



*Northside Equip Foundations:*  
*Old Testament Overview*

*The Wisdom Literature*



## *The Wisdom Literature*

- The wisdom literature teaches God's people how to live wise and fruitful lives in the Creation He has made.

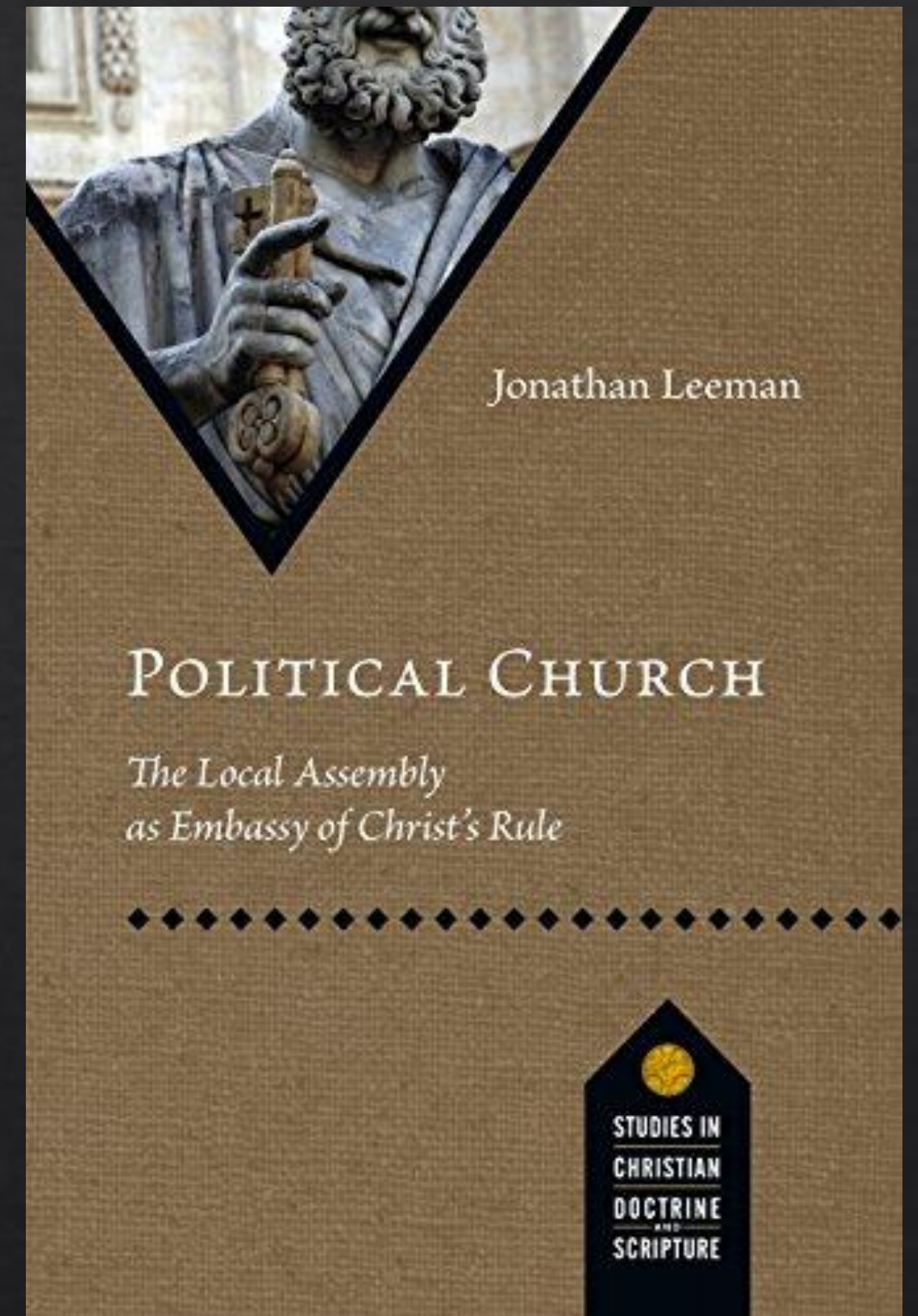
## *The Wisdom Literature*

- Proverbs | Solomon (Mainly)
- Ecclesiastes | Solomon (Almost Surely)
- Song of Solomon | Solomon
- Job | ?



