



**COVER THE EARTH MINISTRIES
BIBLE STUDY NOTES**

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**THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
OLD TESTAMENT**

**INSTRUCTOR
PASTOR DONALD A. SMITH**

1 & 2 CHRONICLES

A Suggested Outline of 1 and 2 Chronicles

I. Genealogies from Adam to King Saul (1 Chron 1-9)

II. The reign of King David (1 Chron. 10-29)

- A. The death of King Saul (10)
- B. David solidifies his kingdom (11-16)
- C. God's covenant with David (17)
- D. David expands the kingdom (18-20)
- E. David numbers the people (21)
- F. David prepares for the building of the temple (22-29) (The death of David)

III. The reign of King Solomon (2 Chron. 1-9)

- A. Solomon receives God's blessing (1)
- B. Solomon builds and dedicates the temple (2-7)
- C. Solomon's fame and splendor (8-9)

IV. The divided kingdom (The kings of Judah) (10-36)

- A. The reign of Rehoboam (10-12)
- B. From Abijah to Asa (13-16)
- C. The reign of Jehoshaphat (17-20)
- D. From Jehoram to Amaziah (21-25)
- E. The reign of Uzziah (26)
- F. The reigns of Jotham and Ahaz (27-28)
- G. The reign of Hezekiah (29-32)
- H. The reigns of Manasseh and Amon (33)
- I. The reign of Josiah (34-35)
- J. The last kings and the downfall of Judah (36)

Introductory Notes to 1 and 2 Chronicles

The books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles record the history of the Jews from the last judge (Samuel) and the establishment of the first king (Saul), to the exile of the nation to Babylon. The books of 1 and 2 Kings were written from the viewpoint of the prophets, while 1 and 2 Chronicles present the priestly viewpoint of Jewish history. There is an emphasis in Chronicles on the Levites, the building of the temple, God's covenant as recorded in Deuteronomy, and the holy city of Jerusalem. You might say that 1 and 2 Kings give us the political record and 1 and 2 Chronicles the religious record. Second Chronicles records at least five "revivals" in the history of Judah (chaps. 15; 20; 23:1-24:27; 25, and 29-31).

The chronologies in 1 Chron 1-9 belong before 1 Sam 1 and are the "living links" with the past. It was important to the Jews that they know their family history and be able to claim their place in the nation. This was especially true of the priests and Levites who served in the tabernacle and then the temple.

The writer of 1 Chronicles picks up the royal record at the death of Saul (1 Chron 10). It is interesting to note what he omits from the record: David's long conflict with Saul; the rivalry with Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2-4); David's sin with Bathsheba; David's family problems with Amnon and Absalom; Adonijah's attempt to get the throne from Solomon; the sins of Solomon; and much of the history of the kings of Israel (the Northern Kingdom). The record focuses on the kings of Judah and emphasizes God's choice of David and his descendants to reign from Jerusalem. If you studied only the record in 1 and 2 Chronicles, you would never know that David and Solomon had ever sinned! According to the writer of 2 Chronicles, it was not Solomon's sin that caused the division of the kingdom, but Jeroboam's political scheming. Both are true, but it is interesting to see the priestly viewpoint that almost idealized both David and Solomon. After all, David provided the wealth for the building of the temple, as well as the songs, musical instruments, and organization for the Levites; and Solomon built the temple.

The book shows that God blesses His people when they obey His will and disciplines them when they disobey. God is true to His covenant even if His people prove false to Him. When God's long-suffering ended, He turned the people of Judah over to the Babylonians and permitted the enemy to destroy the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Second Chronicles ends with a copy of the decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to their land, and thus parallels the beginning of Ezra. The writer sees continuity in the history of the people, because God is guiding them and accomplishing His purposes through them, in spite of their sins.

A helpful volume to use in studying 1 and 2 Chronicles is *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles* by William D. Crockett (Baker Book House).

