dwellings, they cut a shaft in places untouched by human feet. Far from other people, they dangle and sway. You can get this feel of a man on a rope down in this long shaft mining.

The earth from which food comes is transformed below us by fire. Lapis lazuli comes from its rocks. There's a light down there. Someone's lit up the deep darkness and its dust contains nuggets of gold.

[5 : 49] No bird of prey knows that hidden path. No falcon's eye has seen it. You know, the great birds of the world, they can't see down in there. They've not been there.

Proud beasts don't set foot on it. So lions, they don't wander around there. People assault the flinty rock with their hands. They lay bare the roots of the mountains. They tunnel through the rock.

Their eyes see all its treasures. They search the sources of the rivers and bring hidden things to light. It's a wonderful picture, isn't it? What humans can do. He is painting humans as ingenious creatures.

They have knowledge. They have skill. They have incredible resourcefulness. They go where no others can go. They see what no others can see.

They are truly greater than all God's other creatures. They are the greatest of God's creatures. The pinnacle of his created world.

[6 : 47] But then verse 12 comes with a crunch. Humans are all of these things. Wonderful. But can humans find wisdom? Can they search out understanding?

And with that question uppermost in our minds, we're thrown into the second section of this hymn or poem. In verses 12 to 14, we're told that no matter how humans search the earth, they will never find wisdom on their own.

Wisdom is not able to be found. It can't be found in the physical earth. You can dig as much as you like into the ground. You will not find it. You can search the stars as much as you like. You will not find it. Where can wisdom be found?

Where does understanding dwell, our poet asks. No mortal comprehends its worth. It cannot be found in the land of the living. And the deep says, well, it's not in me.

And the sea says, not with me either. Mortals may be ingenious enough to mine the deep places of the earth. But they cannot of themselves find wisdom.

[7 : 50] Nor can they purchase it with money or even with the products of human ingenuity. The point of this verse and the verses that follow is that even if wisdom could be found, it would be inaccessible.

It can't be bought by human wealth. Apart from the fact that no amount of money could be amassed, that would be sufficient. Wisdom is not a commodity that can be bought anyway. Look at verses 15 to 19.

Wisdom cannot be bought with finest gold, nor even its price be weighed out in silver. It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or lapis lazuli.

Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention. The price of wisdom is beyond rubies. The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it.

It can't be bought with pure gold. So the question must arise, where do you find wisdom? Where does understanding dwell? And that's the question posed by verses 20 to 21.

[8 : 51] Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? You see, it's hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds in the sky. Now, of course, there may be another solution right there.

The other solution may be that death brings us into an existence that allows us to view life in proper perspective. A bit late, probably, by that stage, but nevertheless, maybe.

But our writer debunks that as well. Look at verse 22 and listen to our poet. Death and destruction and death say, oh, only a rumor of it has reached us. So where can this unfathomable treasure of wisdom be found?

Where do you go to get it? What is its source? To whom can you go and acquire it? Well, 23 to 27 hold the answer. God understands the way of it, we're told.

He alone knows where it dwells. For he views the ends of the earth and he sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters.

[9 : 57] When he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm. Then he looked at wisdom and appraised it. He confirmed it and tested it. In other words, when God created the world, he has to put wisdom in place.

The point is that God is the creator of the world. He made the world. He knows how it began. He knows how it functions. He knows how it will end.

And therefore he knows wisdom. He is its source. And that brings us to the last question, doesn't it? If God is our creator. If he's the source of wisdom.

Then how do humans get hold of it? By what means is it accessible? How do humans become wise? And verse 28 gives the answer.

Look at it. It's an answer from God himself. He said to the human race. The fear of the Lord. That is the beginning. That is wisdom. And to shun evil is understanding. Can you see and understand what's going on here?

[10 : 56] True wisdom. True understanding. Is to realize that wisdom is a gift from God. The creator. In the end. Being wise is simple.

Even though it's extraordinarily difficult for us humans to acknowledge and accept. Being wise is about recognizing your creator. And your created nature and status.

That is. Being wise is to live as a created being. It is to live realizing that all of life stands under a creator. He is its source.

And of course that brings us to the last question. And the last question is. Well how do I then go about getting it? How do I acquire it?

Where can I go? If God is the source of all wisdom. Then how do humans get hold of it? What makes it accessible? How do humans become wise?

