

Christ in Prophecy
Jesus in the Old Testament 27
Wisdom of the Ages (Proverbs)
Key Verses: Proverbs 1:7, 14:34

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Opening

Tim Moore: Greetings in the Name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope and soon-returning King! I'm Tim Moore, the senior evangelist for Lamb & Lion Ministries and your host for Christ in Prophecy.

Following the inspiring Psalms of David and other Old Testament hymn-writers, Proverbs represents a unique book of wisdom. Its opening verse ascribes the book to "Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel." We know from 1 Kings that Solomon was blessed by God with a "wise and discerning heart," more so than any who came before him. We also discovered in 1 Chronicles that wisdom can be fleeting, for individuals and societies that stray from the living God.

But in Proverbs, Solomon offers a collection of short, pithy statements that offer "prudence to the naïve, knowledge and discretion to youth, increased learning to the wise, and counsel to those with understanding." That is an apt description of the entirety of God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation.

I've reached out to someone whose learning and insight is respected far and wide. Dr. Al Mohler is not only the President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, he is a deep thinker, incomparably well-read, and a cherished friend.

Part 2- Interview with Dr. Al Mohler

Tim Moore: It is a daunting proposition to find a person widely respected for their insights on wisdom. But Dr. Al Mohler has been called the "reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement here in the United States." He is as well-read and widely educated as anyone I know. And his book knowledge is enhanced by a deep reservoir of wisdom, because his commitment to the Lord undergirds all his amassed knowledge.

Dr. Mohler, thank you for taking the time again to sit down with me on Christ in Prophecy.

Dr. Mohler: Tim, as always, it is great to be with you.

Tim Moore: Well, Dr. Mohler, obviously our focus today is on Proverbs. And there are so many individual verses and passages that jump out at us. During our transition of leadership here at Lamb & Lion Ministries our key verse was 16:9, "The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." My own family considers Proverbs 27:17 a theme verse for our family, "Iron sharpens iron, but one man sharpens another." And so, there are so many verses. When I was in the legislature one of my favorites was 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people

perish, or are unrestrained.” What are some of your personal favorites from the book of Proverbs?

Dr. Mohler: Well, you know I will simply kind of paraphrase a bit here by saying that the contrast between wisdom and the fool, in the Proverbs is I think a very important theme to me. So, all of the Proverbs about the foolishness of fools are just very instructive. I read them as a very young teenager, and they struck me immediately. And I think of course the very context of the Proverbs, in which you have a father sharing wisdom with his son. With the Proverbs making very clear that even in the personification of wisdom at time, that wisdom comes only from God, and it is given to human beings in order that that we might live. You know it is one of the things people miss in the Proverbs; it’s not just a matter of riches and poverty, it is also a matter of life and death. Wisdom is the way of life; foolishness is the way of death. And of course, that has deep theological dimensions to it as well.

Tim Moore: Well, Dr. Mohler we always have revered you; I do for your well-read learning. But from a very young age you had a hearts desire to gain knowledge, to gain understanding, and so you have a love for reading that is obvious even with your library I’ll speak to in a minute. What gave you love for learning and knowledge that has blended over into obvious wisdom?

Dr. Mohler: You know I have to say I believe that thirst for knowledge, and wisdom came from God, but it was channeled through my parents and my grandparents. My grandmother, my father’s mother was an elementary school teacher and she was really an expert at teaching children to read, and so really long before I went to school I was absolutely seduced by books. And I could not wait until I could read them on my own. And then my parents just kept me supplied with books from the library mostly, at our church library, and they encouraged me to read. Now, I had to learn a lot, as a matter of fact I got in trouble sometimes for reading. My father who is a wonderful godly father, He enforced lights out even when I wanted to keep the light on to read. But he never dissuaded me from reading. There are some concrete things I could add there, but a hunger to know, and thinking of reading as the most important way to know in conversation with other minds, that came to me very, very early.

Tim Moore: Well, I have observed this, and I know you have as well, sometimes great learning, even from book knowledge or worldly knowledge can lead to great confusion. We have the example that Festus actually dismissed Paul’s testimony by exclaiming, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.” Of course, Paul was not mad, he was speaking words of sober truth.

