

Who Is Wisdom? (For Davidians Seeking Extra Oil)

Description



Who is Wisdom?

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Happy is the man who finds wisdom. . .

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.

If you are currently persuaded, as I once was, that there is to be no more light for God's people beyond the teachings of Victor Houteff (at least until the Kingdom is established), then I recommend for you to read our article [*The End of Davidian Quiescence*](#) before reading this. If, on the other hand, you realize that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," (Rev. 3:), then please read on, proving all things and holding fast that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21).

"Wisdom is supreme. Get wisdom. Yes, though it costs all your possessions, get understanding."
– Proverbs 4:7

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All Scripture passages are quoted from the World English Bible.



Who is "Wisdom" in Proverbs 8? Let us read from Ellen White:

And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting ... When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before him.' Proverbs 8:22-30. – Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34

What is this statement telling us? Quite simply, the words which the book of Proverbs places in the mouth of Wisdom, Ellen White places in the mouth of the Son of God. We may then conclude that Wisdom is Jesus – case closed. But is that really the end of the subject? What if we ask a similar question about another passage? For example, "Who is 'the messenger of the covenant' in Malachi 3?" Well, let us read from Ellen White:

... Christ, the Messenger of the covenant, brought the tidings of salvation. – Gospel Workers, p. 44

So, what is this statement telling us? Quite simply, the person identified by the phrase, "the messenger of the covenant" in Malachi 3 is Christ – case closed. We may stop here and say that anyone who says that the messenger of the covenant is anyone other than Christ must be wrong, for they contradict the Spirit of Prophecy! But we shouldn't say that, should we? As Davidians, we should know better. Remember what Victor Houteff says about "the messenger of the covenant." Quoting,

... the words of Malachi make plain that the Messenger of the Covenant is, in the strictest sense Elijah the prophet (Mal. 3:1-5; 4:5), the last messenger who prepares the way of the Lord ... – The Answerer, Book 1, p. 78

How many Adventists, upon hearing this statement, would accuse Victor Houteff of contradicting

Ellen White and of thus being wrong? We just read where Ellen White said that the messenger of the covenant is Christ, didn't we? Well, this statement from Victor Houteff says that it is Elijah, the last messenger who prepares the way of the Lord. Is Victor Houteff, therefore, wrong because he said something different from Ellen White on the subject? Those who would stick their stakes in the ground, insisting that Ellen White has the final word, saying, "She said it is Christ and that is the end of the matter!" would certainly say that Houteff could not be right. But is that true? What is the basis for Houteff's statement? Let's read it again:

... the words of Malachi make plain that the Messenger of the Covenant is, in the strictest sense Elijah the prophet (Mal. 3:1-5; 4:5) ... – The Answerer, Book 1, p. 78

Notice that Houteff did not come along and say that he is the new prophet and that therefore his interpretation should be preferred over the interpretation of Ellen White. No! He acknowledged Ellen White's interpretation and agreed that the term "Messenger of the Covenant" can apply to Jesus, as well as to John the Baptist, Moses, and many others. But his authority for saying that the messenger of the covenant is Elijah comes from Malachi itself. Again, he said, "the words of Malachi make plain..." That is, when we are talking about a passage from Malachi, Malachi itself is the standard. There may be many applications of Malachi's words which are true and good, but only the application which matches all of the specifications of the words of Malachi can be regarded as the perfect application. With these things in mind, we should remember the following counsel from Ellen White:

To say that a passage means just this and nothing more, that you must not attach any broader meaning to the words of Christ than we have in the past, is saying that which is not actuated by the Spirit of God. – Review and Herald, October 21, 1890, par. 1

Let us now apply this statement. When our Adventist friends say, "Ellen White said that Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant and therefore it cannot be Elijah as Victor Houteff claimed," they are saying that which is not actuated by the Spirit of God. Just so, for anyone here to say, "Ellen White said that Christ is Wisdom of Proverbs 8 and therefore Wisdom cannot be anyone else," would be to say that which is not actuated by the Spirit of God. Let us not set our stakes, and thus place ourselves where we cannot learn anything beyond our present attainments of knowledge. If we are discussing the question, "Who is Wisdom of Proverbs 8?" then Proverbs itself must be the ultimate standard. No one here denies that the words of Proverbs 8 apply beautifully to Christ, yet we are compelled by Proverbs itself to believe that there is more to the story just as Victor Houteff was compelled by Malachi itself to conclude that there was more to the identity of the messenger of the covenant than had been understood prior to his day.

