
Proverbs 8:22-31 and (Hebrews 1:1-4)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, may we attend to God's Word and Wisdom this morning for our good and for the glory of our Triune God in Whom we pray. AMEN.

Arius was a presbyter/elder who lived between 256 to 336 AD. He gave rise to the ancient heresy known as Arianism. Arius asserted that the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, was created from nothing before all other creatures. By affirming that the Son was created, Arius denied that the Son was eternally begotten from the substance of God the Father. Jehovah's Witnesses, founded in the mid- to late-nineteenth century with millions of followers throughout the world, are similar to these ancient Arians. They assert that Jesus, as the Word and Son of God, is a created being Who is not eternal and not God. While Jehovah's Witnesses claim to believe in Jesus, it is not the Jesus of the Bible nor is it the Jesus of the historical, catholic and apostolic Church. Therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christians.

We, as Biblical Christians, "BELIEVE ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made".

The Council of Nicea, in 325 AD, rejected the heretical teachings of Arius, and it gave us the words in the Nicene Creed I just quoted. Christians, from at least the time of Justin Martyr during the years of 100-165 AD, understood the passage being considered this morning, **Proverbs 8:22-31**, to be a reference to the Word—Jesus, the Son of God. Heiser states, "Proverbs 8 and the identification of Jesus with Wisdom was a controversial issue for the early church. In the debates at the Council of Nicea...the interpretation of [a] verb [translated as "possessed" or "brought forth" in **Proverbs 8:22**] was a factor in the distinction between the 'begotten, not made' language of the Nicene Creed. Since Wisdom is a personification of an attribute of God, the key questions [were]: 'Was there ever a time when God did not have Wisdom? If so, how then can God be God?' [Today, we will understand that, in the words of Heiser] It would be unthinkable to the biblical writer for the God of Israel to *lack* wisdom at some point. Wisdom is eternal since God (with His attributes) is eternal."

Today, we will look at **God's Wisdom at Creation.**

The opening and concluding sections of *Proverbs 8* contain familiar themes we have already considered.

Verses 1-21 A Continuation of Wisdom’s Call to the World and Her Characteristics. As we have seen, Wisdom is loudly and publically calling out to “all mankind.” She is accessible while being hidden in plain sight, right at the center of our lives. She rebukes ignorant and rebellious humanity of our foolishness, and she calls us to repent, to turn, and listen to her; because, she is trustworthy and just; she speaks what is right and true; she grants understanding and knowledge; and she is more precious than any precious creations. Wisdom hates evil, pride and perverse speech, and this is essential for properly fearing the LORD, for walking in righteousness, for ruling justly, and for daily discernment.

Verses 32-36 Continuation of Wisdom’s Caring Instruction of Her Children which are Those Who Repent at Her Rebuke and Listen to Her Teaching. Back in *verse 17*, we read that Wisdom loves those who love her, and she reveals herself to those who seek her. So, in these concluding verses, Wisdom is instructing us, as God the Father’s adopted children in Jesus, Who is the Father’s eternal Son and Wisdom FOR us. While Proverbs are not ‘promise’ statements, living wisely in the world increases our ‘probability’ of being “blessed” (aka: fortunate, happy) with life and favor from the LORD Whose creation this is; because, Wisdom, as we will learn, was present at Creation. Therefore, Wisdom knows all about this world and how it works.

Considering God’s Wisdom at Creation in Proverbs 8:22-31 beautifully fills in the portrait of Lady Wisdom being painted for us in chapters 1-9. We see **Wisdom’s Status and Statements.**

Wisdom’s Status at Creation (READ verses 22-26)

1. **Verse 22 Possessed** by God
 - a. “The LORD *possessed* me [Wisdom] at the beginning of his work/way, before His works/acts of old.”
 - b. Here is that verb translated as “possessed” (NKJV, ESV, NASB) or “brought forth” (NIV) that was a factor in the distinction between the “begotten, not made” language of the Nicene Creed.
2. **Verse 23 Set-up** by God
 - a. Wisdom was *set-up* (ESV) or *established* (NASB) from everlasting. From the beginning, before there ever was an earth.
3. **Verse 24 Brought Forth** by God

- a. "...When there were no depths; when there were no springs abounding with water."
 - i. **Verses 25-26** "...BEFORE the mountains had been shaped, BEFORE the hills, I [Wisdom] was brought forth; BEFORE he had made the earth with its fields or the first of the dust of the world."
4. Conclusion: Wisdom is an eternal attribute of God present before creation. There was never a time God was without wisdom. Here, we see Wisdom utilized by God at the beginning of creation as His primary instrument or agent during creation.
 - a. *Illustration* – I ‘possessed’, or ‘brought forth’, my mind as I approached and began working on this sermon. I did not create my mind before I created this sermon, nor was my mind created with this sermon. No. My mind was the instrument I ‘possessed’ and ‘brought forth’ to create this sermon.
 - i. This is the idea behind **John 1:1-3 (READ)**
 - b. Not only is wisdom and attribute of God, but Wisdom, like God’s Word, is personified and speaks for herself. She was speaking in **verses 22-26** about her own status at creation, and now we have...

