

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.
Then I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the world, His earth,
And having my delight in the sons of men.

Proverbs 8:22-23, 30-31

This month I am taking a detour from our study through the Proverbs. To understand the next section of this chapter, we must first dwell on Who Wisdom is, What She is, How she interacts with the God, Man, and the World, and What this means for us. I will bring scripture to bear to understand Wisdom, Her Nature and how she treats with man. Before dealing with Wisdom from the rest of scripture, it bears mentioning what we have already discovered about Wisdom in the book of Proverbs up to this point and what the rest of the book provides in addition.

Wisdom in the Hebrew is “Chokmah” and in Greek is “Sophia.” Both of these words mean something like skill, shrewdness, or cleverness. In Proverbs, wisdom is not just skill or cleverness, but is a lady, particularly. We learn that Wisdom reaches out to all men, pleading with them to listen to her and grow in Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Wisdom is caring, loving, and protective. Her offerings of wealth, long life, and health are made in good faith indeed. However, she will reject the ones who reject her and her vengeance is like God’s, in that she will laugh at them in their pain and suffering that came as a result of their foolishness, and she will hide from them when they need her the most. We also see how wisdom treats those who accept her offerings and deal with her as a sister or a lover. For those who seek her diligently will find not just her, but also find the fear of the Lord. When they find her, she will enter their hearts and cause them to grow in discernment in all things. This discernment will keep them from the wicked men who seek gain through violence and from the harlot and her damnable house. By avoiding these evil people, they will avoid the paths those evil people walk on, and will learn to fear the Lord and turn from evil, which will give them a good name in the sight of both God and man. This results in life and health and peace.

So far, we have been studying through the lectures of a father to his son. In these lectures, the father has done all he can to act just like Wisdom. He seeks out to the son, calls the son to wisdom, and uses his words like a skilled craftsman to deliver his message as effectively as possible. It is this example we are to use to gain our first insight into WHAT Wisdom is: Wisdom is a trained habit of action to a particular end. This is the substance of Wisdom. The definitions of the words “Chokmah” and “Sophia” provide more clarity, since the “trained habits” we develop are represented in our skill or cleverness.

We see repeatedly that Wisdom is better than anything we can gain in this life; the way the son is instructed to seek after her is identical to the way Christ tells His followers to seek the kingdom of heaven; wisdom in the form of the instruction of our parents is to be worn on our

bodies like jewelry; and becoming wise or finding wisdom requires that we see ourselves as fools who need Wisdom. Lastly, in my most recent sermon in Proverbs we saw that the father gives his son an outline on how to fear the Lord, which leads to Wisdom: “My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones. Honor the Lord from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine. My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His reproof, For whom the Lord loves He reproves, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. (3:1-12)”

The son is to remember his fathers teachings — hiding them in his heart and wearing them like jewelry — keeping kindness and truth, or loyalty and faithfulness, close to him just as they keep him close. The son is to trust in the Lord instead of his own mind and heart, and Acknowledge God as God in all things. He is to turn from evil. In good times, he is to honor God from the best of all he has, and in bad times he is to accept the discipline of the Lord in his suffering.

This relationship between the fear of the Lord and Wisdom is so tightly knit that, while a distinction between them is properly made, a rejection of one is a rejection of both. So, while Wisdom seeks to enlighten all men, she will reject those who reject He Who made her. In the very next section of chapter 3 of proverbs and in chapter 8, we gain more insight into what and who Wisdom is: the father says that “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the deeps were broken up And the skies drip with dew. (3:19-20)” And Wisdom says of herself “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge and discretion...By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly. I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me...The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. From everlasting I was established, From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth... When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed, When He set for the sea its boundary So that the water would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth; Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having my delight in the sons of men. (8:12,15-17,22-31)” From these we understand a few things:

The first thing we see is that wisdom is older than anything else. She predates all things, and is said to have been “established from everlasting”. Wisdom was there when God performed His creative works, working with Him as a craftsman. We can infer from this that Wisdom worked with God in the creation of all things. Lastly, we see that God takes delight in Wisdom and Wisdom takes delight in men. Wisdom rejoiced before God and in the world, as it was being created.