In addressing this most important subject, we want to follow the example left by Victor Houteff in answering the apparent contradiction between his statement and that of Ellen White on "the messenger of the covenant." If you read The Answerer, Book 1, pages 78-79, you will find that Victor Houteff started by showing that the title "the messenger of the covenant" is applied by Inspiration to more persons than Christ. He showed that Ellen White also applied it to Moses and that Christ himself applied it to John the Baptist. Only then did Houteff show that Malachi itself teaches that the messenger of the covenant is Elijah. Again, since the question is concerning Malachi, its teaching takes priority over any of the other applications. In following this pattern, we will first consider Inspired applications of the title Wisdom to an individual other than Christ and then look at Proverbs 8 itself.

Before this, however, there is one common misconception which may be helpful to clear up. That is, some people assume that Wisdom in Proverbs 8 is not a person at all, but only an idea. They take it to be a poetic personification of the attribute, or quality, known as wisdom. As we will see, this interpretation falls short on many accounts. For now, though, I'll just mention that Proverbs 8 describes the bringing forth, or birth, of Wisdom (Proverbs 8:24-25). If Wisdom is the quality of being wise, this passage would imply that there was a time before which God did not possess that quality. In other words, it would mean that God was not wise and then he had to bring forth wisdom. I doubt anyone here would want to make that application, but even if someone did, it can be shown to be not true in that it contains a self-contradiction. If God wasn't wise, it would be a wise thing to bring forth wisdom. But if wisdom was not yet brought forth, the wise decision could not even be made. If God did bring forth the attribute of wisdom, it would imply that he was already wise and thus didn't need to give birth to wisdom. All this goes to show that the interpretation which makes Wisdom out to be only an attribute ends up making God unwise and Proverbs self-contradictory.

Anyway, let us now look at what Jesus had to say about Wisdom:

“To what then should I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, saying, ‘We piped to you, and you didn’t dance. We mourned, and you didn’t weep.’ For John the Baptizer came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Wisdom is justified by all her children.”

– Luke 7:31-35

As anyone will candidly admit, the one who did not dance when urged to in this parable represents John the Baptist, for he abstained from eating and drinking. Likewise, Jesus is represented by the one who did not weep when being urged to, for he came eating and drinking. The difference in behavior between John and Jesus was a point of stumbling for the people of the day. Jesus' response to this perceived problem is that “wisdom is justified of all her children.” In other words, Wisdom is justified in having John abstain from eating and drinking, but she is also justified in having Jesus come eating and drinking. Even though Jesus does not here explicitly explain who Wisdom is, he clearly portrays her as someone other than himself, for he speaks of himself and John as being her children. Whoever she is, she was as a mother to both Jesus and John, since they are described as her children. Notice, it does not say, “his children,” but “her children.”

Let us now see what Paul had to say about Wisdom:

But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds for our glory, which none of the rulers of this world has known. For had they known it, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory.

– 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

What can we learn about wisdom from this passage? Let's see:

1. Paul was speaking of Wisdom “in a mystery.”
2. Wisdom is said to be hidden.
3. Wisdom is said to be ordained before the world unto our glory.
4. None of the rulers of this world knew Wisdom.

5. If they had known Wisdom, they would not have crucified Jesus.

To say that if the princes of this world knew Wisdom, they would not have crucified Jesus, clearly distinguishes between Wisdom and Jesus. It also shows that knowing Wisdom is of the utmost importance. Let's continue with what Paul had to say in 1 Corinthians 2:

But as it is written,

"Things which an eye didn't see, and an ear didn't hear,
which didn't enter into the heart of man,
these God has prepared for those who love him."

But to us, God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except God's Spirit. But we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things.

— 1 Corinthians 2:9-13

In this passage (starting from verse 7), there are two sets of key phrases, each set contrasting with the other set. The first set of phrases is comprised of

1. "the wisdom of God" (vs. 7)
2. "the Spirit of God" (vs. 11, 14)
3. "the spirit which is from God" (vs. 12)
4. "the Holy Spirit" (vs. 13)

The other set of phrases is comprised of

1. "the spirit of man" (vs. 11)
2. "the spirit of the world" (vs. 12)
3. "man's wisdom" (vs. 13)

Clearly, "the wisdom of God" (vs. 7) is set at odds with "man's wisdom" (vs. 13), "the spirit of God" (vs. 11) is contrasted with "the spirit of man" (vs. 11), and "the spirit which is from God" (vs. 12) is contrasted with "the spirit of the world" (vs. 13). What is even more enlightening, though, is the fact that Paul is not here saying that "the wisdom of God" is one thing, "the spirit of God" is another, "the spirit which is of God" is yet another, and "the Holy Spirit" is still another. Nor is he saying that "the spirit of man," "the spirit of the world," and "man's wisdom" are all different things. No! "The wisdom of God" is "the Spirit of God," which is "the spirit which is from God," which is "the Holy Spirit." Likewise, "the spirit of man" is "the spirit of the world" and is "man's wisdom." All the terms in each respective category represent the same thing. What really settles this point is the contrast in verse 13. Let's read it again:

We also speak these things, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. — 1 Corinthians 2:13

If Paul was trying to say that "the wisdom of God" is something other than "the Holy Spirit" and

that “man’s wisdom” is something other than “the spirit of the world” and “the spirit of man,” he would keep his contrasts straight. He would have said, “we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the wisdom of God teacheth.” The fact that he actually contrasts “man’s wisdom” with “the Holy Spirit” is showing that he is using all the terms within each category to represent the same thing. In other words, he contrasts “the Holy Spirit” with “man’s wisdom” just as he contrasts “the wisdom of God” with “man’s wisdom” for the very reason that “the Holy Spirit” and “the wisdom of God” are the same. This passage, then, clearly portrays “the wisdom of God” as being “the Holy Spirit.”

In order to head in the direction of considering what Proverbs has to say for itself, let us call to mind what Solomon asked for and what he received. The Scriptures are very plain on this point.

Solomon said to God, “You have shown great loving kindness to David my father, and have made me king in his place. Now, Yahweh God, let your promise to David my father be established; for you have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of yours?”

– 2 Chronicles 1:8-10

Yahweh gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him... – 1 Kings 5:12

The Bible states clearly that Solomon asked for and received Wisdom. Consider now this inspired commentary from Victor Houteff:

If we do not believe what God tells us, if we do not believe what He says He is, then we dishonor Him. He is very anxious to give us gifts, but only if we want them. He is particularly anxious to give us the greatest gift – the gift of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, with this gift all other gifts are given. It was this gift that Solomon asked for, and with it he was liberally given all the other gifts. – Timely Greetings, Vol. 1, No. 31, p. 2

What was Solomon’s gift according to the Bible? Answer – Wisdom. What was Solomon’s gift according to Victor Houteff? Answer – The Holy Spirit. What, then, is Victor Houteff’s interpretation of the Wisdom that was given to Solomon? Answer – The Holy Spirit.

Now, let us summarize the Inspired applications of the title “Wisdom” we have seen so far.

1. Who is Wisdom according to Jesus in Luke 7:31-35? He doesn’t specify, but he does make it plain that she is someone other than himself. He says that she is a female figure who functioned in some sort of motherly role for both himself and John the baptist.
2. Who is Wisdom according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 2? The Holy Ghost, also called the Spirit of God.
3. Who is Wisdom according to Victor Houteff in Timely Greetings, Vol. 1, No. 31? The Holy Spirit.

So, while we do not deny that the title Wisdom can be rightly applied to Jesus, we have before us proof positive that Inspiration has also applied the title to the Holy Spirit and has distinguished between Wisdom and Jesus. Where does this leave us? Who is Wisdom of Proverbs 8? Well, to answer that question, as we have already said, we must study Proverbs itself.

Doesn't wisdom cry out?
Doesn't understanding raise her voice?
– Proverbs 8:1

Let us remember that in order for us to understand the perfect application of these words, we must make sure our application takes all the particulars into account. And as much as some might not like the fact that Wisdom is here described in feminine terms, none can honestly deny that she is. Wisdom cries and she puts forth her voice. Whatever interpretation we put forward, it will not be perfect unless we understand Wisdom as female. All throughout this chapter, and throughout Proverbs, she is described with terms such as “she” and “her.” Is this superfluous, or does it mean what it says? If some feel at liberty to disregard these pronouns, thinking they are meaningless or that they mean something other than what they plainly say, they should take some time to contemplate Proverbs 7:4 which says,

Tell wisdom, “You are my sister.”
Call understanding your relative,
– Proverbs 7:4

Even if the constant and repetitive pronouns “she” and “her” could be swept aside as unworthy of attention (which they cannot be in truth), this verse makes it as plain as could possibly be that Solomon wants you to understand that wisdom is a woman. You are to call her “my sister.” It is also worth pointing out here that “understanding” is another name for Wisdom, which is made clear in chapter 8, verse 14 where she says, “I am understanding.” Continuing with chapter 8:

On the top of high places by the way,
where the paths meet, she stands.
Beside the gates, at the entry of the city,
at the entry doors, she cries aloud:
“I call to you men!
I send my voice to the sons of mankind.
You simple, understand prudence!
You fools, be of an understanding heart!
Hear, for I will speak excellent things.
The opening of my lips is for right things.
For my mouth speaks truth.
Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
All the words of my mouth are in righteousness.
There is nothing crooked or perverse in them.
They are all plain to him who understands,
right to those who find knowledge.
– Proverbs 8:2-9