EZRA

A Suggested Outline of EZRA

- I. National Restoration under Zerubbabel (1-6)
 - A. Returning to the land (1-2)
 - 1. Proclamation of Cyrus (1)
 - 2. Registration of the people (2)
 - B. Rebuilding the temple (3)
 - 1. Establishing the altar (3:1-6)
 - 2. Laying again the foundation (3:7-13)
 - C. Resisting the enemy (4-6)
 - 1. The building ceases (4) (Note: 4:6-23 is a parenthesis describing opposition at a later date)
 - 2. The prophets begin their ministry (5)
 - 3. The building is completed (6)
- II. Spiritual Reformation under Ezra (7-10)
 - A. Ezra comes to Jerusalem (7-8)
 - B. Ezra confesses the sins of the people (9)
 - C. Ezra cleanses the nation (10)

Introductory Notes to Ezra and Nehemiah

I. Background

Ezra and Nehemiah form one book in the Hebrew Bible because they tell one story—the return of the remnant to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the city and the temple. The Babylonian Captivity began in 606 B.C.; Jerusalem fell to the enemy in 587 B.C. The Babylonians deported many of the people between 606 and 586, including Daniel and Ezekiel. Jeremiah had predicted a seventy-year period of captivity (Jer 25:12-14; 29:10-14). It would extend from the beginning of the invasion in 606 to the return of the remnant in 536, at which time the altar was set up and the animal sacrifices instituted again. So, Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the return to the land and the city, the rebuilding of the temple, and the rebuilding of the walls. The Book of Esther also fits into this period, as do the books of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (see Ezra 5:1 ff).

II. Chronology

A brief chronology of the period would look like this:

- 606-605 Babylon begins invading and deporting people
- 587 Jerusalem falls to the enemy
- 539 Babylon falls to Cyrus and the Media-Persian empire begins
- 538 Cyrus permits the Jews to return; about 50,000 return
- 535 The Jews begin to rebuild the temple, but the work stops
- 520 After fifteen years, the work begins again
- 515 The temple is completed and dedicated
- 476 Esther becomes Queen of Persia
- 458 Ezra travels to Jerusalem (see Ezra 7-10)

III. The Leaders

Ezra is presented to us as a godly and patriotic Jew who was a priest and a scribe (Ezra 7:1-6). He was a devoted student of the Scriptures and helped to restore the Law to the nation. He was also a man of prayer (8:21-23) and a man who was greatly burdened for the spiritual welfare of his people (9:3-4). His name means "help." Ezra's faith in the Lord is seen by his willingness to undertake the dangerous journey from Babylon to Jerusalem without the aid of a military escort. Please note that Ezra did not lead the first group of Jews back to Jerusalem; this was done by Zerubbabel and Joshua. Ezra does not come on the scene until chapter 7 of his book, when he led a second company (and a smaller one) to the Holy Land. Ezra remained there to labor, and finally joined hands with Nehemiah (Neh 8:9; 12:26). Nehemiah was an officer in the king's court when God called him to return to the city of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. He

was what we would call a "layman" today, since he had no prophetic call or priestly lineage. He was promoted from cupbearer to governor. Zerubbabel was one of the leaders under Ezra (2:2; 3:8); he was also called Sheshbazzar (1:8, 11; 5:16). His official title was "tirshatha" (2:63), which means "governor." 1 Chron 3:17-19 indicates that Zerubbabel was in the royal line of David. He served as the political leader of the restored nation. Joshua was the high priest at this time (Ezra 3:2; Hag 1:1,12,14; see Zech 3). As we mentioned before, the two prophets were Haggai and Zechariah.

IV. The Lessons

God had promised captivity to the sinning nation, and He fulfilled His promise. He also promised that a remnant would return. (See Jer 25:12-14 and 29:10-14). It was Jeremiah's prophecy that Daniel read in Babylon that encouraged him to pray for the return of the people (Dan 9:1 ff). God kept a "lamp lit" at Jerusalem in order that His Son might be born through the Hebrew nation and come to save the world. The captivity cured the Jews of idolatry and gave them a desire to know and obey the Word. Alas, they forgot their lessons quickly!