In chapter 9 of Proverbs, we see how Wisdom treats her home. She built her house out of seven pillars, prepared her food, wine, and table, and sends out her maidens. She then calls from the heights of the city to any who lack understanding to come and eat at her table. Contrasted with the harlot, who lies in wait, Wisdom is proactive in reaching out to those who need her — which is everyone. Throughout the rest of the book, we see that wisdom is like a sport (10:23), she flows from the mouth of the righteous (10:31), she is with the humble (11:2) and with those who receive counsel (13:10), she hides from the scoffer (14:6), she rests in the hearts of those who have understanding (14:33), she is the end of the Fear of the Lord (15:33), she is in the presence of one who has understanding (17:24), she cannot be used against the Lord (21:30), she is the means by which ones' house is build and established (24:3), she is seen as too aloof by the fool (24:7), she is like honey for the soul (24:13-14), she will make glad the father of any son who pursues her (29:3); she is given by the rod and reproof (29:15), she is not something we have inherently (30:1-4), and she is the guide for the speech of a righteous wife (31:26). All of this we discover just within the book of proverbs.

What does the rest of scripture say about wisdom? And what can this add to our understanding?

In the book of Exodus, this “Chokmah”, the skill or cleverness, is provided to various people to build the Tabernacle. As is recounted by Moses in the book, we see that were some “**skillful persons whom [God] endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him** (Exodus 28:3)”, “**Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah**” who God “**filled ... with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship** (Exodus 31:2b-3a)” in various metals and woods and “**Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan**” who was similarly blessed along with “**all who are skillful** (Exodus 31:6)” to build the tent, ark, mercy seat, and all the furniture. After being commanded to come and build the Tabernacle, we see that everyone who was moved to give provided something of their own skill or possessions to that effort. In this account we see that “**All the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue and purple and scarlet material and in fine linen** (Exodus 35:25).” These people already possessed the skills — that is they had Wisdom given them from God — but were now putting them to use for the Tabernacle.

In Deuteronomy, God had brought Israel to the land of the Canaanites to conquer it. After having crossed the Jordan, Moses began speaking to the people recounting all the glorious things God had already done for them since leaving Egypt. He wants to set the tone for their life in Canaan and tells them, “**See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?** (Deuteronomy 4:5-8)” The laws given by God are said to be Israel’s Wisdom that would make them desirable to the nations. Implied here is that the nation who honors God with its laws will be blessed and favored by God. The last few verses of

Deuteronomy tell us the following: “Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Exodus 34:9)” Here we see that the spirit of wisdom given to Moses had been passed on through a blessing given to Joshua, which the Lord honored.

We also see how Wisdom interacts with various figures in the histories given throughout scripture. I will give three examples today, the first is Solomon, the second are the sons of Korah, and the third is the king of Tyre.

The most notable of these is Solomon. At the beginning of his reign, we see this account: “In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask what I shall give you.” Solomon said to God, “You have dealt with my father David with great loving-kindness, and have made me king in his place. Now, O Lord God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?” God said to Solomon, “Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you.” So Solomon went from the high place which was at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem, and he reigned over Israel. (2 Chronicles 1:7-13)” Take special note to God’s reasoning here. Solomon showed his heart to God and God loved what He saw. Solomon wanted wisdom to rule well instead of wealth, power, or vengeance. This is the heart we see extolled in the book of Proverbs. Solomon saw that he did not have wisdom and he knew that he needed it to be a good ruler over the people. It was because of this that God gave him wisdom beyond all other Kings, and then much more than that. From this gift, we have the Wisdom literature, and Solomon’s wisdom was so prolific that it was chronicled cited in 1 Kings, which has been lost to time.

