



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Look of the Wise (Proverbs 30)

11 MAY 2010

Ron J. Bigalke, PhD / PO Box 244, Rincon, GA 31326-0244 / www.capitolcom.org / ron.bigalke@capitolcom.org

Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Currently, the Bible study for staff members is held Tuesdays at noon in 514 CLOB. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is to be a means of God transforming the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction to the Study

Proverbs was written "to give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion" (1:4), to increase the learning of the wise, and for a "man of understanding" to acquire "wise council" (1:5). Proverbs discusses the life of wisdom. Wisdom begins when God is revered (1:7); therefore, the life of wisdom cannot be disassociated from the all-inclusive wisdom and instruction of the Lord.

LOOKING HUMBLY

(30:1-9) The title provided in the first verse indicates a new collection of wise words. The writer is Agur ("gatherer"), who is identified as the son of Jakeh ("obedient"). Ithiel ("God is with me") and Ucal ("able," "a mighty one") were Agur's companions, or possibly individuals who received instruction from him, as Luke addressed Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). Agur humbly acknowledged his own ignorance without "knowledge of the Holy One" (cf. Prov 29:18). Agur's acknowledgement was sincere in comparison to the knowledge

of God. Human knowledge is indeed limited without divine revelation (cf. Job 38—39). God, therefore, gave Agur understanding—revealing precious truths and imparting wisdom—to communicate these truths not only to Ithiel and Ucal but also to countless generations (cf. Prov 30:5-6).

Ithiel and Ucal certainly ascribed knowledge and wisdom to Agur, but Agur humbly confessed inability and incompetence that overwhelmed him. Similar to Job 38—39, verse 4 begins a series of rhetorical questions, with the obvious reply being "God." Agur considered the immensity of the natural forces, and was amazed before God who controls them. Enoch and Elijah ascended into heaven, but none have been known to also descend. The first question may anticipate John 3:13 and Ephesians 4:9-10. Agur's readers would have regarded the request for a name as an extension of the argument, but it may also be a prophetic intimation of Jesus, the Son of God. The one who knows the name of the Creator, as revealed through Jesus Christ, is happy and wise to have obtained such internal and intimate knowledge (John 1:14-18; 17:3). The primary emphasis of verses 2-4 is humility, combined with gratitude for what God has revealed, and proper submission to God's revelation without intruding upon His words.

God's Word is true and unfailing ("tested"), which must not be combined with autonomous pontifications and speculations. Eternal truth is unattainable by one's own ability and intellect; rather, God alone is the sole infallible source of truth. Not mere parts of God's Word are infallible, but "every word of God" is reliable. Scripture is perfect and sufficient. All who "take refuge" *behind* God as "a shield" will find protection from the vicissitudes of life. Agur, therefore, warned against adding to (and therefore misconstruing) the perfection and purity of God's Word (cf. Deut 12:32; Rev 22:18). Those who disobey this warning will be reprovved and proved to be liars.

Verse seven begins the first of several numerical statements. "Two things," Agur asked of God. God's answer to these requests will sustain him throughout his life. *First*, he requested distance from "deception and lies." Integrity is integral to the life of the wise. The *second* request was for daily necessities, neither too little nor too much. Either circumstance may inculcate intense temptation. "But Zeshurun grew fat and kicked . . . then he forsook God" (Deut 32:15). Extreme want may tempt one to steal. Either action dishonors the name of God. God may grant wealth or withhold riches from others, but most live easier between the extremes (Phil 4:11-13).

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES ~ GEORGIA

LEGISLATORS AND LOBBYISTS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30AM, 514 CLOB (DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

STAFF: TUESDAYS @ NOON, 514 CLOB (AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION)

“keep deception and lies far from me”	
(1) idolatry, vanity	(2) error in outlook
(3) deceit and folly of sin	(4) false actions or thought
twofold prayer against the temptation to sin (1) give me not poverty (2) give me not riches <i>reason:</i> not to profane the name of God through impiety or perjury, or independence and pettiness	

LOOKING THOUGHTFULLY

(30:10-33) The counsel of verse 10 is not to interfere with someone else’s business. The servant would curse the accuser for meddling, whereas the master may find the accuser “guilty” for false accusation. Even among the church, it may be careless, impertinent, and thoughtless to judge the service of a fellow laborer (Rom 14:4, 13).