## *What is Wisdom?*

“Within the realm of human rule, then, **wisdom** becomes vastly important. It begins the posture of fearing the Lord (Prov 1:7), and then it translates into the skill of studying the world, the fixed laws of God and the nature of fallen reality, and bringing order to it (Ex 28:3; 31:6). Biblical wisdom, in two words, is this **posture** and this **skill**.”





## *What is Wisdom?*

- **Posture:** Fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7)
- **Skill:** Studying the World, Bringing Order and Flourishing (Ex 28:3, 31:6)
- **2 Different Speeds:** Command and Wisdom



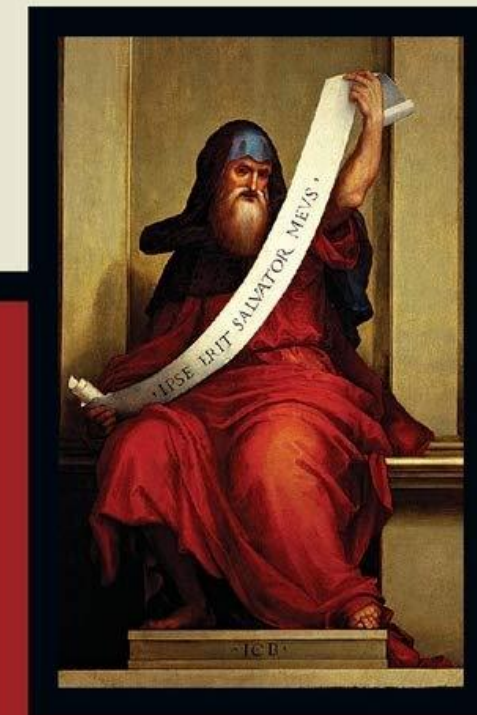
# *What is Wisdom?*

“Because it is “by wisdom” that the LORD fashioned the earth (Prov 3:9; c.f. Ps 104:24), it is the gift of wisdom that leads us back to living in harmony with God’s created world.

And...we...find...that “harmony” is quite often very different from what we might conclude if left to our own devices. Who would ever think that suffering is important for becoming *wise*? Or that death on a cross is the way to life and redemption? Or that the last will be first? And yet the Bible points to all of these as God’s wisdom, which stands over the “wisdom of the world.” Thus, we need to pursue God’s wisdom and its natural grounding in wonder.”

## Old Testament Wisdom Literature

A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION



CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW  
& RYAN P. O'DOWD



# Bartholomew & O'Dowd, Biblical Wisdom

- 1) Wisdom begins with the fear of Yahweh.
- 2) Wisdom is concerned with the general order and patterns of living in God's creation. (Creation is *good AND cursed*).
- 3) Wisdom provides discernment for the particular order and circumstances of our lives.
- 4) Wisdom is grounded in tradition



## *Proverbs | Plot*

- Solomon provides warning and guidance to readers in how to grow in wisdom and “skilled living” through collections of parables and proverbs.



## *Proverbs | Key Elements*

- “Proverb” = small, memorable principles or sayings that teach what life is normally like
- Key Topics: Fear of the Lord, Speech, Finances, Character Traits, Behavior and Conduct, Work and Diligence, etc.