NEHEMIAH

A Suggested Outline of Nehemiah

- I. Repairing the Walls (1-6)
 - A. Preparation (1-2)
 - 1. A concerned leader (1)
 - 2. A cooperating king (2:1-8)
 - 3. A challenged people (2:9-20)
 - B. Cooperation-the people work (3)
 - C. Opposition (4:1-6:19)
 - 1. Ridicule (4:1-6)
 - 2. Force (4:7-9)
 - 3. Discouragement (4:10)
 - 4. Fear (4:11-23)
 - 5. Selfishness (5)
 - 6. Guile (6:1-4)
 - 7. Slander (6:5-9)
 - 8. Threats (6:10-19)

- II. Reviving the People (7-13)
 - A. The citizens registered (7)
 - B. The Word of God proclaimed (8)
 - C. The nation's sins confessed (9)
 - D. The holy covenant ratified (10-12)
 - E. The nation's sins cleansed (13)

Outline

NEHEMIAH 1-3

Whenever God wants to get a work done, He lays hold of willing people. The walls of Jerusalem had been ruined; a small remnant had returned; and there was much work that needed to be done. In 536, Zerubbabel and Joshua had taken about 50,000 Jews back and had (by 516) rebuilt the temple. In 457 there had been a small revival under Ezra, but now it was 445, and God was looking for someone to go to the ruined city and restore safety and order. Nehemiah was to be that person. Notice Nehemiah's activities in these three chapters.

ESTHER

A Suggested Outline of Esther

I. The Selection of Esther (1-2)

- A. The king loses Vashti (1)
- B. The king chooses Esther (2)

II. The Detection of Haman (3-7)

- A. Haman's evil plot (3)
- B. Mordecai's great concern (4)
- C. Esther's courageous intercession (5-7)

III. The Protection of Israel (8-10)

- A. The king's new decree (8)
- B. The Jews' new victory (9)
- C. Mordecai's new honor (10)

Introductory Notes to Esther

I. The Book

The events recorded in Esther take place between Ezra 6 and 7. The "third year of Ahasuerus" (1:3) would be 483 B.C. "Ahasuerus" is the title of the Persian ruler, just as Pharaoh was the title of the Egyptian ruler. The book nowhere mentions the name of God, while the name of the king is mentioned at least twenty-eight times! The Jewish rabbis have found the name "Jehovah" hidden in five different verses in the original Hebrew (1:20; 5:4,13; 7:5,7). Though Jehovah's name is not mentioned, His overruling providence is seen in every chapter of the book. "Esther " means "star"; "Hadassah," her Jewish name, means "myrtle" (2:7).

II. The Theme

Esther tells how the Jewish nation was rescued from extinction. It explains the origin of one of the Jews' most festive holidays, the Feast of Purim. The word "Purim " means "lots," and refers to the casting of lots by Haman to determine the day of the slaughter of the Jews (9:26-31; 3:7). Purim is held the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the last month of the Jewish calendar (our Feb.—March). It is usually preceded by a fast on the thirteenth day in memory of Esther's fast (4:16). That evening the Book of Esther is read publicly in the synagogue. Each time the name of Haman is read, the Jews stamp on the floor, hiss, and cry, "Let his name be blotted out!" The next day, they again meet at the synagogue for prayers and the reading of the Law. The rest of the day and the next day are given over to great rejoicing, feasting, and giving gifts. There is no OT authorization from God for this feast, but the Jews have been observing it faithfully for centuries.

JOB

A Suggested Outline of Job

- I. Job's Distress (1-3)
 - A. His prosperity (1:1-5)
 - B. His adversity (1:6-2:13)
 - C. His perplexity (3)

- II. Job's Defense (4-37)
 - A. The first round (4-14)
 - 1. Eliphaz (4-5) — Job's reply (6-7)
 - 2. Bildad (8) — Job's reply (9-10)
 - 3. Zophar (11) — Job's reply (12-14)
 - B. The second round (15-21)
 - 1. Eliphaz (15) — Job's reply (16-17)
 - 2. Bildad (18) — Job's reply (19)
 - 3. Zophar (20) — Job's reply (21)
 - C. The third round (22-37)
 - 1. Eliphaz (22) — Job's reply (23-24)
 - 2. Bildad (25) — Job's reply (26-31)
 - 3. Elihu (32-37)

- III. Job's Deliverance (38-42)
 - A. God humbles Job (38:1-42:6) (see 40:3-5 and 42:1-6)
 - B. God honors Job — 42:7-17
 - 1. God rebukes his critics (42:7-10)
 - 2. God restores his wealth (42:11-17)

Introductory Notes to Job

Too many Bible readers avoid studying the Book of Job, with the exception perhaps of the first two and last chapters, which are quite dramatic. The rest of the book appears at first to be a collection of long poetic speeches, and the conversation never seems to make much progress. A careful reading of the Book of Job, however, will reveal to you that its very modern message deals with a problem believers face repeatedly.

