

Wisdom Literature: Who is Wise?

Wisdom as Personal

- Wisdom is not something abstract in Scripture
- It is something that only exists when a person thinks and acts according to truth
- The OT recognizes that some people are wiser than others
 - And some people devote themselves to gaining wisdom, so that they might be called 'wise'
- The 'wise' person was highly practical, not merely theoretica
- They were interested in making the type of choices that would help produce God's desired results in life
 - Because all of life is wrapped up in the choices we make

Wisdom in the ANE

- In the ancient world, the connection between choice and result was prominent
 - Thus, wisdom literature exists in a variety of ancient cultures, with the emphasis on making choices that will lead to the best life
- The distinction of biblical wisdom literature is that it defines what is best by what is God-honoring (Pro. 9:10; Ps. 111:10)
 - The term 'fear' means awe and reverence
 - How can one make godly choices if you do not believe in or obey God?

Relationship as the Center of Wisdom

- The first step in biblical wisdom is to know God
 - Not simply know *about* God
 - But to know Him intimately and deeply
- Wisdom biblically is NOT tied to:
 - IQ
 - Cleverness or skill
 - Age, even though experience is a valued teacher
- Wisdom is tied to our orientation to God
 - Out of which comes our ability to please God (Jas 1:5)

Wisdom in the NT

- James is often considered the Wisdom Literature of the NT
 - He defines the wisdom that God gives, and contrasts it with the worldly wisdom by which a person seeks to get ahead of others (Jas. 3:13-18)

Who is Wise?

- Responsible, successful living was the goal
- Sometimes this was applied to technical matters
 - Bezalel, the Tabernacle architect (Ex. 31:2-5)
 - Navigation (Ezk. 27:8-9)
- It was sought by those who had to make decisions affecting the welfare of others

- National leaders such as Joshua (Duet. 34:9); David (2 Sam. 14:20); and Solomon (1 Kgs. 3:9) were all described as being given wisdom by God so that their rule might be effective and successful
- The human heart is the focal point of wisdom in the OT
 - Which was NOT concerned with emotion
 - But rather refers to the moral, volitional, and intellectual center of a person
 - Volitional: “Dealing with the ability to choose freely”
- Wisdom Literature, then, tends to focus on people and their behavior
 - Showing how successful they are at making godly choices
 - And whether or not they are learning how to apply God’s truth to the experiences they have
- It is not so much that people learn to *be* wise, but rather that they seek to *get* wise
- There is a great danger in seeking wisdom simply for one’s own advantage or in a way that does not honor God over all (Isa. 5:21)
- And God’s wisdom always surpasses human wisdom (Isa. 29:13-14; 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5)