

Proverbs 23-03-08a

Good evening, welcome to Wednesday night Bible class at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're in Proverbs chapter nine, and we're about to conclude our study of the introduction to this collection of wisdom that is detailed in chapters one through nine. We are looking at the way of wisdom, the excellence of wisdom, its origins, its characteristics, its self-description, its role in creation is where we pick up tonight, and we will prosecute that study as soon as we take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study, and we'll begin.

Father, we're grateful for another opportunity to dine at the table that you have prepared before us, the opportunity to grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior, to enter into, in a small way, the wisdom of which the Lord Jesus Himself partook in His days of incarnation, and the wisdom that accompanied you when you created the universe, founded this world, and began the great demonstration of which we are all a part. We pray that as we look at these truths together, that the Holy Spirit will find us ready and apt pupils that we can learn and be not just instructed, but be equipped through what we study tonight for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We have as our text the eighth and ninth chapters here, and I'm bouncing back and forth because wisdom gives two speeches here. Chapter 8 is a full speech, and then we have an additional addendum in chapter 9. But we pick up tonight in verse 22.

We studied the first 21 verses over the last week or two, concluding with the way of righteousness and the paths of justice. In verse 20, wisdom says that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries. And we know without it having to be pointed out to us that this is transcendent wealth.

This is eternal benefit. This is inheritance in the coming kingdoms. It doesn't really matter what we accrue in this life.

It all makes a difference in the next. We pick up now in verse 22. The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way before his works of old.

I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountains abounding with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth, while as yet he had not made the earth or the fields or the primal dust of the world.

When he prepared the heavens, I was there. When he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him as a

master craftsman. And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men.

This is a fascinating section and it leads to a great conclusion in verses 32 through 36. What we find out here is twofold. First of all, there is a wonderful window into Genesis chapter 1. There are multiple references to creation and the creation week in Scripture.

This is one of them. It is harmonious, it is detailed, and we'll go rather quickly through our observation phase and reach the interpretation and application shortly. The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way.

The beginning of his way. So this takes us to pre-history. It takes us to before creation, before Genesis 1.1 and 1.2, the beginning of his way.

This, as near as we can ascertain from our human perspective, is a particular way. God has many ways. We know this because Scripture says his ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

But this is a particular way. This is the way that encompasses human history, that encompasses the interaction between angels, elect and fallen, or unfallen and fallen if you choose, with humanity, the coming of the Lord Jesus, everything that pertains to the sweep of history from creation to the new heavens and the new earth. This is a way.

It is not the only way that God has. There is an entire history dealing with angelic beings of which we are almost entirely unaware. We just have tantalizing hints.

But this way was at the beginning and the Lord possessed wisdom. So what it tells us is the wisdom that pertains to this world, this life, our human existence, the wisdom that is communicated in the Old and New Testaments, is unique and peculiar to us and to this way, this order, this creation with its plans and purposes in the mind and heart of God. It is the very limits of our intellectual grasp to realize that there can be other ways, other creations, other purposes, other demonstrations of the character of God.

His character is constant, but the expressions and the manifestations have been different even in this way as we look at the various dispensations. There is a huge attack on dispensationalism. There has been almost from the outset.

In my view, it needs no defense. By their fruits, ye shall know them. The unfolding of the beautiful rose that is the truth of in recognizing these petals with their similarities, their symmetries, and their differences, and how they surround and decorate as a frame or a setting the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is to me without question.

People who want to try to get along in opposition to recognizing God's dealings with the pre-flood creation, with the patriarchs, with Israel, with us, with the millennial kingdom, and so on. I say go with God. I hope you're able to make some progress, but it

is just essential to understand.

We have seen the clear markers that God has put at the beginning of each new phase of his plan, the unfolding and progress of revelation. This particular way has its wisdom that is unique and special to it. It was there at the beginning before the plan got underway.

The wisdom was present. God designed the promises, the principles, the doctrines, the mechanism by which salvation would be achieved through atonement, through the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The appearance of each and every one of us was woven into the fabric of this plan at the beginning before it was started.

