

Woodland Baptist Church
 Wednesday, December 10, 2014
 Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 30
 The Words of Agur, son of Jakeh. The Oracle.

1) READ PROVERBS 30

a) **The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle.**

- i) We know nothing about Agur son of Jakeh nor his father.
- ii) What's an "oracle" - Communications from God. The term refers both to divine responses to a question asked of God and to pronouncements made by God without His being asked. In one sense, oracles were prophecies since they often referred to the future; but oracles sometimes dealt with decisions to be made in the present. Usually, in the Bible the communication was from Yahweh, the God of Israel. In times of idol worship, however, Israelites did seek a word or pronouncement from false gods (Hosea 4:12). Many of Israel's neighbors sought oracles from their gods.¹

2) **Knowledge of Wisdom and the Holy One (4-Q & A's)**

a) **The man declares, I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out.**

- i) Your Bible may say, "the man spoke to Ithiel, for Ithiel and for Ucal" - this is one of the situations where the Hebrew is extraordinarily difficult to translate.
- ii) So it's either a self-effacing statement that leads into verse 2-3 or the Agur is addressing two people he knows to teach them something.

3) **Confession/Dispute of Ignorance**

- a) **2 Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. 3 I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. 4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!**

¹ Holman Bible Dictionary

- i) The three synonyms, “understanding,” “wisdom,” “knowledge,” echo the opening verses of Proverbs, but with all the joy and confidence drained away. What the wise teachers held out as the purpose of their training, Agur confesses to have missed.²
- ii) The point God seems to make in the questions is that no unaided human knowledge can probe these mysteries—a theme sounded in Job 28. Agur should not despair of his ignorance. It is a problem he has in common with all who have not learned to fear and trust God in His revealed word.
- iii) **What is his name, and what is his son’s name?** “No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27).

4) Admonition on God’s Word

- a) **5 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. 6 Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.**

- i) Agur treasured the revelation that God had given. "Tested" means "smelted," purified (cf. Ps. 12:6). It was trustworthy. Agur correctly regarded the aim of revelation to be the promotion of trust in God, not just knowledge (v. 5b). Agur warned against adding to God's revelation because that is a serious offense (v. 6; cf. Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18).³

(1) The words are very similar to **2 Timothy 3:16** - 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...

5) Prayer for Moderate Blessings:

- i) **7 Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: 8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, 9 lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the Lord?” or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.**

(1) **Help me to tell the truth** - as he knows from what he has just said in previous verses, the God’s Word is dependable and God’s word is clear

² Hubbard

³ Constable

about telling the truth - lying is very damaging and causes many problems. Telling the truth can cause problems as well, but you have the advantage of honoring God through telling the truth.

(2) **Help me to know how to live contently** - please don't give me extreme ends of anything - not extreme poverty or extreme wealth - fulfill my needs (feed me with food that is needful). If you do give me one of the extremes I may deny you.

(a) Extremely rich people begin to believe they don't need God - they did it all on their own.

(b) Extremely poor people begin to believe God has forgotten them or stopped caring about them.

(3) **Philippians 4:11-13** - 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

6) Admonition on Slandering a Servant

i) **10 Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.**

(1) One should be hesitant to impugn a laborer to his master (or, in modern terms, to his employer). Otherwise one will be subject to verbal retaliation and be guilty of being a meddler. Behind this injunction is a demand that one respect the person of the menial worker. His work relationship with his master is between the two of them; one should no more interfere here than one would interfere in a matter involving a superior or an equal.

7) Spiteful Behavior

a) Dishonor to Parents - **11 There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.**

b) Hypocrites - **12 There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.**

c) Arrogant - **13 There are those—how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift!**

- d) **Plunder the Poor 14 There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.**

8) Numerical Sayings on Greed

- a) **15 The leech has two daughters: Give and Give. Three things are never satisfied; four never say, "Enough": 16 Sheol, the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says, "Enough."**

i) The horse leech, a common blood-sucking pest in Palestine, is used here as a symbol for that which has an insatiable appetite. There are two, three, even four things which, like the horse leech, never have enough: (1) Sheol, the abode of the dead, which can never be filled with its victims; (2) the barren womb (lit., the closing of the womb), i.e., the burning desire for children characteristic of an Israelite wife; (3) the earth, in that its soil must yearn for water for its fertility; and (4) fire, which greedily seizes upon any fuel available to keep burning.⁴