But we also know examples like Charles Templeton, who began to read and acquire learning from the world, and he lampooned his fellow evangelist, Billy Graham, by saying that he was holding on to the veracity of God’s Word and dismissed his faith as intellectual suicide. And of course, Billy Graham did grapple with that criticism but ended up testifying that he was going to trust in the Lord because he said, “That is the path for me.” He never veered in his reverence for God’s Word, and the Lord’s calling on his life. But how can we expand our knowledge and yet avoid falling into the pit of becoming enamored with our own intelligence?

Dr. Mohler: The father of the Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote about complexity and simplicity. And he said, “The simplicity on the near side of complexity is very fragile, but the simplicity on the other side of complexity is very strong.” And that may seem like a kind of opaque statement, but it means a lot to me. And I think when you look at somebody like Charles Templeton, you look at someone who encountered complexity and he was totally

unprepared for it, and he did not turn to any trustworthy way to get out of it. And instead, he just surrendered to complexity. He believed in God, and then the moment he started to face some real challenges, some big questions he just caved. His cognitive faith just disappeared.

You know, I think Tim this is a warning to us. And by the way this is again going to take us back to the book of Proverbs. Here you have a godly father, who is instructing his son in wisdom. And you'll notice he brings up tough subjects. This is good Christian parenting by the way, it is good Christian leadership, it is good Christian ministry. We should not let the world bring up all the tough subjects or we are going to end up with a lot more Charles Templetons because it should be instead that we bring up the tough subjects with our own sons, and with our own daughters, and with our own church members.

Without saying too much here, we know, and this is revealed in Scripture by the way, it's revealed in human patterns throughout history, we know that there is a massive change that comes in adolescence and in pre-adolescence in what is called the acquisition of complex cognitive operations. What that really means is that a 4-year-old thinks, but a 14-year-old thinks about thinking. And so a proverb to a 4-year-old is of course that is true. But to a 14-year-old a proverb is an opportunity, or a conversation with a parent, or a trusted Christian, it is an opportunity to say, okay, what do Christians believe about this? And why? And so, I am thankful you raised the specter of Charles Templeton, who by the way died just a very sad life, died after a very sad life, with no hope of salvation or the resurrection to come. And then you think of his dear friend Billy Graham and you see two different ways.

The book of Proverbs is about helping to raise sons, in particular, but children who when faced with complexity just don't collapse.

Tim Moore: Well, I appreciate you emphasizing the role we have in pouring into our children, our grandchildren. But speaking of intelligence, there was also once an American political party, I know you are a historian for politics especially, that was called the Know-Nothings, and they seemed to gravitate toward ignorance. Sergeant Schultz would have been right at home with that party. But today, our society seems to have devolved instead of evolved. In other words, our culture is tech-savvy but lacks wisdom. How have we gotten to where we are today?

Dr. Mohler: Well, a part of it is simply the dethroning of all the natural, and created hierarchies and authorities. You know when I was a boy I needed to know what was true and what was false, and I went to my parents. And especially the older I got as a boy I went to my dad. And then there were other trusted authorities in my life. I could go to my pastor. I could go to all kinds of Christian leaders in my church. And I knew behind them were entire structures of authority, they would go back to the Word of God, and that is the authority of God Himself.

But ever since, especially the fast paced revolutions of the 20th Century there has been a dethroning of authority. And so, and by the way without authority there can be no wisdom. There can be no even acknowledgment of truth. And so, we've arrived at a point where truth is an emotivism, people say, or expressivism sometimes they are combined, and do emotive-expressivism. Which means people say, when I say that I believe that two people of the same gender should be married, it is not that I actually believe there is any objective truth about that being good or bad, it's that I'm expressing who I am, and expressing my emotional state by making that statement. Now, just to be clear there is no civilization that can survive that kind of nonsense. And there is no way Christians can square that kind of nonsense with our Christian responsibility.

Tim Moore: Certainly not. Obviously we know Pontius Pilot said, "What is truth?" Dismissive of the Lord who stood before him representing all truth. You know last time we were together you offered a tremendously insightful observation. You said that "Christians cannot be optimistic or pessimistic, but we know too much about the world to be optimistic, too much about sin," you said, "but we also know too much about God's purposes to be pessimistic. The Christian mode is not optimism or pessimism which can wax and wane with our mood," there that emotive again. You said, "It is hope. And it is hope in Christ. Hope has a name." And I have shared that wisdom so many times with other Christians who of late have been racked sometimes by fear and anxiety. So, what word of wisdom and encouragement would you offer us today?