There are some wonderful principles of application here. First of all, we can see that in the same way that there are symmetries and echoes in prophecy, in human history. We see that there are specific kinds of wisdom, expressions of doctrine and principle and promise at the beginning of dispensations, and it changes.

It is consistent. It is harmonious with God's character, his plan, his purpose. It is not self-contradictory, but it differs.

It adapts. It corresponds and is adjusted to the particular circumstance. You need one kind of revelation when the presence of the Holy Spirit is not ubiquitous.

You need another kind of revelation that covers the Holy Spirit age. It is not inconsistent. It is not in conflict, but the emphasis and the applicability shifts as the circumstances change.

We know this. Anybody that does any kind of work knows that you have a body of understanding that applies. As each new situation arises, some portion of that knowledge is put into effect, into practice.

It may be that something you did last time, you don't do this time. It doesn't mean that it was wrong last time, but it doesn't fit this time. It isn't necessary this time.

This is different. This has unique qualities that require a unique expression of our reservoir of knowledge. It is a small reflection of how it is with God.

So, the Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way before His works of old. The only works of old that we know of are the works that are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures and then referenced again in the New. His works of creation, His works of inception, His works of promise, and the unfolding of the nation of Israel, and ultimately the Redeemer, and widening the scope of the people of God to include Gentiles who don't need to convert and come to Israel.

But it is of a piece. It is consistent. And His works of old, I have been established from everlasting.

Everlasting in our context has limits. From everlasting to everlasting is from the beginning to the end of the experiment that is this universe with humanity. The universe as we know it, I am unaware of any other sentient creation with whom God is working other than ourselves and the angels who are at a level well above us.

I have been established from everlasting from the beginning before there was ever an earth. And this is a worthy example from God to follow, which is to have a plan, arrange thoughts and intentions and materials and purposes before we start going hammer and tongs into an effort. Think it through.

Have an objective. This is one of the problems if you want to be somewhat political, but it is shared equally by any portion of our government, any administration, any Congress during my lifetime certainly and probably before that, that we have entered into wars and have committed troops and materiel without a clear session establishing goals, measures, mission, a measure of when the mission is complete and we no longer need to be sending materiel and troops and intervention into some far off area. What are the specifications and the limits of our national interest in a given situation? When is that interest satisfied? Clear and measurable goals.

And without that, you have the history of the United States ever since World War II. It has been a very troubled and unsatisfactory effort. And this is what you get when you do things by committee instead of having an all-wise, all-powerful God who is accompanied by wisdom.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the same wisdom that was brought forth to serve and to guide and to measure and to function during human history was at our side in our little part of human history when we are looking to our stewardship of time and resources and opportunities to consult the same wisdom that was with God during creation and during the purposing and the designing and the aligning of materials and intentions and plans and provisions to accomplish God's goals. We have the availability. This is why this is in the Proverbs, to try to reinforce how valuable access to this wisdom is.

This is the wisdom that God brought forth and implemented before He ever said, Let there be light. Before He ever created the heavens and the earth, this wisdom came into being. There was a plan.

There was a design with all of its beauty, all of its symmetry, the crowning jewel in the center of the Lord Jesus Christ as the fullest expression of deity and bodily form. All of that was in the God before He ever created the first molecule, before the Big Bang or whatever it was that brought this heavens and earth into being happened. The wisdom that gave it shape and direction was brought forth.

We have access to that same wisdom. What a gift, what an opportunity, what an overlooked treasure that as we embark on an endeavor, on a task, on a purpose, on

training, on whatever goal we have. And let me emphasize, this can be as simple as putting a dog fence around your yard.

We don't have to wait for some grand curing of cancer or bringing about a world peace or some giant really important thing in our life. Everything in this life is training. It is all story problems.

It isn't the size of the problem that we solve. It's not the magnitude of the plan that we create. It's not the epic proportions of the solution or the implementation.

