

We're still moving through Proverbs and as we come to our text today we will be dealing with the 5th division in this book which goes from chapters 25-29. This section returns to the wisdom of Solomon himself, but a caveat is added by saying that certain men are part of the process.

Proverbs 25:1 ^{NAU} These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.

So, who are these men of Hezekiah, king of Judah? Well, obviously they are men who are part of the Kingdom of Judah during the reign of Hezekiah.

But this raises an interesting problem. Does anyone know what kind of a problem this may be when considering when Solomon reigned over all of Israel?

There was no division of power or division of kingdom during the reign of Solomon. In other words, there was no kingdom of Judah when Solomon was king. It wasn't until after Solomon's death that the kingdom of Israel was divided into two separate lands with two separate kings.

The kingdom of Israel was the land to the north and the kingdom of Judah was the land to the south.

The reason for the division was due in part to certain adversaries that Solomon had during his reign. But what is fascinating is where these adversaries came from and how it was that they decided to come against Solomon.

But, we need to go to the root of the problem as to why there would be a division of the kingdom of Israel. And for that we need to go to 1Kings.

1 Kings 11:1-13 ^{NAU} Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his

heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*.⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.⁶ Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father *had done*.⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.⁸ Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.¹¹ So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.¹² "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son.¹³ "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, *but* I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

Notice what is happening here. It is Solomon himself who brings God's judgment on the kingdom of Israel, over which he was given the responsibility to rule well with the wisdom God had given him.

Remember, why God had blessed Solomon with a special wisdom? It was because Solomon didn't ask God for wealth or fame but for wisdom to rule His people and God blessed Solomon with that wisdom. But it seems later in life that his foreign wives turned his heart after other gods.

As a result of his idolatry God personally intervenes after two separate rebukes concerning this matter.

1 Kings 11:9-12⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.¹¹ So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your

servant. ¹² "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

And the way God does it is to raise adversaries against Solomon who would continue to rebel against the kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death. One of those rebels was Jeroboam.

1 Kings 11:26-35 ²⁶ Then Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king. ²⁷ Now this was the reason why he rebelled against the king: Solomon built the Millo, *and* closed up the breach of the city of his father David. ²⁸ Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. ²⁹ It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. ³⁰ Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. ³¹ He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes' ³² (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), ³³ because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and *observing* My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David *did*. ³⁴ 'Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes; ³⁵ but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you, *even* ten tribes.

Notice what is happening here. On the one hand it appears that Jeroboam considers the circumstances under which he has found himself and actually joins a group of other rebels against Solomon.

And if we are just considering this from an historical perspective we would conclude that it was Jeroboam who initiated this course of action.

But what is actually the truth of the matter when it comes to Jeroboam coming against Solomon?

God raised him up because of Solomon's idolatry. Therefore, Jeroboam necessarily is carrying out God's will because God has determined how He will punish Solomon and the nation of Israel as a result of Solomon's actions, and the Lord has chosen Jeroboam to carry out His will.

It's only after the death of Solomon that things go south, literally.

1 Kings 11:43 - 12:5 ⁴³ And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.

^{NAU} **1 Kings 12:1** Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ² Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *of it*, he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon). ³ Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ⁴ "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." ⁵ Then he said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed.

Rehoboam consulted with the elders and his peers and chose the latter where he increased the hardness of the yoke of his father and created more of a division within his borders.

1 Kings 12:13-16 ¹³ The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him, ¹⁴ and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." ¹⁵ So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn *of events* from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. ¹⁶ When all Israel *saw* that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? *We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!*" So Israel departed to their tents.

All of this took place around 933 BC. This date will become important in a moment. So, from 932 to around 722 BC we have

two separate kingdoms both claiming to be under the covenant of God, though both still rebellious toward God.

It was in 722 BC that the northern kingdom of Israel is defeated by the Assyrians. The last king of Israel was Hoshea. The southern Kingdom of Judah will continue for another 130 plus years after which time Judah will be defeated by the Persian King Cyrus.

From this point in history, about 586 BC until 1947, Israel will not be seen as a nation under their own rule, when the United Nations, not God, determined that Israel would once again be their own state.

