

That's What They Say

Lesson 2: Christ, Our Wisdom for Living

Israelite Wisdom

From time to time, someone would reflect on an experience and coin a saying to enshrine the lesson learned.

Some of these sayings would be related to an inner circle, to the family or common interest group.

Others would relate to the common life and eventually find a place in the oral wisdom of that community.

In time, various scribes would write down these pithy sayings of conventional wisdom.

Proverbs of the Covenant

Hebrew society developed as a covenant society.

- Israel's origins and growth were always in relation to the activity of God:
- God called Abraham.
- God made a covenant with Abraham.
- God led Abraham's descendants through a redemptive experience, the exodus from Egypt
- The Sinai covenant, understood in the light of the exodus experience, became the chief influence on the ordinary life of all Israelites.

Eden and Canaan

In Eden the people of God interpreted the world and life in it by what God had revealed through his Word.



Israel had the revealing word of God that interpreted their existence in relation to the covenant and the redeeming acts of God.

The Bible is a Story

- The story is the story of what God does
 - it has a beginning
 - it develops towards an end
- The activity of God is the framework, or reference point, for the human activity of:
 - thinking about the facts of living
 - understanding the meaning of life

God's Activity in Abraham

Abraham was given the covenant promises that his descendants would be a great nation of God's people living in the promised land.

This nation would be also the means of God's purposes of blessing reaching all the nations of the world.

God's Activity in Moses

Revelation given in act:

- The exodus

Revelation given in word:

- The meaning of salvation

Revelation given in act:

- The law of Sinai

Revelation given in word:

- The structure of life and redemption

The Fear of the Lord

The “fear of the Lord”, for Israel, included the task of:

- Understanding their life
- Gaining wisdom

The Development and Formation of Wisdom

The Development of Wisdom:

- Began with Adam and Eve
- Progressed in Israel as a Nation

The Formation of Wisdom

- Practical folk wisdom
- Reflection on
 - o Right Application of the Law
 - o Knowledge of God’s saving acts

The Animals Won’t Stand Still

Before the fall:

Eden was orderly and perfect.

Adam could exercise his God-given rule over the animals to examine them.

Adam could relate the facts of his investigation to the word of God.

Adam could fit his experience into the reality of God’s ordered universe.



After the Fall:

The world and its relationships were dislocated and distorted.

Human beings refused to acknowledge the true state of affairs.

Human beings ceased to reason in the light of God's word.

Two Interpretations of Reality

The serpent's interpretation of reality:

We are able to understand all things through what our senses perceive.

There are no mysteries.

There is no knowable God.

There is no knowledge dependent upon revelation from a higher being.

The Bible's interpretation of reality:

We are dependent on the One who is Creator of all and Lord of all.

Proverbs as Practical Wisdom

The Book of Proverbs contains the kind of wisdom that stresses the existing order of things that God maintains in his goodness.

Proverbs' main assumption is the preservation of a perceptible order in the universe despite the confusion due to sin.