It is, can we learn to go to God's wisdom and consult it and be guided by it? You do the silliest things in training. In the military you run around with rubber knives and rubber guns and blank firing adapters, BFAs. You're firing blanks.

You couldn't hurt a bug with your M16 with a BFA on it. You're far more likely to hurt yourself with the blowback and such. But it isn't about how many bullets did we shoot? How many bullet holes did we create? How many enemies did we slay? It is all about, can I learn to implement tactics? Can I exercise leadership? Can I think tactically? Can I synthesize my understanding of the battlefield with the larger strategic picture? Can I think in terms of military goals using this artificial, somewhat silly, unimportant exercise out there sweating in the Virginia woods, getting ticks and sleeping soggy and so on.

We miss how important it is to become intimately acquainted with this wisdom because we think we don't have important occasions to use it. It's a huge mistake. It is commended to us and we say, well, but this is the wisdom that accompanied God when he created the universe.

Yes, it is. But it is also the wisdom that we can consult when you're creating a pie or a cake or a small completion of a task wherever, whenever, however, we live this life, because it's not about the task. It is about how and why we accomplish it, in what spirit, in what strength, to what end.

It doesn't say in scripture, anytime you decide to do something important, do it heartily as unto the Lord. It doesn't. If you're going to do something big, be sure you dedicate it to God.

The small stuff, don't sweat it. The verse my dad wrote in the front of my Bible, whatsoever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, not unto men. Heartily, whatever it is, large or small.

Washing the dog. I mean, just you think of the silliest things. We are here to get practice in consulting and implementing the wisdom of God, because maybe the task isn't that important, but the thinking that we do, the attitudes that we cultivate and that we eschew, that we drive out of our soul, the patience we develop, the outward looking love for neighbor and love for God that we can express in the smallest of tasks.

So don't be fooled when it says this is the wisdom that God brought forth before he ever founded the earth. Wow, that's a big thing. The next time I found a universe, I'll be sure and consult this wisdom.

It's just the opposite. This goes all the way from the sublime to what we would consider to be ridiculous. Don't think it's ridiculous.

It's practice. It's practice. It's a practice dummy.

It's a paper target. It's blank firing adapters. It's rubber knives.

Learn to access and implement and respect and love this wisdom. That's why it says in verse 17 up above, I love those who love me. It doesn't say I will make sure their small tasks succeed.

Wisdom says, I love those who love me. When you are in love with someone, you think about the fullest expression of it is in the days of infatuation when you just can't get your mind off of a person. They just fill your thoughts.

You're virtually useless. There used to be literary depictions of this back in the days of Shakespeare and some of the other poets where Langer would overcome a young man and he would just lean against a tree and stare up into the sky and he was completely useless and worthless. All he could do was think about the object of his affection.

Are you going to Scarborough Fair? My true love is there. Take her some spices. Really? She needs parsley? Yeah, she does.

Plant a field and reap it. All the words of that song. But your mind is occupied at all times with things large or small.

This is the idea of wisdom. So as we go through this, just remember, it's hard for God to be depicted doing small things. We like to think of him in creation.

We think of him in sweeping galaxies and that. But the wisdom of God is like God himself. It goes from the macroscopic to the microscopic.

And even the small insignificancies of this life are to be addressed and accomplished, accompanied by, in the light of, informed by this wisdom. The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.

When there were no depths, I was brought forth. The earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep. Wisdom was there before Genesis 1-2.

It was there before Genesis 1-1. This is fascinating because it also says that this wisdom was brought forth. This wisdom is not timeless.

It is timeful. It pertains specifically to this time. Otherwise, it would just say, I have always been with God.

You can't even say that because as soon as you say time, now you've got time. But it can't say, I have ever been with God. I am as eternal as God.

It says multiple times, look at it. I was established in verse 23. I was brought forth in verse 24.

I was brought forth in verse 25. So it is brought forth and then it is present. It is possessed in verse 22.

And it is present in verse 27. The presence beside him in verse 30, as a master craftsman, you have a text note there that says a Jewish tradition reads, one brought up. I was beside him as one brought up.

