

INTRODUCTION

*“Therefore my people go into exile for want of knowledge.....-“
Isaiah 5:13(a) (RSV)*

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

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

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)

The impression I get is that most people think of themselves as being 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/naïve, and they certainly don't see themselves as being either fools or wicked.

But that presents a problem, because the Bible indicates that very few people are wise and that the other three groups make up the great 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 within 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. Basically, however, the biblical definition of wisdom means thinking, speaking and acting in a godly way rather than as the world does, or in accordance with your carnal, 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, as we have seen, 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 it is so rare. 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. Few of us are willing to put in the amount of work that is needed to get to really know the whole Bible well and to put it into practice in our day to day lives. That largely explains why wisdom is so rare, because the truth is that 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.

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 acquire. 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 whole of the first eight chapters of the Book of Proverbs are devoted to trying to convince you of this in a host of different ways. 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 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. I do hope, therefore, that you will consider very carefully the case that is made for wisdom in this book and then decide to pursue it for yourself, no matter how high the cost may be, and no matter how long it takes.

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