Verses 11-14 describe four kinds (“generation” or “classes”) of individuals. They are ungrateful children who dishonor their parents, hypocritical persons who are contaminated with their own sins (although they are morally pure in their own estimation), proud and arrogant people, and those who demonstrate cruelty and oppression towards the afflicted and needy (as wild beasts).

THE WORLD AND ALL IT CONTAINS WILL NEVER SATISFY THE RESTLESSNESS OF THE MATERIALISTIC.

Verses 15-17 describe the greedy, who are compared to a leech with two offspring just as voracious and wretched. Similar to the greedy, three things will never be satisfied: sheol (the grave), the barren womb, and the earth with incessant water. Four things will never say, “Enough.” “Fire,” therefore, is added to the list of three. The three plus four style is a Hebrew idiom that enhances the poetic statement, and intensifies to a climax that implies numerous examples. The list is specific but not comprehensive. Verses 15-16 describe four insatiable things. Two things are deadly (sheol, fire) and two conducive to life (the womb, earth). The world and all it contains will never satisfy the restlessness of the materialistic. Augustine wrote famously, “. . . you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you” (*Confessions* 1.1). Verse 17 recalls the ungrateful children mentioned in verse 11, and reveals God’s judgment against those who mock and scorn their parents. Rebellious children scorn obedience, which is sin against divine authority. The disobedient mocker will be deprived of vision.

Verses 18-20 describe three things “which are too wonderful,” and four exceeding the understanding of the

writer. The descriptions are another numerical proverb. All four things share something in common: progress without any visible means of movement and the absence of any trace of their presence. The eagle flies, the serpent slithers, and the ship traverses. Similarly, in the relationship between a man with a woman, there is a mysterious “way” into her heart. The writer does not marvel at the beginning and the end of these four things, but wonders at the mystery of the way. Verse 20 applies the idea of verses 18-20. An adulteress removes traces of her sin (“eats and wipes her mouth”) and claims to be innocent (“I have done no wrong”). She has no conscience to prevent her promiscuity. The adulteress is “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13). God will judge every secret (Eccl 12:14).

Verses 21-23 contain another numerical proverb, with the repetition “under” and “when.” The listing contains four things that causing the earth to tremble. The servant rules as king without ability, as does the maidservant. The boorish fool cannot experience blessing without being insensitive to others. The despised woman who has been hurt deeply will have difficulty in her marital relationship.

Verses 24-28 depict four “small” but “exceedingly wise” creatures. Although these creatures are small and lack strength, they thrive in spite of such insignificance. The ants are not strong in comparison to man, but they do have foresight to store food in summer. The shephanim (“rock badgers”) cannot defend themselves; therefore, they “make their houses in the rocks.” The locusts have no leader but can gather in orderly formations. The lizard is helpless but dwells easily “in kings’ palaces.” The qualities that they do possess allow them to succeed; their weakness is not the priority of these creatures.

Verses 29-31 compare three impressive creatures to a king. The lion is king of the beasts. The rooster struts with all the pomp of a king’s court. The male goat struts aggressively with intimidation before his rivals. The king with his army is both confident and noble. All four are “stately when they walk.” The comparisons seem related to the closing verses. The reader is exhorted to self-examination with regard to exalting oneself or plotting evil against the innocent. Covering the mouth refers to ceasing this exaltation. The threefold repetition of pressure and production in verse 33 indicates the inevitable outcome of sin (as certainly as butter, blood, and strife result from the actions producing them). The observations of Proverbs 30 were intended to result in personal humility in contrast to the exaltedness of God. The observations of both life and nature were intended to exhort the reader to avoid foolishness, and to have the look of the wise in humility and thoughtfulness.