Dr. Mohler: Well, you know what you have in that imperative in Proverbs is seek wisdom. And here is good news, there is wisdom. And as we seek it God provides it. And as you well know, and as you well teach we start with God's Word, and then we start with the very center of God's Word and that is Jesus Christ. And thus we begin with the right authority structure in knowledge. We begin with the knowledge that there is truth because God has created the cosmos, He created us in His image, and He is truth and He has revealed truth to us, and He's made the world intelligible so that by observing the world we may know His truth.

We also know the power of sin. And the power of sin is devastating. This is by the way a distinctive between the Protestant and the Catholic understandings historically of the Fall. The Catholic understanding of the Fall is that the human will is totally corrupted but not human intelligence, or reason. The Protestant Reformers came along and said, "No, this is what total depravity means. It is not just our will, it is our cognition that is fallen." And that is why we desperately need the Scriptures, but ultimately it's why our only rescue is from Christ. Christ the true wisdom.

You know the beginning of the prologue of the Gospel of John it says, "In the beginning was the Word," the Logos, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is the wisdom of God. And thus, we have true wisdom. And again, just as I said, we don't hope in hope, we hope in Christ, we don't believe in belief, we believe in Christ.

Tim Moore: Amen. Yes, we do. In the course of our Jesus in the Old Testament series, we've already discussed the tragic end to Solomon's reign, this man who had great wisdom given to him by God Himself but he strayed grievously from the Lord. How can we avoid such enticements as Solomon succumbed to that robbed him from the very wisdom that would have led to life and that is reflected in Proverbs? I mean he is the one that wrote in 14:34 "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people." And yet, he strayed himself.

Dr. Mohler: Well, that ought to tell us something about the power of sin, and the seductiveness of sin. The very king whom the Holy Spirit inspired to write the book of Proverbs, that he himself would fall so devastatingly into sin. So, it is a reminder to us that we need more than wisdom, even more than the book of Proverbs, we need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need a Savior.

And thankfully Christians are called to not just the wisdom that is revealed in the Old Testament, not just to the wisdom that is revealed in nature, but to the wisdom that is revealed in Christ, and this is why we need the Church. We desperately need the Church as the congregation of those who are disciples growing in grace, and clinging to the truth, and we are not up to this alone. But we are not called to this alone, we are called to faithful Christianity in the context of a faithful church.

And then we desperately need the preaching of God's Word. This is the first and most fundamental of the means of grace. We are built up in Christ by the preaching, the expository preaching of God's Word. And without that we should not expect that there will be any help in us.

Tim Moore: Well, and that leads to my next question. There was a time I think most Americans would have agreed on at least the basic foundations of even having a dialogue. They believed that there was a truth, and there were individuals that they would have found trustworthy. I mentioned Billy Graham, at one time most Americans would have trusted a voice like Billy Graham's. Today I think the divide has grown so great, and the erosion of the foundation that there is even a knowable truth has grown so great that I fear Americans especially would not be able to agree on one voice, or one source of wisdom. Do you disagree with that assessment?

Dr. Mohler: No, I do not disagree, but I will say there is no political rescue to that problem. There is no scientific rescue to that problem. There is only a theological rescue to that problem.

And by the way, you are absolutely right in how post-modern and relativistic, what we would call in my world call social constructivism to understandings of truth, that is the truth is just something that people create. The antidote to that is Biblical Christianity.

But we need to note something and that is sinners can never stay consistent in their worldview, a non-Christian worldview, so inherently unstable it doesn't work by definition. So, you even have someone who is a radical Atheist like Richard Dawkins who says, "There are no post-modernists at 33,000 feet." And I'm saying that to a jet pilot. Gravity does not care if you believe in it or not. So, it is just another reminder the fact that those who try to hold to just a relativistic understanding of truth, they do not want their heart surgeon to have a relativistic understanding of truth.

Tim Moore: No, they do not. Well here at Lamb & Lion Ministries we proclaim the imminent return of Jesus Christ, not to set dates or times, but just to have people looking for our Blessed Hope and the return of our glorious God and Savior Jesus Christ. But we encourage them to stay engaged in whatever sphere of human endeavor the Lord has called them to, and planted them in. When it comes to guarding the hearts of our children and grandchildren how do we balance the importance of being salt and light out and about in our darkening society and yet protecting them and following the admonition of Proverbs 14:7 that says, "Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of wisdom."

