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Proverbs 8:1-36

Everyday Wisdom: Jesus in Proverbs

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Anyone who doesn't know Jesus is either a simpleton or a fool. I know that's a **shocking statement** but I mean it. You cannot be wise without knowing Jesus. You have to know Jesus to be wise. My **big idea** is this... *To know Jesus is to know wisdom.* So if you **want to be wise**, if you want to walk through life **making wise decisions**, if you **don't want to be a fool or a simpleton**, you need to know Christ Jesus.

Maybe you're thinking, "But I know plenty of people who **aren't Christians** who are **wise**. They make wise decisions. They're not stupid." I agree that anyone can make a **smart, intelligent, or savvy decisions** but the way the **Bible defines wisdom** means that **true wisdom** is only possible through a **relationship with God**. That's what our previous **foundation verse** says. Let's **review** it together. Would you say it with me?

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction. **Proverbs 1:7** (NIV)

Proverbs is saying that **wisdom begins** with **seeking to understand who God is** (the Fear of the Lord). In this series I've **defined wisdom** as:

- a. The skill of living (God's way)
- b. The words and ways of God

I've been equating wisdom with knowing and obeying God's Word (Psalm 19:7-8; [Proverbs 3:1-2](#)). Today I want to add one more way to define wisdom.

- c. Knowing and obeying Jesus

The people who first **heard** the book of Proverbs were called to be in relationship with the **LORD**, with **Yahweh**. But we have the **rest of the story**. We're called to be in **relationship with Jesus**. It's through being in relationship with him that we **become wise** and **grow in wisdom**.

Today we find a **call to be in relationship with Yahweh** that **looks forward** to our call to **be in relationship with Christ Jesus**. To examine this call I want to look at how **Jesus fulfills wisdom, embodies wisdom, is the way to wisdom, and grants wisdom**.

Jesus fulfills wisdom.

Today many of the points I'm preaching come from [Tremper Longman III's commentary on Proverbs](#) and his great book *How To Read Proverbs*.¹ One of the points he starts with is how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament.

Jesus fulfills the Scriptures.

In other words, when we read Scriptures, even in the Old Testament, somehow, it's **pointing to Christ Jesus**. Maybe it's pointing to our **need** for him or that he's **coming**, or that only he can **perfectly live out** what the Scripture requires. Jesus **affirms** this.

Luke 24:44-45 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. (NIV)

Here Jesus is telling two disciples on the Road to Emmaus that **all of Scripture whispers his name**. Once we read about Jesus in the New Testament, we can **never read** the Old Testament **the same way**.

I recently watched the **1985 cult-classic movie, Clue**. It’s based on the board game Clue. It stars **Tim Curry** as the **butler** and **Christopher Lloyd** as **Professor Plumb**. There’s a murder (**Mr. Body** dies) and **characters** go back and forth between **rooms** trying to figure out **who did it** and **how they did it**. By the end of the movie I had **no idea** who did it. But that’s when Tim Curry the butler stops the story and explains how it happened, not once, but **three different ways**. When this movie was **originally released** there was a different ending depending on which **movie theater** you went to. But if you watch it on **Amazon Prime** you get to see all three. But you can imagine **why** it’s become a cult classic, right? People want to go back and watch it again to see if they can **follow the story** and see for themselves who did it. I bet if I were to go back and watch the movie I would see it **very differently**. I would see the **small hints**. I would see the **clues**. I would **recognize** who did it. I wouldn’t be as confused or surprised by the big reveal.

We know the ending of **our story**. We know it’s all about Jesus and what he did on the cross. Now as we **read back through** the Old Testament and books like Proverbs we can’t help but see **clues of Jesus**, clues of his **coming**, clues of his **suffering**, clues of his **divinity**, clues of his **sonship**.

Jesus is the wise Son.

We’ve seen the **theme of sonship over and over again** in **Proverbs** as the **father-figure instructs** his son to walk in the path of wisdom. Well... Jesus is the **wise son** walking the path of wisdom. After Jesus is **dedicated** at the **temple** as a **baby** we encounter these words.

Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him. (NIV)

But the author **Luke** doesn’t stop there. Right after this he **tells a story** to **illustrate** Jesus’ wisdom. When Jesus turned **twelve** Mary, Joseph, and him go to a **festival** in **Jerusalem**. But when it’s time to go home Jesus stays behind. Mary and Joseph thought he was traveling with company but after they traveled for **a day** they realized their mistake. Have you ever left your kids at **school** or **church** and had to **rush back** to get them? Imagine traveling a whole days journey and then having to turn around and go back.

Luke 2:46-47 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. (NIV)

What is Jesus doing here? He’s sitting, asking questions, and showing **God-given wisdom**. His parents tell him to come home and he does and the story **ends** by saying this.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (NIV) (see also Mark 6:2; Luke 11:31)

Jesus grew in wisdom. I want you to stop and **imagine** for a moment that **King Solomon**, the author for much of Proverbs, wrote Proverbs at least **in part** to **help his own son who would be king** grow in wisdom. So Solomon writes Proverbs for his son **Rehoboam**. But he doesn’t turn out to be very wise. In fact, he’s **foolish**. But maybe his son **Abijah** will be the wise son. But he’s not either. He’s actually pretty **bad**. But then his son **Asa** comes along, and he’s **better**, but **not perfect**. And then **another son** comes and goes and

then another son and another and another.² They are a **lot** of foolish sons and a handful of wise sons but all of them are **foolish in some way**. They all **fall short**. But then one day, **a son in this family line is born** who doesn't fall short.³ His name is **King Jesus**. *Jesus is the wise son. To know Jesus is to know wisdom.*

Jesus is so much the wise son that he doesn't just fulfill wisdom he actually **becomes wisdom**.

Jesus embodies wisdom.

This means that **Jesus is wisdom**. As we read **several key verses** in **Proverbs 8** they speak of God's wisdom that **Jesus fully embodies** in the **New Testament**. Back in Proverbs 3:18-20 it said that God **made all of creation through wisdom**. This **theme** is **expanded in Proverbs 8**. **Paul** then **identifies the creation-wisdom** of Proverbs 8 with the **wisdom of Jesus in Colossians 1**.

Proverbs 8:22-23

22 "The Lord brought me (wisdom) forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;
23 I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning, when the world came to be. (NIV)

Then Paul writes in Colossians 1 how **Jesus** was also there at the **beginning of creation**.

Colossians 1:15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (NIV) (see also Revelation 3:14)

When a guy named **Arius** read this passage in Colossians at around **AD 300** he saw this passage's similarity with Proverbs 8 and **concluded** that if **God created wisdom**, and **Jesus is wisdom**, then **Jesus is created**. So Jesus hasn't been God **forever** and **isn't equal** with God the Father. Arius launched **Arianism** which the **council of Nicea in 325** declared to be a **heresy** (false teaching) and in **response** created the **Nicene Creed**:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made...⁴

You can hear the **echos** of Proverbs 8 and Colossians 1 in the Nicene Creed. **Mormons, Unitarians**, and **Jehovah's Witnesses** all hold to **some form of Arianism**. So if a Jehovah's Witness **knocks on your door** and tells you "Jesus was created, just look at Proverbs 8," how do you answer them? An apologetics organization called Stand To Reason⁵ taught me **two reasons why** they're wrong:

- 1) God didn't create wisdom because it's always been a part of him.

If God created wisdom, what was he before he created wisdom? **Stupid**? Did he create wisdom through **non-wisdom**? No. One of God's attributes, which are all **eternally** there, is wisdom.

- 2) We should interpret unclear Scriptures through clear Scriptures (not the other way around).⁶

Proverbs 8 is a highly **poetic** and **metaphorical** passage. It's full of beautiful **imagery** and **mystery** but both imagery and mystery can create **confusion**. That's why we need to look to **other passages** that clearly tell us who Jesus is to understand that he is God and **not created**. We can look to passages like:

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (NIV) (see also Hebrews 1:3a)

Jesus is the wisdom Proverbs 8 speaks of, but he's **not created**. He was always present as the **eternal son of God**. Paul continues to make this **connection** between **wisdom** in **Proverbs 8** and **Christ** in **Colossians 1**.

Proverbs 8:26-27

26 before he made the world or its fields
or any of the dust of the earth.