Wisdom’s [Additional] Statements about Herself (READ verses 27-31)

5. **Verses 27-30 Speaks for Herself** and claims She was:
 - a. **Verses 27-29 Present with God** at Creation, “I [Wisdom] was there.”
 - b. **Verse 30 Beside God like a Master Workman** and **God’s Daily Delight**
 - c. **Verse 31 Rejoicing in God’s Inhabited World** and **Delighting in the Children of Man**
6. Wisdom can affirm something about herself and her status that Job could not when questioned by God.
 - a. **READ Job 38:1-11**

Here is some interesting and very Good News. In essence, **verses 30-31** state that “God is delighted by Wisdom, and Wisdom is delighted by humanity.” By God’s grace, we get caught up into this divine delight. **READ John 1:14** According to the Nicene Creed, we BELIEVE that the Eternal Word, Wisdom and Son of God came down from heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin

Mary, and was made man in the Person of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures for our salvation, for us, for the humanity that inhabits this world yet rebels against the One Who created it. Why? Because, Jesus delighted in us, and the Father delights in Jesus.

Jesus is not only the Father's delight Who delights in us as His cleaned and redeemed Bride, but Jesus is the Father's wise instrument/agent of creation. We have already considered *Colossians 1:16* and *1 Corinthians 8:6*, so, today, I would like to look at *Hebrews 1:3* (also read this morning), and see how Dr. Heiser helps us connect it to *Proverbs 8:22*. *Hebrews 1:3* states, "He [Jesus] is the radiance [brightness] of the glory of God."

Dr. Heiser states that, "What's strange about the phrase isn't its meaning. We get the metaphor. Jesus 'shines forth' the glory of God; He is a brilliant reflection of what God is like. What's odd is where the idea comes from, and how startling it would have been to the Jewish Christians for whom the book of Hebrews was intended. The word "radiance" ["brightness" or "reflection"] (ἀπαύγασμα; *apaugasma*) occurs only here in the New Testament. The writer is quoting the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but the Septuagint included books that many Jews and Christians today do not consider part of the biblical canon, but which some in ancient times considered sacred. The phrase in *Hebrews 1:3* comes from one of these books—*Wisdom of Solomon*. How can we be sure? Because [this word *apaugasma* translated as 'radiance', 'brightness' or 'reflection'] is found only one time in the Septuagint: *Wisdom of Solomon 7:26*. Not only is the word extremely uncommon, but the source of the *Hebrews 1:3* quotation has a woman as God's personified reflection.

"Wisdom of Solomon 7:24-26 reads, *For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection [a radiance, or a brightness] (apaugasma) of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.*

"About 250 years before Jesus, Jewish theologians equated the Torah with wisdom mainly because torah (תורה) was also a grammatically feminine word in Hebrew and the Torah made one wise. This meant that, to many Jews, the Torah (Wisdom) was divine. For these writers, the word spoken by God at the creation in *Genesis 1:3* was Wisdom—the word of the Torah. *Proverbs 8:22* casts this spoken

Wisdom as a living divine entity, whose instruction would later be written down by Moses. Wisdom (Torah) was God’s agent of creation and even the Savior for Jewish theology.

“The New Testament writers had another view. Paul’s description of Jesus as “the Wisdom of God” (*1 Cor 1:24, 30*) and God’s agent of creation was a theological jolt to Jewish ears. Defining Wisdom as Jesus was another way for Paul to say that Jesus was indeed the Word of creation, the agent at God’s right hand, as John had as well (*John 1:1–4*). And that also meant that Jesus was Wisdom (Torah), the means of salvation. It was Jesus who radiated God’s character to humankind as the bearer of salvation. Along with Paul and John, the author of Hebrews articulated this startling view by calling Jesus ‘the radiance [or “brilliance”] of the glory of God.’”

So, John, Paul and the author of Hebrews considered Jesus to be the “Wisdom of God” made flesh, but did Jesus see himself in this way? Heiser once again drew my attention to these parallel Gospel passages: *Luke 11:49-51 (READ)* and *Matthew 23:34-36 (READ)*. Notice that, whereas Jesus quotes “the Wisdom of God” as saying, “I will send them prophets and apostles...” in *verse 49* of *Luke 11*, in *Matthew 23:34*, Jesus takes the place of “the Wisdom of God” and says that He is the one who sends the prophets. I found this interesting and convincing that Jesus saw Himself as “the Wisdom of God.”

So, in *Hebrews 1:1-4*, we have a unique Son of God through Whom God created the world in *verse 2*. This Son also radiates and reflects the glory of God in *verse 3* as God’s Wisdom by Whom the world was created. But there’s more, in *verses 3-4*, this Son and Wisdom of God through Whom the world was created is also the saving agent of our re-creation by making purification for our sins through His incarnation, death and resurrection in the Person of Jesus Christ. That’s the Good News to which *Proverbs 8:22* points. That’s the Gospel. AMEN.

Resources for Additional Study and That Were Referenced in Sermon

Link to Dr. Michael S. Heiser’s article entitled “God’s Right Handed Woman?” with Bible Study Magazine

<http://www.biblestudymagazine.com/bible-study-magazine-blog/2015/2/19/gods-right-handed-woman>

Link to Dr. Michael S. Heiser’s Naked Bible Podcast 174 on Hebrews 1:1-4

<http://www.nakedbiblepodcast.com/naked-bible-175-hebrews-11-4/>