In both 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles, we see that the queen of Sheba is silenced and disturbed by the excellence of Solomon’s wisdom. 2 Chronicles says, “Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test Solomon with difficult questions. She had a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and a large amount of gold and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was on her heart. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from Solomon which he did not explain to her. When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house which he had built, the food at his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his ministers and their attire, his cup-bearers and their attire, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the Lord, she was breathless. Then she said to the king, “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. Nevertheless I did not believe their reports until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me. You surpass the report that I heard. How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the Lord your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice

and righteousness.” (2 Chronicles 9:1-8).” Wisdom was not merely the crown that Solomon wore, but was seen in even the dress of his servants or the stairs he used to get to the Lord’s Temple. This wisdom was beatifying to everyone over whom Solomon governed to the astonishment of the Queen of the South.

Our second example are the sons of Korah. Korah was a Levite who joined with the 250 men who challenged Moses for leadership of Israel. This insurrection was stopped by God, Who, according to the word given by Moses, had the ground open its mouth and swallow Korah and all that he possessed. Korah’s sons, however, were spared and went on to serve the temple as doorkeepers and custodians. There are eleven Psalms we have in scripture that were written by these sons. In Psalm 49, these sons sing, “Hear this, all peoples; Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, Both low and high, Rich and poor together. My mouth will speak wisdom, And the meditation of my heart will be understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will express my riddle on the harp. Why should I fear in days of adversity, When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me, Even those who trust in their wealth And boast in the abundance of their riches? No man can by any means redeem his brother Or give to God a ransom for him— For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever— That he should live on eternally, That he should not undergo decay. (Psalm 49:1-9)” In His mercy, God rescued the sons of Korah and gave them wisdom, which they shared through song in the Tabernacle. Where their father fought against the prophet God over Israel, his sons went on to proclaim the faithfulness and worthiness of God even in the hardest times. What we see of Wisdom is that she is granted to those who do not deserve it and is used to redeem those who come from evil men.

In our counter-example, we see the King of Tyre. The king of Tyre has been so condemned by God that some people believe that God is actually speaking about Satan himself. Tyre was an ancient Phoenician city in Lebanon that was known for its ruthless business practices. God gave Ezekiel a prophecy against this king: “Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Because your heart is lifted up And you have said, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods In the heart of the seas’; Yet you are a man and not God, Although you make your heart like the heart of God— Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you. By your wisdom and understanding You have acquired riches for yourself And have acquired gold and silver for your treasures. “By your great wisdom, by your trade You have increased your riches And your heart is lifted up because of your riches— Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Because you have made your heart Like the heart of God, Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, The most ruthless of the nations. And they will draw their swords Against the beauty of your wisdom And defile your splendor. ‘They will bring you down to the pit, And you will die the death of those who are slain In the heart of the seas. (Ezekiel 28:1-19)” We see here that Tyre had wisdom, but denied God. They used their wisdom to ravage others, and were the kinds of wicked men that the father speaks against in his opening treatise. As the father says, “they lie in wait for their own blood; They ambush their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its possessors. (1:18-19)”

In a lament for the king, we see why some believe that the King of Tyre is actually Satan. God instructed Ezekiel to say “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: ...the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They

were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever. (Ezekiel 28:11b-19)” As if the previous verse could be confused as sarcasm or biting scorn, this portion of the text confirms that Tyre did, in fact, have wisdom, but squandered it in pride.

In these three examples, we see Wisdom in action. In one, we see that even clothes of the servants and slaves of his house are made beautiful by his wisdom. In the second, we see a lineage redeemed by the Mercy of God with Wisdom as a gift. And in the third, we see that the wisdom that the wicked possess was taken from them after being used to destroy them because of their wickedness.

We now have a fuller picture of who and what Wisdom is and how she interacts with us. Summarized, we can understand that Wisdom

- was established by God before anything else;
- is the delight of God;
- is a trained habit of action to a particular end and is shown in skill and cleverness;
- is given to provide craftsmanship;
- is found in the operations of all things;
- genuinely cares for men and takes delight in them;
- offers blessings beyond compare, wanting all men to feast from her table;
- is more desirable than anything else, refreshing the soul, giving life to the bones, and beautifying all who walk in her ways;
- loves those who love her, and hates those who hate her;
- is what God used to create all things, is the standard of how the world operates, is the end of all things, and is found in all things;
- and is what kings and princes use to rule well, is the Law of a nation who honors God, and beautifies those nations who honor God.