27 I was there when he set the heavens in place,
when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, (NIV)

Proverbs 8 says God created the **earth** and the **heavens through wisdom**, and what does Paul say?

Colossians 1:16a For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... (NIV)

The **heavens** and the **earth** were created through the wisdom of **God's eternal Son**, one day **revealed** as Jesus. And if you go back just a **few verses earlier** in Proverbs 8 we find **wisdom's rule over kings**.

Proverbs 8:15-16

15 By me kings reign
and rulers issue decrees that are just;
16 by me princes govern,
and nobles—all who rule on earth. (NIV)

And **what** does **Paul** add about Christ?

Colossians 1:16b-17 ...whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (NIV) (see also 1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 2:3)

Tremper writes, "The message is clear: **Jesus is Wisdom herself.**" I glanced at one blog that didn't feel comfortable calling Jesus lady wisdom, so it called him "**wisdom itself.**" But did you know that **Jesus equates himself with lady wisdom?**

Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds." (NIV)

Jesus fully embodies the wisdom of **lady wisdom**. Jesus embodies the wisdom of God, the rule of God, the power of God. Jesus is **wisdom in the flesh**. He is wisdom **incarnate**. It's **baseball** season and I know some of you **love the Red Sox**. Have any of you ever met an **actual Red Sox player**? What was it **like**? There's a difference between watching the Red Sox on TV or going to game and watching the players from a far, and actually **shaking hands** with a **Red Sox player in person**. Now you're meeting the Red Sox in the **flesh**. This is the Red Sox **incarnate**. **Likewise**, you can hear about God's wisdom from **afar**, you can read about wisdom in the book of **Proverbs**, you can talk about it, but to actually encounter wisdom itself you have to **encounter** Jesus. *To know Jesus is to know wisdom. Jesus fulfills wisdom. Jesus embodies wisdom. And...*

Jesus is the way to wisdom.

You have to **know Jesus** if you **want** to be wise. The **big picture** of Proverbs actually **points** to this. To see how Proverbs points to Christ we need to **read Proverbs 8 in light** of the **macrostructure** of the book of Proverbs (**Terry Iles** showed me this).⁷ At a very basic level Proverbs is divided up into **three parts**.

- **Proverbs 1-9** / Wisdom Stories

- **Proverbs 10-29** / Wisdom Sayings
- **Proverbs 30-31** / Wisdom Stories

This means in some ways chapters 1-9 and 30-31 **match** each other. Have you ever played the **matching card game** where all the cards are flipped over and you can **flip two cards** on your turn? The point is to flip over two matching cards. The goal is to match the shark card with the shark card, the tiger card with the tiger, the penguin with the penguin and so on. In the Bible first we flip over a card that says **lady wisdom** in **Proverbs 1-9** and if we want to find the **matching card** we have to turn over the **wise woman** in **Proverbs 31**. Next we turn over a card that talks about **God creating the world** from **Proverbs 3:18-20** and in today's text **Proverbs 8:22-31**. If we want to find the matching card we have to turn over **Proverbs 30** in the other wisdom stories, which is **also** about God creating the world through wisdom.

Proverbs 30:3-4

3 I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I attained to the knowledge of the Holy One.

To know wisdom is to know the Holy One himself (to **know God!**). Then here comes creation...

4 Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Whose hands have gathered up the wind?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?

Doesn't that sound like creation? God created everything through his **own** wisdom. But wait... There's more.

What is his name, and what is the name of his son?
Surely you know! (NIV)

I thought we were talking about **God** and **wisdom**? But suddenly Proverbs is talking about the “**son**” of the **Holy One**. The **author**, a guy named **Agur**, **divinely inspired by God**, wrote about the **Son of God**, the **promised Messiah**. He wrote that **the way to wisdom is through God and his Son** (see also Psalm 2:6-7, 10-12). *Jesus fulfills wisdom. Jesus embodies wisdom. Jesus is the way to wisdom.* And finally...

Jesus grants wisdom.