This is not to suggest that God had not determined for this to happen in 1947, but it has nothing to do with God reestablishing the nation of Israel as a nation that will represent Him in this world until He comes.

That status belongs to the true descendants of Abraham, those children of God who are of the faith of Abraham.

Romans 4:16-18 ¹⁶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸ In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

And of course, this coincides with what Paul had said earlier in this letter concerning what a true Jew is, as it has nothing to do with being a physical descendant of Abraham.

Romans 2:28-29 ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

So, what does all of this have to do with Proverbs and the men of Hezekiah transcribing the words of Solomon?

Well, as I mentioned earlier the date of 933 BC is important because that was the time in which Solomon died and the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel were established by God Himself as He brought about the judgment based on Solomon's idolatry.

But Hezekiah, King of Judah, doesn't come along until 726 BC. Solomon has been dead for 207 years. And so, for 207 years the book of Proverbs does not contain these particular wise sayings that we are reading today.

This doesn't mean that they didn't exist or were not utilized in some form, but they didn't happen to be a part of the word of God we have today. So, how did the men of Hezekiah come to transcribe these words of Solomon?

In all likelihood it was the result of a desire by King Hezekiah to restore the Davidic order in the temple by reestablishing the covenant that God made with Israel.

2 Chronicles 29:1-10 ^{NAU} Hezekiah became king *when he was* twenty-five years old; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. ² He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. ³ In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. ⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them into the square on the east. ⁵ Then he said to them, "Listen to me, O Levites. Consecrate yourselves now, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry the uncleanness out from the holy place. ⁶ "For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and have turned *their* backs. ⁷ "They have also shut the doors of the porch and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. ⁸ "Therefore the wrath of the LORD was against Judah and Jerusalem, and He has made them an object of terror, of horror, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. ⁹ "For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. ¹⁰ "Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His burning anger may turn away from us.

In this process is probably when the wise sayings of Solomon were discovered and from chapters 25-29 is where they compiled some of these sayings as we have them today.

Time will not permit us to delve too far into them, so we'll briefly look at some and continue them next time.

Proverbs 25:1-5 ^{NAU} These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed. ² It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. ³ As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, So the heart of kings is unsearchable. ⁴ Take away the dross from the silver, And there comes out a vessel for the smith; ⁵ Take away the wicked before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.

Does anyone see the irony here?

The very first words from Solomon's pen describe a king who is able to rule well only as that king is cleaned of dross, or sin, who will then be able to have a throne established in righteousness.

Solomon's rule was not established in righteousness as we see toward the end of his life, as God, who searched and judged the heart of King Solomon, but this is not to say that the throne Solomon ruled on will not one day be reestablished in righteousness.

Luke 1:31-33 ³¹ "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

2 Peter 3:13 ³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

By the way, that same Jesus is now ruling and reigning over His kingdom even though that kingdom is not yet fully realized in the new heavens and new earth.

Revelation 19:4-6 ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." ⁶ Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of

many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

Proverbs 25:11-12 ¹¹ Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances. ¹² Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

I go back to the end of Solomon's life where it would have been prudent of him to listen to his own advice of following a word spoken in the right circumstance, and like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

The right circumstance and the right reprover proved to be God Himself, when in His mercy and grace we are told that He approached Solomon, not once, but twice during the time Solomon was tempted to succumb to the idolatry of his wives. Remember?

1 Kings 11:9-10 ⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

Now, I don't want to cut Solomon any slack here, but on the same note I don't want us to place ourselves above him as though we would have done any differently.

If even the wisest of all men can refuse the counsel of God, it would behoove us to learn from this and consider that the counsel we receive from God today really makes a difference to the Lord.

Though it angered God toward Solomon, I think there is something worse than angering God for a believer and that is grieving God.

Ephesians 4:30 ³⁰ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 ¹⁶ Rejoice always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹ But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil. ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

It is ironic that after some 200 plus years after Solomon's death these words of his are discovered and bear witness to the truth that he wrote, and now the Holy Spirit has taken those words and by the hands of Hezekiah's men they come to life as they demonstrate that a Holy God always has the final word.

We'll pick up here next week.