I can't make any sense out of that. But a master craftsman makes somewhat more sense. You can look these up in some of the versions.

Anytime there's a bit of a disturbance in the Hebrew, there can be some very creative solutions. It doesn't change the point. The point is this value.

Wisdom was there before God started the work of creation. It was present and involved during creation. And it now presides in and through this creation.

So when we access God's wisdom, we are partaking of principles and understandings that are a part of the fabric of the universe itself. I would commend to your attention, not necessarily the source, but the product, a video that I showed to the girls the other night. You may have seen references to this before, but there is a video produced by Answers in Genesis.

It's available on YouTube and they have some unfortunate title on it, like atheists don't want you to see this or atheists can't explain this or some such thing. Ignore all of that. But you can find it if you search on the Mandelbrot and Numbers.

It is a demonstration by a fellow who works at the Answers in Genesis group. He's got a wonderful video demonstration. The Mandelbrot set wasn't discovered until the early 1980s by a fellow oddly enough named Mandelbrot.

You can't really see it and plot it effectively without a computer. Personal computers began to be accessible in the 1980s. Matthew and I got a Mandelbrot mapping program back when computers booted off of floppy disks.

Every time we would change the parameters and pick a different spot of the Mandelbrot plot to look at, we had to wait seven to ten minutes for the screen to remap. It was 16 color CGA at the beginning. I think we eventually got to see it in VGA.

It was right around the time upgraded graphics came out. But you couldn't even begin to do it if you didn't have a powerful computer, powerful for the time, and a good graphics card with plenty of memory. But we were messing with this in the 1980s just shortly after it was discovered and popularized.

But take a look at it because it will explain and illuminate what we're talking about here. The simplicity of the equation and the beauty of the plot, and it requires not just positive and negative numbers. You have to understand imaginary numbers and complex numbers, which are a combination of real and imaginary.

It just gives you a y-axis instead of the number line so that this becomes a plot in a plane. The initial factor is the number squared. Is the number squared plus itself going to produce something that increases? If it starts getting larger, that's not a part of the Mandelbrot set.

If it stays the same or cycles within a parameter, then it plots. And when you map all of the sets, what you discover is there is a beautiful and infinite mathematical plot. And one of the points that is made in the video that I think is really good and pertinent to this passage is there are a lot of things that are a part of this universe.

Protons, neutrons, electrons, subatomic particles, principles of magnetism and electricity and so on, different kinds of radiation. They are a part of the physical universe. Here's something that is not a part of the physical universe, but it's a part of God.

And that's numbers, mathematics. Think about the number three. You don't need a physical universe to think about threeness.

Numbers are a reference to quantity of some kind. And a quantity can be anything, but threeness or fiveness or twelveness is an abstraction. Even without a physical universe, if you've got more than one of a thing, then you've got numbers and you have the beginning of a number system.

And this quality of, there can be three apples, there can be three pencils, there can be three members of the Trinity, but before there is a universe, there is threeness in deity. So to explore mathematics and to find infinite beauty and references to every number imaginable and even unimaginable in a single equation is just stunning. And it is just a touch of the hem of the garment of the wisdom of God, the wisdom that is being spoken of here.

So the references to creation are very fascinating here. From the beginning in verse 23, before there was ever an earth, when there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountains abounding with water, all of the references to early creation reference land and water.

You don't see water ever being created. It's kind of an unusual thing because H₂O, it's a

chemical compound, but it never talks about water specifically being created. You would think somebody imagining creation as a human being would say, well, there was a dark ball of dirt and God said, let there be water.

And there was water. And the water was on the face of the deep and the spirit of God moved. As soon as you have an earth, you have water.

They seem to have been formed together. So then no fountains abounding with water before the mountains were settled before the hills. I was brought forth while as yet he had not made the earth or the fields or the primal dust of the world before the primal dust of the world.