## *Proverbs | Structure*

- Chs. 1-9 | Choosing Wisdom, Avoiding Foolishness
- Chs. 10-24 | Main Collection of Proverbs



# *Proverbs* |

## Finances

- “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.” Prov 3:9-10
- “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.” Prov 20:17



# *Proverbs* |

## Finances

- “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.” Prov 13:11
- “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.” Prov 22:7
- “One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.” Prov 11:24-25



# *Proverbs* |

## Speech

- “Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” Prov 12:19
- “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” Prov 18:21
- “For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.” Prov 26:20
- “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Prov 15:1
- “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” Prov 27:2



## *Proverbs | Structure*

- Chs. 1-9 | Choosing Wisdom, Avoiding Foolishness
- Chs. 10-24 | Main Collection of Proverbs
- Chs. 25-29 | Proverbs from Hezekiah's men
- Ch. 30 | Words of Agur, Warning against Pride
- Ch. 31 | Words to Lemuel → Virtuous Woman



## *Proverbs | Takeaways*

- Wisdom is supremely valuable (Prov 3:13-18).
- Wisdom is developed over time (“my son”, Agur, ch. 30), in real-life contexts, with attention to God’s Words (“fear of the Lord”, “pay attention to my words”).
- Wisdom is context-dependent. (“the poor, the king, young man, the slave”, Prov 26:4-5)



## *Ecclesiastes | Plot*

- Solomon (The Preacher) observes the broken nature of his own life, history, and the world around him. He both (1) laments the state of creation as it is, yet (2) fears the Lord and enjoys the good gifts He provides.



## *Ecclesiastes | Key Elements*

- “The Preacher”
- “Vanity” = *Hevel*
- “Joy Statements”



# *Ecclesiastes | Structure*

- *1:1-2 | Prologue*
- *1:2-18 | Opening Poem*
- *2:1-11:10 | 7 Cycles of Lament ➔ Joy*
- *12:1-8 | Closing Poem*
- *12:9-14 | Epilogue*



## *Ecclesiastes | Takeaways*

- In the midst of a cursed creation, we must recognize that everything in this life is “vanity.” Pleasure, riches, power, betting on the future, and accomplishment will not sustain us in this life. We should rightly lament the curse.
- In the midst of a cursed creation, we must not take our eyes off the fear of the Lord, obeying His commands, and waiting on His judgment/justice.
- In the midst of a cursed creation, we must take joy, by God’s power, in the good gifts God has given us today.



## *Job | Plot*

- God grants Satan permission to test Job, a righteous man, through loss and pain. Puzzled, then angered, by his circumstances, Job eventually lashes out at God. Job's friends are sure that Job has suffered because of sins he has committed. They counsel repentance. Undaunted, Job seeks an audience with God, which he receives. The book ends with reconciliation between Job and God, and Job and his friends.



## *Job | Structure*

- *Chs. 1-2 | Job's Testing*
- *Chs. 3-31 | Job's Dialogues w/ His 3 Friends*
- *Chs. 32-37 | Elihu's monologue*
- *Chs. 38:1-42:6 | God's answer*
- *Chs. 42:7-17 | Reconciliation & Restoration*



## *Job | Takeaways*

- *God's people are not promised specific answers or understanding for why our suffering happens.*
- *God's people should bring our sufferings to God in times of testing and doubt. (Lament)*
- *God's presence and majesty are our satisfaction and steady anchor in our times of suffering.*



## *Song of Songs | Plot*

- Two lovers praise each other, seek time together, and regret time apart, celebrating the beauty and joy of human sexuality in God's design.



# *Song of Songs | Key Elements*

- Solomon
- The Bride (“Shullamite” 6:13)
- Chorus



# *Song of Songs | Structure*

- *Chs. 1-2:2 | First Expressions of Love*
- *Chs. 2:3-3:11 | The Desire to be Together*
- *Chs. 4:1-5:1 | More Statements of Affection*
- *Chs. 5:2-6:3 | Further Longing for Love*
- *Chs. 6:4-7:9 | Final Praises for Her Beauty*
- *Chs. 7:10-8:14 | The Desire to be Together Permanently*



## *Song of Songs | Takeaways*

- Sexual love is a ***sacred gift*** (“the flame of YHWH” 8:6) that should be ***savored*** (“your love is better than wine” 1:2) and ***stewarded*** with great care (“do not awaken love until it pleases” 2:7, 3:5).