

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

(OT Survey Lesson 290—Wisdom about Government)

Introduction: Solomon was given wisdom by God to govern his people. His fame in government reached to far away places. In these proverbs we are able to learn some of important principles concerning government and guided Solomon as king.

Lesson aim: To show the features of a just society.

The blessings of a society based on God's law

The blessing of a just society

14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to *any* people.

11:10 When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, And when the wicked perish, there is glad shouting.

29:2 When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan.

11:11 By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, But by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.

28:2 By the transgression of a land many are its princes, But by a man of understanding *and* knowledge, so it endures.

29:18 Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is he who keeps the law.

The undesirability of a government based on iniquity

17:26 It is also not good to fine the righteous, *Nor* to strike the noble for *their* uprightness.

18:5 To show partiality to the wicked is not good, *Nor* to thrust aside the righteous in judgment.

28:15 *Like* a roaring lion and a rushing bear Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.

The importance and features of moral leadership

11:14 Where there is no guidance, the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory.

16:10 A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment.

20:8 A king who sits on the throne of justice Disperses all evil with his eyes.

20:26 A wise king winnows the wicked, And drives the *threshing* wheel over them.

16:13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And he who speaks right is loved.

20:28 Loyalty and truth preserve the king, And he upholds his throne by righteousness.

29:14 If a king judges the poor with truth, His throne will be established forever.

16:12 It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, For a throne is established on righteousness.

28:16 A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, *But* he who hates unjust gain will prolong *his* days.

29:4 The king gives stability to the land by justice, But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.

25:4-5 Take away the dross from the silver, And there comes out a vessel for the smith; Take away the wicked *from* before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.

28:28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves; But when they perish, the righteous increase.

29:12 If a ruler pays attention to falsehood, All his ministers *become* wicked.

17:7 Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool; Much less are lying lips to a prince.

24:24-25 He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous," Peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;

25 But to those who rebuke the *wicked* will be delight, And a good blessing will come upon them.

Principles of just and wise government

For success in battle

20:18 Prepare plans by consultation, And make war by wise guidance.
21:22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty, And brings down the stronghold in which they trust.
21:31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD.

For justice in decision making

25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
18:17 The first to plead his case *seems* just, *Until* another comes and examines him.
19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will perish.

18:18 The lot puts an end to contentions, And decides between the mighty.
24:23 These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good.

Miscellaneous observations

16:11 A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; All the weights of the bag are His concern.
19:10 Luxury is not fitting for a fool; Much less for a slave to rule over princes.
14:28 In a multitude of people is a king's glory, But in the dearth of people is a prince's ruin.

Lessons for subjects of the government

Respect the power of the king

21:1 THE king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.
25:3 *As* the heavens for height and the earth for depth, So the heart of kings is unsearchable.
16:15 In the light of a king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain.
16:14 The wrath of a king is *as* messengers of death, But a wise man will appease it.
19:12 The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, But his favor is like dew on the grass.
20:2 The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.
23:1-3 WHEN you sit down to dine with a ruler, Consider carefully what is before you; 2 And put a knife to your throat, If you are a man of *great* appetite. 3 Do not desire his delicacies, For it is deceptive food.
25:6-7 Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men; 7 For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, Whom your eyes have seen.

Be submissive to the law

14:35 The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.
22:11 He who loves purity of heart *And* whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.

Be careful about how you reveal evidence that may be incriminating

25:8 Do not go out hastily to argue *your case*; Otherwise, what will you do in the end, When your neighbor puts you to shame? 9 Argue your case with your neighbor, And do not reveal the secret of another, 10 Lest he who hears *it* reproach you, And the evil report about you not pass away.

Look to the Lord, and not man, for ultimate justice

29:26 Many seek the ruler's favor, But justice for man *comes* from the LORD.