Now this is saying something because the primal dust of the world is stardust. It comes from galaxies as near as science can tell and this means that before the galaxies were created, God's wisdom that defines and controls and becomes useful in this universe existed. When he prepared the heavens, I was there.

Space is a product of and was informed and guided in its appearance and its ongoing sustenance by wisdom. And as I mentioned last time, much of this seems to be almost synonymous with the Lord Jesus himself that John chapter one, without him, nothing was made that was made. All things were created by him and so on.

So when God established the clouds above, this is the reference to the firmament in Genesis, separating the waters from the waters. When he strengthened the fountains of deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters would not transgress his command, let the dry land appear and the water will not transgress it. When he marked the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him.

I was daily his delight. This is constant reference back to the blueprint, back to the purpose, to the design. And this is a model for us.

Form a plan, establish a purpose, and constantly refer back to that. And if our plans and purposes are aligned with and created in consultation with God's wisdom, they're going to have the same eternal quality, the same benefit, transcending the task of the moment. It doesn't matter that it's only laundry or it's only a car or it's only the garden or it's only some other mundane chore in academia or at work or whatever it may be.

It is the reference to the utilization of God's wisdom in creating our plans and establishing our purposes, creating our goals, founding our priorities, establishing our values, always referring back to this wisdom. This is what God does. The wisdom is beside him.

And the picture is God is looking at this existing wisdom that he brought forth and that he said, come with me. You're going to help me establish this. This is what we want to do.

Have God's wisdom accompany us, be present with us. And I think the thing that gets missed is people wait for something big. Well, I'm about to get married.

I'm about to move. I'm about to look for a new job or undertake something big. And we wait and we say, well, this is a momentous decision.

This is a big directional change or I'm establishing a new thing here. So I better pray and everything from the time we achieve consciousness in the morning until time we lose consciousness at night and any time in between. This should be our goal to have this wisdom as our companion.

Now, where does it come from? What does it look like? Well, that's why we have Bible class four classes a week to make sure that this wisdom from God contained in the scriptures and translated and interpreted and made real by God's Holy Spirit, without whom it's gobbledygook, without whom it's a parable to those who are outside. The explanation of every parable of God for us comes through the Holy Spirit. He is our teacher.

He is our guide. He's our interpreter. He's our comforter.

And the wisdom is not by our side. We can't understand the language it speaks without God, the Holy Spirit. God, the Holy Spirit knows languages that humans can't utter, right? He translates our prayers into that language.

And in the days of Pentecost, he translated unknown languages so people could understand them. It's a picture. This is what God, the Holy Spirit does for us all the time.

The things that are past our understanding and beyond our comprehension, he makes them pertinent and real. Cannot underestimate the constant reference back to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the combination. This comes under the heading wisdom.

For us, the Lord Jesus Christ has been made to us wisdom and righteousness, peace, understanding. Everything comes to us through Christ. What has he given us? He's given us the Word, and he's given us the Spirit.

I'm going away. I will send you another comforter. He will lead you into the written truth, the communicated truth, the Spirit and the truth, the Spirit and the Word.

That's this wisdom. The Spirit, we know, was intimately involved in every aspect of creation. The Spirit of God, you can't get two verses into Genesis before the Spirit is referenced.

This wisdom was present. The Spirit was present. It's the same wisdom and the same Spirit.

Can you believe the privilege that we have been given of borrowing this book off of

God's library shelf? What a shame. What a tragedy to not use it. The challenge is to remember this and to think of it, to avail ourselves of it in everything.

Everything. Driving the car on your commute. Sitting down to relax.

Deciding what to do in the next couple of hours. What about meals? What about logistics? What about maintenance? What about fill in the blank here? The challenge, the command, is in everything. Reference this wisdom.

Then, in everything, give thanks. This is the will of God concerning you. How can you give thanks in everything unless everything is conditioned and permeated with this wisdom? Then I can be thankful.

I'm learning. Sometimes I learn by failing. Other times I learn by succeeding.

But with His wisdom present, we are always learning. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to pick up in verse 30.