I. The Book

As you study the Book of Job, keep these facts in mind: (1) This is an Oriental book, filled with the thoughts and expressions of Eastern peoples. (2) This is a poetical book (except for chaps. 1-2 and 42:7-17), and Hebrew poetry is very unlike Western poetry. (3) This book

wrestles with a difficult problem, the presence of suffering in a world where God rules. These three characteristics alone make the Book of Job difficult to read and interpret, but we must not ignore it.

II. The Man

Job was not a fictional character invented for this dramatic poem; he was a real man in history. Ezekiel names him (14:14-20) and so does James (5:11). Job was a godly man, a wealthy man, and a man with sincere concern for the needs of others. However, he was also a perplexed man, for he could not explain why God should permit him to experience so much trial.

III. The Theme

Most people say that the theme of Job is the age-old question, "Why does a loving and righteous God permit the godly to suffer?" But if that is the theme of the book, the question is never answered! The theme is better stated, "How do the righteous suffer?" In just a few days, Job lost his business, his wealth, his family (except for his wife), and his health. Why should this happen? His three friends had it figured out that Job was really a hypocrite, that there was hidden sin in his life and the Lord was chastening him. Job insisted that he knew of no hidden sin, so they kept arguing with him. Please note in 2:3 that God states clearly that He had no cause against Job. And in 42:7 God rebukes the three friends for not speaking the truth about Him. Job was not a hypocrite, although (like any of us) he certainly had room for improvement in his life; and this he admitted in the end (42:1-6).

It is true that God sends chastening when His children persist in sin (Heb 12:1-13), and that this chastening is evidence of His love. It is also true that the wicked have their enjoyment today but will soon be cut down (Ps 37; 73). But neither of these facts met the need in Job's life. Nevertheless, God had divine purposes in mind in permitting Job to suffer. For one thing, He revealed through Job to Satan and the angels the testimony of a man of faith. (Only in eternity will we discover how much the angels have learned from the lives of the saints; see Eph 3:9-10 and 1 Peter 1:12.) The main lesson in Job is this: God is completely sovereign in His dealings with His people and will never permit anything to come to the life of an obedient Christian that is not for his good and God's glory. God does not have to explain His ways to us. It is enough for us to know that He cares and that He never makes a mistake. We do not live by explanations; we live by promises. The Book of Job shows us how the righteous should suffer. "You have heard of the perseverance of Job" (James 5:11, NKJV).

IV. Job's Friends

Four other men are involved in this drama, all of them friends of Job. Keep in mind that the events in this book cover several months (7:3) and that friends and neighbors discussed Job's case (6:15; 12:4; 16:10; 17:1-9). Eliphaz from Teman was the first speaker, and he based all his

ideas on a "spiritual experience" he had one night (4:12-16). Bildad was a "traditionalist" who knew some "wise sayings" and tried to build a case on them. Like Eliphaz, he was certain Job was a hypocrite. Zophar was very dogmatic and certain that he knew more about God than anyone else. Each of these men argued with Job, and he argued back. At the end (chaps. 32-37), a new voice appeared, that of the younger man Elihu, who waited until his elders had spoken before advancing his ideas. While the three older men insisted that God always blessed the righteous and judged the wicked, Elihu said that God sometimes chastened (not punished) the righteous in His own will. He asked Job to submit to God and trust Him, but his attitude was still that of a judge and a critic. When God did appear, He made no reference to Elihu's great speeches at all!

V. The Blessing of Endurance

The Book of Job does not give a "pat answer" to the problem of why the righteous suffer. Certainly Job was a better man after the trials were over, for suffering can have a purifying effect if we will surrender to the Lord. James 5:11 commends Job for his endurance, which literally means "faithfulness under trial." (The word "patience" here can be misleading, for Job certainly did get impatient with his friends and with his circumstances!) Job maintained his faith in God and believed that, in the end, God would vindicate him. And He did. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson of the book: that God is completely sovereign in our lives and does not have to explain His ways to us. God works out His purposes (Rom 8:28), and this is all that matters. When trials come, we should not ask, "How can I get out of this?" but "Lord, what can I get out of this?"