[11 : 51] Verse 28. As I said. Gives the answer. It comes from God. It is realizing that God is the author of your existence.

And you live life fearing and respecting him. That is. It's putting him and yourself in proper perspective. Wisdom is to live as though God is the creator. And you are the creature.

Rather than the reverse. Wisdom is to live as though God is the creator. And you are the creature. Rather than the reverse. Wisdom is to live as though God is the creator. Now what I would like to do in the remaining time.

Is to try traveling through the centuries. To see just what else can be added from the rest of scripture. Let's see if there is anything in Job 28 that will help us in the 21st century.

And then move on to the New Testament. See if the New Testament will help us. And there is lots in Job. I think there is plenty that is applicable to us. Let's ask ourselves about the question of wisdom itself. What is it?

[12 : 50] Well Job and the rest of the Old Testament spell it out for us. Wisdom is a way of life that is sensible, right and godly and practical. And these are things we constantly search after, aren't they?

We want to know, don't we, how to live rightly with each other and the world in which we live. We want to know how to live rightly before God. Therefore the concept of wisdom is eminently applicable in our day.

It fits with us. It addresses the sorts of aspirations that we have. It offers us answers to the sorts of things that we're looking for. But what else does Job tell us? He tells us that this sort of wisdom cannot be bought with money.

Sorry, this sort of wisdom can't be bought with money. See, human wealth cannot buy sensible living. Now we know that, don't we? Because we know plenty of very wealthy people in the world who are not very sensible. Okay?

Human wealth can't buy sensible living. And it can't buy right living. We know that again because many people in this world, the wealthy, are not necessarily right and godly livers as well, are they?

[13 : 54] Their wealth hasn't bought them that. All the money in the world cannot purchase godly living. You see, you can't go up the road to Doncaster Shopping Town, go into a particular shop and say, I will have some wisdom. Thank you.

I will pay you whatever the price is. You can't even go to Melbourne City and buy it. You can't buy it in London or New York, in whatever shopping centers exist there.

It's just not for sale. It cannot be bought. But Job presses on from that. He also comes to us in an age of information. And he comes to us in an age of technological mastery.

He comes to us in the middle of all sort of research and development that we humans do. And he says to us, you can't find wisdom that way. You can't sort of go and dig it up in Palestine or anywhere else in the world.

You can't deduce it from the world. Spending your life in research and development won't teach you how to live sensibly. Hence, you can have professors who are not yet sensible.

[14 : 53] Devotion to technology will not help you know how to live rightly with other people. Massing information will not instruct you in godly living. So we have people who trowel the internet, as probably some of you do.

You can Google search for everything. It won't make you wise, will it? No matter what amount of information Google can come up with, there's not enough to make you wise unless you come across the stuff from Job and from Scripture itself.

Universities don't offer a course, unfortunately, in Wisdom 445 or whatever it might be. But Job 28 does help us because it holds out a promise.

It tells us that we can find wisdom and we find it in God. God, the creator of the world, you see, knows how to live sensibly in his world. He knows how to live rightly in his world.

God, the creator of all humanity, knows what it is to live a godly life, knows how to live a godly life and can instruct us. Wisdom, you see, is hidden with God. It is a gift from him.

[16 : 03] And it's here that the New Testament comes to our aid. It adds to our search. You see, it adds something that Job didn't contain. It goes further than Job. It tells us that wisdom is not actually hidden anymore.

You don't have to dig in the holes. You don't have to go searching for it. It's actually revealed. It's not tucked away. The way to live a sensible, right and godly life is paraded before us.

It's in the public domain. And it's found in a most unusual place. It's found in a man who was God, who lived on this earth, who in his life, death, resurrection and ascension lived wisely.

This man, Jesus Christ, is wisdom in the flesh. If you like wisdom incarnate. Let me show you. First, I want to show you what Jesus himself says about this.

I want you to turn to Matthew 12 in your Bibles. It's page 978 in your pew Bibles. Matthew chapter 12.

[17 : 03] And it's almost a throwaway statement from Jesus, but it's profound. Look at verse 42 in Matthew 12. Jesus speaking about the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, the King of Israel, who was renowned in the ancient world for his wisdom.

But look at what. Listen to what Jesus says. He says the Queen of the South. That's the Queen of Sheba will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it.

