

Proverbs of Solomon (Proverbs 10:1–22:16)

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Abstract

This lecture examines the first major collection within the book of Proverbs, extending from Proverbs 10:1 to 22:16, which consists of exactly 375 proverb couplets corresponding to the Hebrew numerical gematria of Solomon's name. Dr. August Konkell outlines the literary transition from the pedagogical instructions of chapters 1–9 to the poetic collections of individual proverbial observations that function through generic, single-point analogies rather than rigid empirical formulas. The lecture highlights the dominant antithetical style of chapters 10–15, addresses thematic groupings such as wealth and moral integrity, and provides a textual critical analysis of scribal errors like dittography alongside Septuagint variants. Additionally, the presentation acknowledges the scholarly contribution of Dr. Ted Hildebrandt regarding structural patterns and highlights the practical application of proverbs across diverse social contexts.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Book of Proverbs and Context of Session 11

A. Transition from Chapters 1–9 to Chapters 10–31

1. Proverbs 1–9 functions as parental instruction establishing foundational values and orientation for wisdom.
2. Proverbs 10–31 comprises distinct collections containing hundreds of individual proverbial sayings.

B. Purpose and Structure of the Proverb Collections

1. The instruction section (1–9) was added to orient the reader to understand subsequent sayings.
2. Collections represent practical guides for daily moral choices and character formation.

II. The First Collection: The Proverbs of Solomon (Proverbs 10:1–22:16)

A. Scope and Numerical Composition

1. Spans Proverbs 10:1 through 22:16, containing exactly 375 proverbial sayings.
2. Ascribed directly to Solomon as likely the earliest collection in the book.

B. The Significance of the Number 375 (Hebrew Gematria)

1. Hebrew uses alphabetical letters as a decimal numerical system.

2. Numerical calculation for Solomon's name (Shlomo / שְׁלֹמֹה):

- a. Shin (ש) = 300
- b. Lamed (ל) = 30
- c. Mem (מ) = 40
- d. He (ה) = 5
- e. Total sum = 375

3. Deliberate compilation matching the author's name value to structure the collection.

III. Poetic Style and Major Divisions of the Solomon Collection

A. Two-Part Division at Chapter 15

- 1. Divided primarily on the basis of proverbial poetic style.
- 2. Proverbs 10:1–15:33 is characterized almost exclusively by antithetical parallelism.
- 3. Proverbs 16:1–22:16 introduces varied topics and poetic structures.

B. Nature of Antithetical Poetic Couplets

- 1. Proverbs consist of two complementary lines (Line A and Line B).
- 2. Contrast in antithesis (e.g., Prov 10:1: A wise son brings joy to a father; a foolish son brings grief to a mother).

C. Themes in the Latter Division (Chapters 16–22)

- 1. Prominence of royal themes and kingship across collections.
- 2. Association with royal court scribes (cf. Proverbs 25:1 regarding Hezekiah's court).

IV. Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Proverbs

A. Observational Nature of Proverbial Wisdom

- 1. Proverbs are generic observations of human behavior, not empirical scientific laws.
- 2. They state general truths requiring practical discernment rather than rigid grammatical exegesis.

B. Single-Point Analogies and Metaphors

- 1. Analogies focus on a specific point of comparison rather than total structural identity.
- 2. Illustrative Example: 'A ship plows through the water' (comparing the bow cutting through waves to a plow coulter, not leaving a wake).
- 3. Natural World Example: Grasshoppers marching in orderly formation without a king (Prov 30:27).

C. Genres and Cultural Uses of Sayings

- 1. Popular sayings and warnings (e.g., thornbush in the hand of a drunkard / proverb in the mouth of a fool).
- 2. Sneers and insults (e.g., 'Is Saul among the prophets?' in 1 Samuel 10:11, 19:24).
- 3. Provocations and political retorts (e.g., 'Let not him who girds his armor boast like him who takes it off' in 1 Kings 20:11).

4. Modern parallels and societal slogans (e.g., contemporary socio-political slogans).

V. Sample Exegesis and Textual Criticism in Proverbs 10

A. Thematic Groupings in Chapter 10

1. Proverbs 10:1–5/6: Sayings regarding wealth, diligence, and sloth.
2. Proverbs 10:6–11: Sayings regarding moral integrity and righteous speech.

B. Textual Criticism and Scribal Transmission

1. Dittography in Proverbs 10:10 (repetition of the second line of verse 8 in the Masoretic Text).
2. Evidence from the Septuagint (LXX) preserving the original antithetical reading ('he who corrects boldly makes peace').

C. Acknowledgments of Scholarly Contributions

1. Recognition of Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's research on structural and rhetorical patterns in Proverbs.