

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

(Book of Wisdom)

Bishop Moussa

There are five main themes in the Book of Proverbs. Let us consider them...

WISDOM IS JESUS CHRIST

Because He is the 'Logos' (the Word), He is the eternal, infinite wisdom, and hence the source of our wisdom. The following three verses speak about the infinity of our Lord Jesus Christ :-

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old" (8:22). This verse shows the presence of Jesus with the Father from the beginning, and it was this chapter that puzzled Arius the heretic.

"Then I was beside Him; as a master craftsman, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him" (8:30) Here we see Jesus being the Creator and the master craftsman.

"Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars" (9:1) The verse refers to Christ forming the church and the seven sacraments.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WISDOM

"To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgement and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion" (1:1). These are the three goals of wisdom: understanding, prudence to the simple, and discretion. Having attained these three goals, you will have the ability to differentiate between what is right and what isn't.

WARNING ABOUT WALKING IN THE STEPS OF THE WICKED

"Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it and do not travel on it, turn away from it and pass on" (4:14-15). Solomon is advising us not to walk in the ways of the wicked people. Sin is always destructive. It destroys your mind because you will not be able to think clearly, and it destroys your spirit and deprives you of God. It destroys your body because it consumes all your energy, and it will destroy your social life. For this reason, "Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their heart devises violence and their lips talk of trouble making" (24:1-2). Therefore, you must have an enlightened mind, an active spirit and a strong relationship with the Lord, and thereby have the ability to discern between what is right and what is wrong, for "a wise man is strong" (24:5).

WARNING AGAINST ADULTERY

Adultery is one of the major issues which Solomon warns us about in this Book :-

"For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is as bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life - her ways are unstable; you do not know them. Therefore hear me now my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house" (5:3-8).

"For the commandment is a lamp and the law is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life, to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids, for by means of a harlot, a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be seared? ...Whoever touches her shall not be innocent...Whoever commits adultery lacks understanding, he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonour he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away" (6:23-33).

"For at the window of my house, I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner, and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him with the attire of a harlot and a crafty heart...so she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him 'I have

peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you...Come let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love...' With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life. Now therefore, listen to me my children, pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death" (7:6-27).

DRINKING

Drinking should not be something taken lightly, or for fun, because once you start this habit, it will be very difficult to stop. Not only will you lose your health and your mind, but you will also lose your friends, for they will mock you. Without doubt, drinking leads to many catastrophes.

"Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (20:1)

"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like the serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of a mast, saying, 'They have struck me but I was not hurt. They have beaten me but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?'" (23:29)