In some ways, we cannot help but see Wisdom as a representation of Christ Himself, just personified in the Feminine. The more I look throughout scripture, the more convinced I am of this position. In his commentaries on Proverbs 8 and 9, Matthew Henry says, “Wisdom here is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; it is Christ in the word and Christ in the heart, not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the Word, in whom all divine revelation centres; it is the soul formed by the word; it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent

thing.” And “Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent and munificent queen, very great and very generous; that Word of God is this Wisdom in which God makes known his goodwill towards men; God the Word is this Wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He who, in the chapter before, showed his grandeur and glory as the Creator of the world, here shows his grace and goodness as the Redeemer of it. The word is plural, Wisdoms; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery.”

It is no wonder then, that God held the disbelievers in Israel in contempt for their rejection of Christ. This God the Word, spoken of through types and shadows was then revealed to be Christ. At His coming, he performed signs and wonders, and gave gifts. He who is the source of all life, which was a light to men — this true Light which enlightens every man — came to his own, but His own did not receive Him (John 1:4,9,11). Because of their sins, He spoke “**to them in parables; because while seeing they [did] not see, and while hearing they [did] not hear, nor [did] they understand. In their case the prophecy of Isaiah [was] fulfilled, which says, ‘You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.’ (Matthew 13:13-15)**” Even in his own home town, “**they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offense at Him. (Matthew 13:53-58)**”

To the scribes and Pharisees, those leader who had the truth and yet hid it from the people, He proclaimed, “**Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:34-36)**” and when they asked him to give them a sign, He said to them, “**An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. (Matthew 12:38-42)**” To the other cities He said, “**Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you. (Matthew 11:20-24)**” Christ spoke of them so harshly because “**they**

were entrusted with the oracles of God (Romans 3:2b)". So, while all men had Wisdom of some sort, "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them (Romans 1:19)", Israel was given the wisdom of God through the scriptures and in spite of that, they refused to "honor Him as God or give thanks (Romans 1:21)."

In contrast, while Christ spoke to them in parables to confuse them, to those of us who love God, "blessed are [our] eyes, because they see; and [our] ears, because they hear. (Matthew 13:16)." "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. (Matthew 13:12)" This wisdom we have been granted in Christ is not something we have earned, nor something we can attain by ourselves. It was given because Christ has come to us and given us new eyes and new ears and new hearts so that we may see, hear, and believe. This wisdom is what Paul speaks of when he says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven...that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 1:15-20; 2:2b-3)"

When we read of Wisdom in Proverbs, know that we are dealing with God veiled in a Type. This veil is not one made of words, though words are used to describe this personification. This type is one we see in nature all around us and is that type that makes us accountable to God for our rejection of Him. When the father in Proverbs tells us to seek Wisdom — that is the practiced habit of action toward an end — he is using a literary tool to show us how we can understand the Mind and Methods of God as made manifest in nature. This Type — this representation — is accessible to all men, and genuinely seeks the salvation of all by crying out through the excellencies we develop in this life. Not only that, but this Type is embodied in those excellencies, such that God is visible in the work of our own hands. This Type is perennial, so long as this life continues. On one hand, Wisdom is a thing we seek to obtain — a set of skills or an excellency of being — and the other, Wisdom is a Person we are told to love with our entire being. In this first sense, wisdom is nothing more than acting God's actions after Him and thinking God's thoughts after Him in the pursuit of a state of being that most perfectly mirrors His Perfections. In the other sense, Wisdom is that Person through Whom we have access to God, that is Christ. This Type is not merely concerned with your Justification, but is intensely concerned about your Sanctification. It is concerned with your ability and desire to be good at all that you put your hands to and it expects of you diligence and craftsmanship in all things. And it is in this Type, this Wisdom, that we as Christians may see the Character and Nature of the Triune God made manifest in our daily lives.

Amen