PSALMS

Introductory Notes to Psalms

I. Name

The word psalm comes from a Greek word that means "a poem sung to musical accompaniment." The Hebrew name is *tehillim*, which means "praises." Not all of the psalms are hymns of praise, but many of them are. The Book of Psalms is the hymnal of the Jewish nation, and some of the psalms have found their way into the Christian hymnal. Ps 46 is the basis for Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," and Isaac Watts used Ps 90 to write "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." The familiar Doxology (or "Old hundredth") is based on Ps 100.

II. Purpose

The Book of Psalms is a collection of very personal songs and poems. As the book grew over the centuries, its contents were adapted by the Jews for their corporate worship as well as for their personal devotions. In this collection you find prayers from sufferers, hymns of praise, confessions of sin, confessions of faith, nature hymns, and songs that teach Jewish history, and in each one the focal point for faith is the Lord. Whether the writer is looking back at history, looking up into the heavens, or looking around at his problems, he first of all looks by faith to the Lord. The psalms teach us to have a personal relationship with God as we tell Him our hurts and our needs and as we meditate on His greatness and glory.

III. Hebrew Poetry

Western poetry is often based on rhyme, but not so Eastern poetry. It is based primarily on what we call "parallelism"; that is, the relationship of the lines to each other. In synonymous parallelism, the second line restates the first, as in Ps 15:1 (NKJV) — "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?" Antithetic parallelism is just the opposite: the lines are in contrast to each other. One example is Ps 37:9 (NKJV) — "For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Ps 19:8-9 (NKJV) is an example of synthetic parallelism as each successive line expands the meaning: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

IV. Christ in the Psalms

Jesus said that the psalms spoke about Him (Luke 24:44), and we can see that they do. He is the crucified Savior in Ps 22; the shepherd in Ps 23 (see John 10); the sacrifice in Ps 40:6-8 (see Heb 10:1-10); the high priest in Ps 110 (see Heb 7:17-21); the stone in Ps 118:22-23 (see Matt 21:42); and the coming King in Ps 2 (see Acts 4:25-26 and 13:33).

V. Special Psalms

Seven of the psalms are called "penitential psalms" because they are confessions of sin (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130, and 143). Ps 120-134 are called the "Songs of Degrees" and are thought to be a collection of the songs that the Jewish pilgrims sang as they made their way to the annual festivals in Jerusalem. There are several "imprecatory psalms" in which the writers call down God's wrath upon their enemies (35; 37; 69; 79; 109; 139; 143). These are not so much personal expressions of vengeance as national petitions for the justice of God to be manifested for His chosen people. Ps 119 extols the virtues of the Word of God (see also Ps 19), and Ps 113-118 are used by the Jews when they celebrate Passover.

VI. Authors

Though we usually associate David with the Book of Psalms (his name is on seventy-three of them), some of the psalms are anonymous and some list other authors: Asaph (50; 73:1-83:18), Solomon (72; 127), the sons of Korah (42-49; 84:1-85:13; 87:1-88:18), Ethan (89), and Moses (90). Some of David's psalms reflect the experiences he was going through, such as the rebellion of his son Absalom (3), his victory over Saul (18), his sin with Bathsheba (32; 51), his strange behavior in Gath (34; 56), and his years of exile in the wilderness (57; 63; 142).

VII. Outline

Since each of the psalms is a separate unit, there is no need for an analysis of the structure of the book. There are five divisions, each ending with a benediction: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150.

PROVERBS

A Suggested Outline of Proverbs

Introduction (1:1-19)

I. Wisdom's Calls and Folly's Calls (1:20-9:18)

A. Wisdom's first call — to salvation (1:20-33)

B. Wisdom's Path — righteousness and safety (2-4)

C. Folly's first call — condemnation (5)

D. Folly's second call — poverty (6)

E. Folly's third call — death (7)

F. Wisdom's second call — to wealth (8)

G. Wisdom's third call — to life (9)

II. Wisdom's Contrasts (10-15) — A series of proverbs contrasting wisdom and folly

III. Wisdom's Counsels (16-31) — A series of proverbs on practical matters

Introductory Notes to Proverbs

I. Title

Our English word "proverb" is made up of two Latin words: pro (instead of) and verba (words). So, a proverb is a sentence that is given "instead of many words"; it is a short statement that summarizes a wise principle. The Hebrew word translated "proverb" means "a comparison." As we shall see, many of the proverbs of Solomon are comparisons and contrasts. Like most Oriental peoples, the Jews did much teaching through proverbs. These short, "catchy" sentences were easy to remember, and they condensed much wisdom in a small space.

