

Proverbs 30 • The Words of Heaven vs. Earth

Introduction

All things begins with words. We know that the universe was created at God's utterance, and that Christ Himself is designated "the Word". All relationships begin with words. All fights begin with words. All transactions begin with words. Although material actions may ultimately result in the real world, they are born out of words. Perhaps this is the best reason of all to regard God's Word above everything else, because man's word never results in anything lasting or good.

¹The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle.

The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:

²Surely I am more stupid than any man, And I do not have the understanding of a man.

³Neither have I learned wisdom, Nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.

⁴Who has ascended into heaven and descended?

Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!

[Read v.1-4]

Q: Here are the meaning of the names mentioned in v.1-2. What might they seem to indicate about this teaching?

- "Agur" = "assembler" or "gatherer"
- "Jakeh" = "pious; fearing God"
- "Ithiel" = "God is with me"
- "Ucal" = "I shall be completed/established"

Together they seem to indicate that the son of one that fears God has gathered to pass along wisdom intended to establish a personal relationship with God.

Q: Is there any significance to the fact that these words are specifically called "the oracle"? What does it mean when something in God's Word is called an "oracle"?

A: An oracle is always associated with a word of prophecy given by God, a message given through a prophet. This passage is designated as a prophecy from God just like those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. and come about **not** by the will of man, but by the inspiration of God.

Q: But if this is prophecy, why doesn't there appear to be predictions of specific things to come in the future?

A: Biblical prophecy is actually a call to God's people to obedience and righteousness. Predicting the future is actually a very small part of a biblical prophet's message, which are far more devoted to calling for adherence to God's will and ways.

Q: How is Agur's description of himself in v.2-3 a stark contrast to the person of Solomon and Solomon's acquisition and teaching of wisdom?

A: Whereas Solomon was personally visited by God and granted wisdom and intelligence like none before or after him, this was not the experience of Agur. His wisdom is tied much more strongly to faith in his need to trust God for all the answers, both for the ordinary things and for the mysteries of heaven.

Q: What is the basic point being made in v.4 regarding God and His ways?

A: It's an admission that God as Sovereign and Creator is so far above man that man cannot grasp even the basic workings of God that man can see taking place in creation. It's a fancy way of describing man's humble status in comparison with God's.

⁵Every word of God is tested;
He is a shield to those who take refuge in
Him.

⁶Do not add to His words
Or He will reprove you, and you will be
proved a liar.

[Read v.5-6]

Q: What kind of a test has God's Word undergone as alluded to in v.5?

A: It's the same kind of test that precious metals undergo to establish their purity, such as silver and gold. It means that the whole of God's Word is absolutely pure and therefore reflecting the only right way for us to follow Him in this impure world.

*The words of the LORD are pure words;
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.
Psalm 12:6*

Q: According to v.5, what makes God's Word effective?

A: It is enforced by God Himself on behalf of those that will embrace Him alone, forsaking all others gods.

Q: How do the thoughts in v.6 of not adding to God's Word connect to the observation in v.5 that God's Word is pure and found to be perfect without any defect?

A: Being pure and tested and therefore found to be wholly true and complete, they need no additional embellishment. In fact, to do so will invite God's reproof to bring one back to His original Word, shedding what was added by man. [Note: Quite a contradiction to what the Pharisees and Scribes were doing by Jesus' time.]

Point: *Agur opens by acknowledging that God alone is the Source of all wisdom and knowledge, with man incapable of understanding even the few things he can see God doing in life and nature. He now explains that this is OK, because God has provided His pure and unblemished Word to provide everything man needs to know. The search for God's wisdom does not have to go any further than the breadth of His given Word. This is why nothing "new" is given through Agur, only the reinforcement that we've already been given everything we need in the Bible provided to us.*

Application: *Do you ever seek knowledge beyond what is already given in God's Word? How is this, in itself, a test of faith? How strongly do you believe that God has provided everything you need to know in the finite pages of the Bible?*

⁷Two things I asked of You,
Do not refuse me before I die:
⁸Keep deception and lies far from me,
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is my portion,
⁹That I not be full and deny You and say,
"Who is the LORD?"
Or that I not be in want and steal,
And profane the name of my God.

[Read v.7-9]

Note: *There is an interesting literary mechanism beginning at this point using numbers. He describes "two things", then later escalates to "three things" and "four things". This is most likely a way of building a foundation of succeeding thoughts, one upon the other, to teach an overall lesson about something greater.*

Q: What is the goal of this request? How does it fit with the thoughts leading up to these verses?

A: He wants to adhere to the purity of God's Word alone, neither adding to /subtracting from it due to doctrinal error ("deception and lies") or elevating personal desire and pleasure over those of the Lord.

Note: *This is the repeated, demonstrated behavior of man, that when he seeks to do things his own way and to please himself, he alters God's Word to try and fit it to his wrongful behavior rather than following it plainly and contentedly.*

[Continued on the next page.]

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¹⁰Do not slander a slave to his master,
Or he will curse you and you will be
found guilty.

¹¹There is a kind of *man* who curses his
father
And does not bless his mother.

¹²There is a kind who is pure in his own
eyes,
Yet is not washed from his filthiness.

¹³There is a kind—oh how lofty are his
eyes!
And his eyelids are raised *in arrogance*.

¹⁴There is a kind of *man* whose teeth are
like swords
And his jaw teeth *like* knives,
To devour the afflicted from the earth
And the needy from among men.

¹⁵The leech has two daughters,
“Give,” “Give.”
There are three things that will not be
satisfied,

Four that will not say, “Enough”:

¹⁶Sheol, and the barren womb,
Earth that is never satisfied with water,
And fire that never says, “Enough.”

¹⁷The eye that mocks a father
And scorns a mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,
And the young eagles will eat it.