Dr. Mohler: Yeah, that assumes that you have the choice, and that is not always something that, for instance, our children will have. Sometimes they will be in a classroom with someone and they really don't have the choice of just getting up and walking out, so they've got to learn how to think. We need to build in theological, biblical, intellectual defenses into their lives. And by the way we need to keep that conversation going on. The most important classroom needs to be at the dinner table, and the breakfast table.

So, we have to understand what we are up against and push back. Look, as a society, just look around us, this society is openly embracing insanity, irrationality, untruth. We have a society that keeps trying to look at itself with a straight face and say, "No, we believe a boy can be a girl, a girl can be a boy." And by the way then again the inconsistency comes up when all of a sudden they understand, well, this isn't exactly working too well, but we can't admit that. And so, look

we just got to be in this constant mode of not being tossed to and fro, but instead saying, look we expect a sinful world to act like a sinful world, we expect a sinful world to think like a sinful world. Our task is not to think that way, and not to live that way. But we do need to be very watchful of what is taking place. And as parents, again, and as Christian leaders have to understand we are surrounded by children, teenagers, young people for whom these challenges are just immense.

Tim Moore: They certainly are. Dr. Mohler, I personally look forward every day to listening to “The Briefing” your daily podcast that offers an analysis of the news from a Christian worldview, and it is insightful for a wide range of topics that don’t often make the local news or even the national news here in America. And you speak of a false fixation on intersectionality, the ideology of secularists that talks about deliberately flaunting the wisdom of God to embrace, again, these abnormalities if you will. It galls the sense of anyone who adheres to a Christian worldview. What do you see coming down the pipe that is even more abhorrent and just crazy but is inevitable given the trends in our culture?

Dr. Mohler: Yeah, I’ve kind of given the reference to it already when I spoke of the confusion of male and female. You know throughout virtually all my young years as a young person, as a young adult, and even throughout most of the years, the three decades I’ve served as president of this institution and been a Christian apologist, and theologian, the most pressing questions have been intellectual. The most pressing questions have been what we would call in the academic world epistemology; how do I know? How do I know that the Bible is the Word of God? How do I know that God really inspired the Bible? How do I know that Jesus Christ was really the Son of God? How do I know that Jesus really was raised from the dead? And so those were the how do I know questions. How do I know questions, that was the obsessive concern of Christian apologetics.

But we are now living in a world in which people are denying reality itself, and not just how do I know this, but we have a war on matter, we have a war on creation. And so, again, something as simple as male and female is now a subject of widespread, increasing, unprecedented confusion. Now let me just point out there never has been a society in all of human history that has been confused about these things, that we are now, this is a rejection not just of the Bible, this is a rejection of creation, of the created order.

Tim Moore: It certainly is. Dr. Mohler, this series we’ve been focusing on is Jesus in the Old Testament, looking for Him throughout the pages of the Scripture, not just the New Testament. So, as we look at Proverbs, the Hebrew word for proverb, as I know you are aware can mean taunt, discourse, or parable. And it is crystal clear we can cite chapter 2, verse 6, “That the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” But where in Proverbs do you see evidence of Jesus our Messiah providing that wisdom and the book itself pointing to Him as the coming Christ?

Dr. Mohler: The most important thing I know to say that He is the wisdom. That He is not just the preacher of wisdom, He’s not just the teacher of wisdom, He is the wisdom. So, I would point throughout the entirety of the book of Proverbs. That means that when we are told to seek wisdom, it really means we are to seek Christ. And so, I appreciate you looking Christologically at the Old Testament and at the Proverbs. Because here is the thing, if the Proverbs is just even, if its just a Holy Spirit inspired book of wisdom from a father to a son in ancient Israel, well

that is great. But if it is an Old Testament window into understanding the wisdom of Christ, well that makes it wisdom for the church, which it is.

Tim Moore: It certainly is. Dr. Mohler, I have to tell you I am grateful for your ongoing ministry, not just “The Briefing” not just your service there at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and involved obviously with Boyce College where my daughter is, but all the things you do to pour into the church, and into our culture God’s wisdom and truth. And so, may He continue to use you as a conduit of blessing which He most certainly has done.