Here, the voice of Wisdom cries out to the children of men, pleading with them to hear the truth. Wisdom is said to be the one from whom we are to learn the truth – the pure truth. As all believers in Jesus know, this is the role of the Holy Spirit (John 14-16). Wisdom says,

Receive my instruction rather than silver,

knowledge rather than choice gold.
For wisdom is better than rubies.
All the things that may be desired can't be compared to it.
"I, wisdom, have made prudence my dwelling.
Find out knowledge and discretion.
The fear of Yahweh is to hate evil.
I hate pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse mouth.
Counsel and sound knowledge are mine.
I have understanding and power.
By me kings reign,
and princes decree justice.
By me princes rule,
nobles, and all the righteous rulers of the earth.
I love those who love me.
Those who seek me diligently will find me.
With me are riches, honor,
enduring wealth, and prosperity.
My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold,
my yield than choice silver.
I walk in the way of righteousness,
in the middle of the paths of justice,
that I may give wealth to those who love me.
I fill their treasures.
– Proverbs 8:10-21

As Victor Hotueff said, "He [God] is particularly anxious to give us the greatest gift – the gift of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, with this gift all other gifts are given." (1TG 31, p. 2). Wisdom leads in the way of righteousness – what does Paul say on this note?

...that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us who don't walk according to the flesh,
but according to the Spirit...
For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.
– Romans 8:4, 14

Furthermore, Wisdom says, "by me kings reign" and "by me princes rule, and nobles, even all the righteous rulers of the earth." What a statement! Daniel says that work is the work of God (Dan. 2:21), and so does Paul (Rom. 13:1). Whoever Wisdom is, she must be a member of the Godhead since no one else has such power and authority over all the rulers of the earth. This is brought out even more clearly in the next part of the chapter. Wisdom says,

"Yahweh possessed me in the beginning of his work,
before his deeds of old.
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
before the earth existed.
When there were no depths, I was born,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains were settled in place,

before the hills, I was born;
while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields,
nor the beginning of the dust of the world.
When he established the heavens, I was there.
When he set a circle on the surface of the deep,
when he established the clouds above,
when the springs of the deep became strong,
when he gave to the sea its boundary,
that the waters should not violate his commandment,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was the craftsman by his side.
I was a delight day by day,
always rejoicing before him,
rejoicing in his whole world.
My delight was with the sons of men.
– Proverbs 8:22-31

If an ancient prophet wanted to tell us of a Divine Woman who was brought forth before the creation of the world and who was there when the earth was created, how could it be said any more plainly than in the above verses? It is understandable that some may initially resist this idea since it is just so different from what we are used to thinking. After all,

No man having drunk old wine immediately desires new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’ – Luke 5:39

Yet, if we are to judge our ideas by the Scriptures, and not the Scriptures by our ideas, what reason could we possibly have for not accepting the plain meaning of Proverbs 8? If we are to be honest with ourselves, can we truthfully say that there is anything within Proverbs which contradicts the idea that it is speaking of a Divine Feminine Figure who was present at the creation of the world and that the role which this figure plays in relation to mankind is the same as the role assigned to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament? Even more to the point, could we honestly say that this passage does not put forward that very idea? Indeed, Christ was brought forth before the creation of the world – that is good and fine. He meets that specification. But are we to call Jesus our “sister”? Is Jesus a “she” and a “her”? Of course he is not! We need to move beyond our prejudices, my dear fellow Davidians. It says “she,” it says “her,” and it says “sister.” It is about time that we adjust our ideas to match what the Bible says rather than twisting and rejected the portions of the Bible which do not match our ideas.

As we consider the last several verses of this chapter, please open your heart to hear Wisdom’s plea:

“Now therefore, my sons, listen to me,
for blessed are those who keep my ways.
Hear instruction, and be wise.
Don’t refuse it.
Blessed is the man who hears me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting at my door posts.

For whoever finds me finds life,
and will obtain favor from Yahweh.
But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul.
All those who hate me love death.”
– Proverbs 8:32-36

This is the real heart of the matter. This is life and death. Do not hate Wisdom and thus sin against the Holy Spirit. She is the life-giver.

Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in that which is to come.
– Matthew 12:31-32

Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
the man who gets understanding. . .
She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.
Happy is everyone who retains her. . .
Don't forsake her, and she will preserve you.
Love her, and she will keep you. . .
Don't let her go.
Keep her, for she is your life.
– Proverbs 3:13, 18; 4:6, 13

If you can see light in this study, know that there is much more beyond this. We encourage you to keep studying the material on this website, and feel free to [contact us](#) if you have questions.