II. Author

In Prov 1:1; 10:1, and 25:1, we are told that Solomon wrote most of the proverbs in this book. 1 Kings 4:32 informs us that Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs, and these were undoubtedly recorded in the official records. The men of Hezekiah (a group of writers in King Hezekiah's employ who assisted in copying out the Scriptures) copied out the material in Prov 25-29 (see 25:1), while King Solomon himself wrote or dictated Prov 1-24. In Prov 30-31 we have material from other writers, although many believe that "King Lemuel" in 31:1 was really Solomon. Solomon was certainly known for his wisdom, even though later in his life he turned to idolatry and folly.

III. Theme

The key word is wisdom . We commonly think of wisdom as the ability to use knowledge in the right way, and this is a practical definition. But, in the Bible, wisdom means so much more. True wisdom is a matter of the heart and not the mind alone. It is a spiritual matter. There is a "wisdom of this world" (1 Cor 2:1-8; James 3:13-18), and there is a divine wisdom from above. In Proverbs, wisdom is actually pictured as a lovely woman who calls people to follow her into a life of blessing and success. Folly is pictured as a wicked woman who tempts the foolish and leads them to hell. Of course, Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of God to the believer (1 Cor 1:24,30; Col 2:3). When you read Solomon's description of wisdom in Prov 8:22-31, you cannot help but see Jesus Christ. Wisdom is described as eternal (vv. 22-26), the creator of all things (vv. 27-29), and the beloved of God (vv. 30-31). Immediately you think of John 1:1-2 and Col 1:15-19. To yield your life to Christ and obey Him is true wisdom.

IV. The Fool

Proverbs often mentions three classes of people who desperately need wisdom: the fool, the simple, and the scorner (see 1:22). The fool is the person who is dense, sluggish, careless, and self-satisfied. Nabal in 1 Sam 25 is a good example; the name "Nabal" means "fool ." The fool hates instruction (1:7,22) and is self-confident (12:15). He talks without thinking (29:11)

and mocks at sin (14:9). The simple are those who believe everything and everybody (14:15) and lack discernment. They are easily led astray by others because they lack understanding (7:7). They cannot see ahead (22:3) and, as a result, repeatedly walk into trouble. Scorners mock at God's wisdom because it is too high for them (14:6), but they will not admit it because they know everything (21:24). The He-brew word for "scorner" literally means "to make a mouth"; and we can easily picture them sneering and curling up their lips in scorn. They never profit from rebuke (9:7-8; 13:1) and, as a result, they will one day be judged (19:29).

V. The Wise

Proverbs outlines for us the character of the wise: they listen to instruction (1:5); obey what they hear (10:8); store up what they learn (10:14); win others to the Lord (11:30); flee from sin (14:16); watch their tongue (16:23); and are diligent in their daily work (10:5).

VI. Value

Proverbs is valuable to us as a guidebook for practical wisdom in everyday life. It teaches us about such things as the tongue, money matters, friendship, the home, and business contracts. It would be well for believers (especially young people) to read one chapter of Proverbs a day, and thus read the entire book through each month. The NT quotes Proverbs in: Rom 3:15 (Prov 1:16); Heb 12:5-6 and Rev 3:19 (Prov 3:11-12); James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 (Prov 3:34); Rom 12:20 (Prov 25:21-22); and 2 Peter 2:22 (Prov 26:11).

VII. Interpretation

Proverbs are generalizations about life and not promises for us to claim, although there are some great promises found in the Book of Proverbs. The basic requirement for understanding and applying these proverbs is the fear of the Lord (1:7) and a willingness to obey (3:5-6; see John 7:17). The aim of the book is to give the godly person skill in human relationships and endeavors. This begins with submission to the Lord. It is dangerous to lay hold of one or two statements in Proverbs but ignore the total message of the book. Also, though we can find examples of exceptions to some of the proverbs, this does not minimize the lesson they contain. Not all godly people live long lives (3:1-2) or become wealthy (3:10). In some parts of the world, believers are dying from famine and poverty. But generally speaking, those who obey God do not ruin their bodies or waste their substance. The Book of Proverbs summons us to understand and apply all of God's revealed wisdom for all of life.