Dr. Mohler: Well, Tim I am always thankful for a conversation with you. I love thinking biblically along with you, and Lamb & Lion Ministries, and I pray God’s richest blessings to you.

Tim Moore: Thank you, sir, and Godspeed.

Part 3- Signs of the Time Segment

Tim Moore: Throughout human history learned men and women have aspired to wisdom. Long understood as a level of discernment beyond mere knowledge, the quest for wisdom motivated great thinkers like Socrates and Aristotle and Confucius. Within the Bible, wisdom was understood to begin with a reverence for the Lord God, and yet be a gift bestowed by Him alone.

But as I cited regarding Festus’ words to Paul, some have always been suspicious of too much learning, and discernment beyond their own understanding. Through the long period of the dark ages, misguided priests and magistrates prohibited common people from reading, let alone owning, the Bible for themselves. With an imposed famine of the Word of the Lord, immorality and doctrinal drift went largely unchecked.

The Reformation ushered in by Martin Luther began to cast off the shackles of ignorance. As followers of Jesus Christ once again studied the text of Scripture and feasted on the Word of the Lord, a new era of revival and evangelism swept the world. But, in recent years we have witnessed yet another famine. Although the Word of the Lord is readily available, most people throughout the West refuse to take and eat. Like spiritual anorexics, they run to and fro but are spiritually starving, not because they cannot access God’s Word, but because they have no interest in doing so.

Simultaneously, and caused by the same spiritual myopia, our culture now scoffs at the very concept of wisdom. Whose wisdom? They ask. Casting themselves away from conventions and human understandings handed down since the Creation, they are adrift in a sea of irrationality and moral oblivion. When the leading scholars and legal minds of a society cannot even define the meaning of the word, “woman”, you know that sanity has left the scene.

We’ve frequently spoken of the warnings Paul issued in Romans 1. As our culture exchanges the truth of God for a lie, we are pitching over into depravity at an accelerating pace.

The Lord told Daniel that in the end times, “many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.” We recognize that the positive aspect of that Word is that the Holy Spirit will enable understanding of prophecies that are sealed up until the end times. But there is another connotation as well: although knowledge will increase, wisdom and discernment will elude the unbelieving world.

Rightfully did Solomon ask, “How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?” Unless a miracle of God reforms our society one more time, I believe it is destined to decline until the Day of the Lord arrives in full force.

Proverbs is full of pithy statements that jar our sensibilities and help us stay on the straight and narrow path. I hope that you make this little book of wisdom a part of your regular Bible study. If you do, it will draw you closer and closer to the One who is Wisdom personified.

Closing

Nathan Jones: Well, Tim, I’m always impressed by Dr. Mohler’s breadth of knowledge and insight.

Tim Moore: I am too, Nathan. If you could see his extensive library, and discover as I have that he can cite from any book in it, you’d realize that he has earned his learning through years of disciplined and focused study.

Nathan Jones: There are some who want to skip the effort and get to the reward. Sort of like getting six-pack abs without doing sit-ups, or massive biceps without lifting weights. Well, within prophetic circles, there are some who advocate for mystical interpretations instead of simply reading and studying the Word of God for its plain sense meaning.

Tim Moore: Exactly, Nathan. You know Mysticism appeals to some because it seems to offer a shortcut to studying the whole counsel of Scripture.

If you want to gain wisdom regarding God’s revelation for the End Times, read and heed His Word. As you do that, a great resource for understanding the signs of the times is Dr. David Reagan’s book, “God’s Plan for the Ages.” For a gift of \$20 or more we’ll be glad to send you a copy. It is my favorite book by Dave and has been a great blessing to me over the years.

Nathan Jones: I couldn’t agree more, Tim. Dave’s book is the culmination of his many years of study and highlights the plain sense meaning of God’s prophetic Word spread throughout the Bible and collectively pointing to Jesus’ soon return. “God’s Plan for the Ages” would be a wise addition to your personal library.

Tim Moore: Our key verses for this week are Proverbs 1:7 and 14:34. The first speaks to the Source of all wisdom, and the second offers a word of wisdom to any nation, including ours. Visit our website to download our Key Verse Commentaries for each episode in our Jesus in the Old Testament series. Until next week, this is Tim Moore.

Nathan Jones: And Nathan Jones, saying, Look up, be watchful, for the only wise God and our Savior worthy of glory and majesty is drawing near.

End of Program