Q: What is the biblical connection between “deception and lies” and “food”?

A: Throughout Scripture, teaching is associated with food, particularly in accordance with the Old Testament designations of what is “clean” and “unclean”. Bad doctrine/teaching is associated with unclean foods and gluttonous behavior, while sound doctrine/teaching is associated with clean foods and a controlled appetite.

[Read v.10-14]

Q: Mentioned here are a slave, father, mother, the afflicted, and the needy. What is the common problem experienced by them all according to these verses?

A: They are all cursed or slandered or in some manner verbally maligned.

Q: How does this compare or contrast to the previous discussion of God’s Word?

A: Whereas as God’s Word is tested and ensured to be pure, man’s word is definitely not so and, in fact, identified by the sinful works it produces.

Q: What is the contrast of the purity of God’s Word versus that of man as provided in v.12?

A: The purity of man’s word exists exclusively *“in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness”*. In reality, it is proved to not be pure at all, but completely and totally unclean.

[Read v.15-17]

Q: What is the defining characteristic of a leech? What is its desire?

A: Leech’s have an insatiable appetite for blood. The point being made is that man’s uncontrollable desire to satisfy himself leads to the worst kind of behavior, even the shedding of blood to get what he wants. Basically it’s describing how man’s appetite for evil can take over.

Note: *The 4 things mentioned here could refer to generations or groups of mankind that have been/are/will be unrepentant.*

- *“Sheol”* refers to the grave into which are cast those that curse their parents and die before their time.
- *“the barren womb”* refers to those not washed of the filthiness of their unfaithfulness to God and have no spiritual children.
- *“Earth that is never satiated with water”* refers to the proud and arrogant humbled by spiritual famine. (Think of the desert and how quickly the rain is absorbed and disappears.)
- *“fire that never says, ‘Enough’”* refers to judgment from heaven that consumes those devoted to the oppression of the poor and needy and/or those devoted to God’s ways.

Q: What is being taught in the illustration of the mocking eye that becomes food for a bird of prey?

A: It’s the classic illustration of God’s justice, that all things will be made right by Him in the end. One day the same eye that in this life mocks and scorns will be judged and forever plucked out, removed. It’s a warning that everyone will eventually be held accountable to God, even though they may look temporarily prosperous for a time in this life or temporarily get away with their bad behavior.

¹⁸There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Four which I do not understand:
¹⁹The way of an eagle in the sky,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
And the way of a man with a maid.
²⁰This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
And says, "I have done no wrong."

²¹Under three things the earth quakes,
And under four, it cannot bear up:
²²Under a slave when he becomes king,
And a fool when he is satisfied with food,
²³Under an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.

²⁴Four things are small on the earth,
But they are exceedingly wise:
²⁵The ants are not a strong people,
But they prepare their food in the summer;
²⁶The shephanim are not mighty people,
Yet they make their houses in the rocks;
²⁷The locusts have no king,
Yet all of them go out in ranks;
²⁸The lizard you may grasp with the hands,
Yet it is in kings' palaces.

²⁹There are three things which are stately in their march,
Even four which are stately when they walk:
³⁰The lion which is mighty among beasts
And does not retreat before any,
³¹The strutting rooster, the male goat also,
And a king when his army is with him.

[Read v.18-20]

Q: What is the stark contrast of the 4 ways not understood in v.18-19 and the 1 way that IS understood in v.20?

A: The 4 mysterious ways (covering air, land, sea, and man) are all natural wonders created, ordered, and directed by God since the moment of their creation. These are all natural things that we don't and can't completely comprehend. The actions of the unfaithful woman, however, is man's decision to forsake what little he does know, choosing to reject God's ways and instead seek to please the self.

[Read v.21-23]

Q: How do these things all portray incompleteness?

- Slaves are not properly educated and prepared to take the office of king.
- Fools mistake temporary fulfillment with justification for their missteps and error.
- Just getting a husband in name only does not a healthy marriage make, and rarely reinforces the necessary commitment of faithfulness.
- Inheritance is often no substitute for working and legitimately earning an exalted position or responsibility.

Q: How does this hint back to the overall teaching of God's Word and wisdom?

A: There are no short-cuts to doing it according to God's ways, according to His Word.

[Read v.24-31]

Q: How do the things listed in v.24-28 contrast to the things that portray incompleteness in the previous verses?

A: These are all things that have not strayed from the inherent nature provided by God. They don't merely "survive", but thrive as they live obedient to God's natural order.

Point: WE will not simply exist, but thrive and grow if we would be obedient to that which God has revealed to us, to those things that we already know.

Q: What is implied in the use of the terms "march" and "walk" for those things listed in v.29-31?

A: They all have a purpose to fulfill. It's an illustration of God's will being carried out.

Point: Being obedient to what has been revealed to us by God through His Word is all we need to be successful according to HIS standards.

³²If you have been foolish in exalting yourself

Or if you have plotted *evil*, put your hand on your mouth.

³³For the churning of milk produces butter,

And pressing the nose brings forth blood;
So the churning of anger produces strife.

[Read v.32-33]

Q: How does v.32 sort of tie up the overall theme illuminated throughout this chapter?

A: The theme has to do with the various facets of God's Word versus man's word. It might all be summed up by observing that success comes by embracing God's Word while forsaking the wanderings of man's word. This is a way of stating that we need to immediately halt allowing ourselves to be driven by our own word and instead subject exclusively to God's.

Q: What is the inevitable result of uncontrolled speech, of living according to man's word instead of God's as provided in v.33?

A: Man's words and ways always lead to ever-increasing problems.

Point: *No fight begins without words. Anger does not grow into violence without the fuel of words. A heart in right submission to God controls words before they can escalate into evil.*