- b) **17 The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.**

i) This is an independent proverb only connected with the preceding by being founded on an allusion to an animal. Agur depicts a son arrogantly mocking the advice of his fathers. "The eye that mocks at his father" will be plucked out by "the ravens of the valley." The "eye" here is the mind's instrument for expressing scorn and insubordination; it is the index to the inner feeling. One who disobeys his mother is equally as guilty and will receive the same treatment. So the punishment here implies that the rebellious son will meet with a violent death and his body will be left unburied.⁵

9) Numerical Sayings about Love

- a) **18 Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand: 19 the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin. 20 This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, "I have done no wrong."**

⁴ Wisdom and Psalms

⁵ Ibid

- i) The eagle, the snake, and the ship can cross the sky, a rock, or the sea and leave no tracks. No trace of their passing through remains. The link between these three and the way of a man with a young woman is in v. 20, which serves as a clue. Wiping her mouth after eating means that the adulteress treats sexual liaisons the same way she does eating: she just finishes up and goes home without a care and certainly without a sense of guilt.⁶

10) Numerical Sayings on Social Chaos

- a) **21 Under three things the earth trembles; under four it cannot bear up: 22 a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is filled with food; 23 an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress.**

- i) Agur humorously depicts the earth tottering under the burden of four kinds of persons. The four evils he names destroy the comfort of social life, uproot the bonds of society, and endanger the safety of a nation. He selects two illustrations from each sex.

- (1) First, the earth totters under “a servant when he becomes king” (cf. 19:10).
- (2) Second, the earth totters under “a fool when he is filled with food.” The “fool” (nabal) is a low, profligate fellow, who is rich and without care. When such a one rises to high position, or has power over others, he becomes arrogant, selfish, unbearable. Such a person also may come to deny the role of the Lord in his life (cf. vv. 8–9; 28:12; 29:2).
- (3) Third, the earth totters under “an unloved woman who is married.” The reference could be to a woman who had a long wait to secure a husband. If such a one eventually does win a husband, she uses her new position to vex those who formerly depreciated her, and to make them as miserable as she can.
- (4) Fourth, the earth totters under “a handmaid who is heir to her mistress.” The reference may be to a servant who displaces her mistress in the husband’s affections and takes her place as his wife. Such a one tends to become conceited, arrogant, and odious to all around her.

⁶ Garrett, NAC

11) Numerical Sayings on Wise Behavior

- a) **24 Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise: 25 the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; 26 the rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs; 27 the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; 28 the lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.**
- i) **Ants** - they are a “people,” because they live in a community, and have authorities which they obey. Their actions are regulated by certain definite laws. Ants are “not strong.” Yet they are wise enough to lay in store during the summer months the food which they will need during the winter. The ant already has been proposed as an example to the sluggard (cf. 6:6). Here **foresight** is commended.
 - ii) **Rock-badgers** (lit., hidiers) show wisdom by making their houses in the crags of the rocks. These inaccessible places provide protection from predators. Here the **safety of a sound shelter** is commended.
 - iii) **Locusts**, which have no king, “go forth all of them by bands.” They appear to divide themselves into companies like an army (cf. Joel 2:7). Unity and discipline in their ranks make these insignificant creatures a formidable pest. Here the **triumph of organization** is commended.
 - iv) **Fourth**, the “lizard” or “spider”—the Hebrew word has both meanings—is so small that it can be crushed in the hand. Yet that small creature can gain admission to the grandest type of building. Here the **success of persistency** is commended.⁷

12) Numerical Sayings on Stateliness

- a) **29 Three things are stately in their tread; four are stately in their stride: 30 the lion, which is mightiest among beasts and does not turn back before any; 31 the strutting rooster, the he-goat, and a king whose army is with him.**
- i) To keep us from concluding that little is always better than big (in view of vv. 24-28), Agur produced “four” more illustrations of “stately” or noble behavior. He had shown the balance between groundless pride (cf. vv. 21-23) and false humility (cf. vv. 24-28). Now these stately things demonstrate that a proper bearing in life comes neither from exalting nor from depreciating oneself. It comes from functioning as God created one to function (i.e., to be oneself,

⁷ Wisdom and Psalms, Logos

sincere). David, as warrior-king of Israel, marching into battle against Israel's enemies, gives us a picture of a stately "king."⁸

b) 32 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth. 33 For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife.

i) Agur advises his students to exercise restraint. A student should put his hand to his mouth, i.e., check himself, if he contemplates acting in a foolish manner. Churning milk makes butter, and wringing a nose causes a flow of blood. So strife is often deliberately created. A quarrel need not happen and can be averted. "Wrath" is "wrung out" of a person just as blood is "wrung out" of the nose.⁹

⁸ Constable

⁹ Wisdom and Psalms