Do you want wisdom in your **business** relationships? Do you want wisdom for how to deal with your **aging parents**? Do you want wisdom for **parenting** your **young children** or your **teenagers**? Do you want wisdom for what to **study** in **school** or what to **pursue** as a **career**? Do you want wisdom for finding a **husband** or **wife**? Then **seek Jesus**. Jesus **invites** you to himself and he will give you wisdom. He calls all **fools** and all **simpletons** to come and confess their sins and believe in him. He'll forgive us and grant us his wisdom. Over time he **transforms foolish or simple people** into **wise people** through a **relationship with him**. Jesus won't turn you away. Wisdom in Proverbs 8 says:

Proverbs 8:17

I love those who love me,
and those who seek me find me. (NIV)

In the New Testament God **again extends** this offer to us.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (NIV)

If you want wisdom just ask God for it. But you can't ask for wisdom apart from Jesus. **Wisdom begins with a relationship with Christ Jesus.** *Jesus fulfills wisdom. Jesus embodies wisdom. Jesus is the way to wisdom. Jesus grants wisdom. To know Jesus is to know wisdom.*

I met with a **pastor friend** recently and at the end of our time we **exchanged prayer requests**. I shared my requests and when I asked him how I could pray for him he said, "Would you pray that I **love Jesus more deeply?**" That struck me. That's what we need. We need to **love Jesus more and more**. So often we pray for wisdom, for how to make the **right decision** or **what to do next**, but **what if** we started praying for each other to **know** and **experience Christ Jesus** more every day? I think if we **seek him**, he'll **also give us wisdom**. *To know Jesus is to know wisdom.*

Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon, which includes endnotes and references. Read [our story here](#).

¹ I highly recommend *How To Read Proverbs*. It's easy to understand and read.

² I looked at this table of Good & Bad Kings. Published January 09, 2017 on + The Good Life blog by Steven Jay Davis. <https://www.squanlife.com/squanlife/2017/01/good-bad-kings.html> Accessed August 08, 2019.

³ Lines of Joseph and Mary. http://apologeticspress.org/user_images/image/bibbul/2003/bb-03-31-lg.png Accessed August 08, 2019.

⁴ First Council of Constantinople (381) edition.

⁵ Tim Barnett, "Does Proverbs 8:22 Teach That Jesus Was Created?" Published December 24, 2015. Accessed August 17, 2019. <https://www.str.org/blog/does-proverbs-8-22-teach-that-jesus-was-created#.XVfvti2ZMk9>.

⁶ Tim Barnett writes, "When it comes to Scripture, you always interpret what is unclear in light of what is clear. That is, you start with what is clear and work out to what is less clear." [str.org](http://www.str.org)

⁷ Terry Iles explains the big structure of Proverbs and its relation to Jesus in Proverbs 8. He writes:

I do think that Proverbs 8 is originally messianic. This is based on two intertextual connections in Proverbs 8:

1. ...Note the importance of the childbirth language in Proverbs 8 and the identification of YHWH's son, seemingly out of nowhere, in Prov 30:4. Also, the context in Proverbs 30 relates wisdom to God and his son's sovereignty over creation, also the context of Proverbs 8. In addition to this, recall the macrostructure of Proverbs, with the sustained discourses of chapters 1–9 and 30–31 framing the collections of sayings in the middle. Proverbs 8 and Proverbs 30 mirror one another structurally in this scheme. Essentially, they are the inner frame of the book's outer frame. I think all of these things lead the reader to reading Proverbs 8 and Proverb 30:1–6 on analogy with one another.
2. In Prov 8:23, wisdom says that she was formed long ago. This verb (*nasakh*) is often translated as "installed" or "set up" and has this exact meaning only here and in Ps 2:6, which is about the begotten son of God being "installed" as king in Zion. Psalm 2 uses childbirth language to describe God's relationship to the king (v. 7) and the kings of the earth are to gain wisdom by submitting to the son (vv. 10–12). I think that Prov 8:23 and Ps 2 are supposed to be read together.

The sum of all of this is that I believe the Hebrew Bible itself develops an association of wisdom personified with the messianic king. There is an interesting and controversial text that likely witnesses a pre-Christian interpretation of Genesis 1:1 that brings these various strands together. Here is the reading of Targum Neofiti in Genesis 1:1 as the text stands—"In the beginning, with wisdom, the son of YHWH completed the heavens and the earth."