For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom. And now something greater than Solomon is here. And it's clear that Jesus is speaking about himself.

In one sense, he's saying someone greater than Solomon is here. He is wisdom incarnate. And that notion is picked up by the Apostle Paul in his writings.

Flip further toward the back of your Bibles to Colossians chapter 2, verses 2 to 3. If you're looking for a page number 1183. So Colossians chapter 2, verses 2 to 3.

[18 : 08] Paul says this. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God.

That is what God has now revealed, which was secret in the past, is now revealed in the present. Namely, Christ. And then look at what he says after that.

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

You see, the treasure looked for in Job, which couldn't be found in the deepest earth. Which the birds of the sky couldn't comprehend.

Which no one could see. Is found in Jesus. In him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found. Now then, in your Bibles, flip back a bit to 1 Corinthians.

[19 : 08] 1 Corinthians. Chapter 1, verse 24, page 1142 in your Bibles. Page 1142. And I want you to see how the apostle identifies Jesus in verse 24.

Christians, no matter what their background, whether they're Jewish or Gentile, know this truth. It is, see what Paul says? Jesus Christ. Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Now, go down then to verse 30 in the same chapter. Look at what Paul says here. He reminds us that because of God we are in Christ Jesus. And then he says, of Jesus, that Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God.

Can you hear what's being said? It's quite profound. You see, in Job's day, wisdom was found in fearing God. And keeping his commandments.

In our day, Job is found elsewhere. In our day, it's found in Jesus. In his life. His death. His resurrection.

[20 : 17] His ascension. In all that he is and in all that he's done. In all that he's accomplished. But let's go on. Let's just press on a bit further. Let's ask what we asked in Job 28.

If that's so, then what do I do? And Job answered clearly to us, didn't he? He said, fear the Lord and shun evil.

The equivalent would be, I suppose. Believe in the Lord Jesus. And shun evil. And the New Testament, you see, has a slightly different answer.

But it's just as clear. In fact, it's probably clearer. It tells us that the true locus of wisdom is found in Jesus. And what you must do is believe in Jesus.

Have faith in him. Beginning of wisdom is believing in Jesus. In fact, Jesus is wisdom incarnate. Can you see what I'm getting at? If you want to know how to live a wise life, that is a sensible and a right and a godly life.

[21 : 16] Then believe in Jesus. And follow him. Take a good look at him. Examine his life and his death. See what he's done. Consider him. Believe in him.

Take on him. Live life in the light of who he is and what he's done. And that will make you wise. Now, I start off by saying that wisdom is immensely practical.

It tells you how to live life in the everyday. Well, how does this work out in practice? How are we to be wise every day? Well, in my view, the answer to that question is clear.

We should increase our understanding of Jesus. Devote ourselves to getting to know him more. Spend more time with him. And then live in the light of what we find. And look, just consider all of the epistles in the New Testament.

And that's exactly what they do, don't they? In fact, Paul's the clearest of all in this. He'll say in the first half of his epistles, this is what God has done for you in Jesus.

[22 : 16] And then in the second half of his epistles, he'll say, and this is how it works out in life. As you live with your slave, your master, your husband, your wife, your children, do this.

He's saying this is how practically to live in the world. Live in the light of what Jesus has done, what you've seen in Jesus. Apply it to your life. So you see, what do we do then?

We devote ourselves to studying the Bible, to prayer, and then to working out the implications of all of that in everyday life. And that's really what we do here at Holy Trinity all the time.

We teach the scriptures which reveal Jesus. We draw out their implications. And we encourage each other to grow in our knowledge and understanding of Jesus. And then we encourage each other to shift that information from our heads to our hands and our hearts.

We work with God in making our faith filtered down into every practical, everyday part of our Christian existence. And into our ministry. You see, into sensible living and right living and godly living and practical living.

[23 : 28] And we help others find that sort of wisdom as well. So that they too might live practically, practically, sensibly, rightly, in a godly fashion, in a wise fashion, in God's world.

You see, so that others might live before God as they were designed to live. And so that we might live before God as we were designed to live. That is in a way that gives glory to our Creator and to His Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So friends, I do urge you today to be wise, you see. Put your faith in Jesus. But don't just stop at that. Let it filter down into your whole existence.

To change your actions. To change your heart. To change what you do every day. Then, you'll be God's wise people in God's world.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.