

INTRODUCTION

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.....”
Hosea 4:6(a) (RSV)*

*“..... and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.”
Hosea 4:14(b) (ESV)*

*“For my people are foolish;
they know me not;
they are stupid children;
they have no understanding.
They are ‘wise’—in doing evil!
But how to do good they know not.”
Jeremiah 4:22 (ESV)*

*Therefore my people go into exile
for lack of knowledge;.....
Isaiah 5:13(a) (ESV)*

*People who have wealth but lack understanding
are like the beasts that perish.
Psalm 49:20 (NIV)*

*⁶ The stupid man cannot know;
the fool cannot understand this:
⁷ that though the wicked sprout like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction forever;
Psalm 92:6-7 (ESV)*

*How much better to get wisdom than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
Proverbs 16:16 (ESV)*

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without
reproaching, and it will be given him.
James 1:5 (RSV)*

*Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
Psalm 51:6 (ESV)*

*Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God.....
1 Chronicles 22:19 (ESV)*

My impression is that most people think of themselves as wise, at least to some degree. They may not say it out loud, but they think it, even if only unconsciously. At any rate, they don't consider themselves to be what the Bible calls simple or naïve, and they certainly don't see themselves as being either fools or wicked. However, that presents a problem, because the Bible indicates that very few people are wise and that the other three groups make up the vast majority of the population.

Even within the Church, the reality is that few people are wise. At best, the majority of us are simple/naïve and many of us, despite the fact that we are members of churches, are fools, or even

wicked. So, my first task in this book is a delicate one. It is to seek to convince you that you probably aren't wise at the moment. That's not the way for me to win friends, but it does appear to be what the Bible is saying.

My second task is to persuade you that you ought to make it your aim to *become* wise. To that end, I will set out a host of benefits that come from being wise and try to explain more fully what wisdom really is. Biblical wisdom means thinking, speaking and acting in a godly way, rather than as the world does, or in accordance with your fleshly nature.

The third aim is then to show how such wisdom can be acquired. Although real wisdom is rare, the fact remains that it is fully available to all of us. It is there to be gained and it can be developed by *anybody at all*. You don't have to be naturally clever or educated or have an important job. That is because real wisdom is primarily about developing a Christ-like character and seeing the world, yourself, and those around you *as God sees them*.

It is also about learning the principles by which God operates, and the way He thinks, and then emphasising and valuing the same things that He does. That is why I insist that wisdom really is available to everybody, despite the fact that, in practice, it is so rare. It is only rare because so few people *choose* to pursue it. If they did, they would acquire it, no matter who, or what, they may be at present. You can undoubtedly get it, if you are willing to *seek for it* by studying the Bible with sufficient determination and perseverance.

The problem is that such diligent, long-term study requires effort and commitment. But very few of us are willing to put in the amount of work that is needed to get to know the whole Bible really well and to put it into practice in our day to day lives. Accordingly, wisdom is exceptional, but only because most people, even real Christians, don't want to make that much of an effort. At any rate, they are not sufficiently motivated to keep it up, even if they make a start at it.

That therefore brings us back to the second aim of this book, which is to persuade you that genuine biblical wisdom really is worth making a great effort to obtain. No matter what it requires, or how long it takes, it is worth it. You don't need to take my word for that. The Bible tells us so over and over again. Indeed, the first eight chapters of Proverbs are devoted to trying to convince you of this. The conclusion of those eight chapters is that wisdom should be pursued as if it was gold or precious stones. In fact, it is said to be far more valuable than those things:

¹³ *How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.*
¹⁴ *For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.*
¹⁵ *She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.*
¹⁶ *Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.*
¹⁷ *Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.*
¹⁸ *She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.*

Proverbs 3:13-18 (NASB)

Moreover, we are told all of this by King Solomon, the writer of most of the Book of Proverbs. The Bible says that he was the wisest man who ever lived, other than Jesus. Therefore, he must surely be worth listening to, by anybody's standards. I do hope, therefore, that you will consider very carefully the case that is made for wisdom in this book and then resolve to pursue it for yourself, no matter how high the cost may be, or how great the effort involved, and regardless of how long it takes.

Sean Kehoe 6 April 2018