

Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus Christ, to our rescue. When everything appears to be lost, when we have been badly let down by friends, when we feel we have failed in things of importance, Lord Jesus Christ, be our very real Saviour. Bring gladness out of despair and joy out of trouble; and through our witness, show the world that failure and defeat is never the end because our God always has more for us that is good. We praise You, Lord Jesus Christ; AMEN.

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: 'Anointing'

Pray for the anointing of the Lord on your home and family. Pray that this will enable God's peace, love, and grace to be found in your midst, and that it will be a guard against all evil.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for the gift of music its use for worship within churches
- Pray for the nation of Iran and against evil and repression
- Ask the Lord to help us agree about how to look after our world

Meditation

You, Lord, have done so many things beyond our understanding:

You have created this magnificent world in which we live,
Yet for all our far-reaching physics, we can't find out how.

You have made life itself, because You are life itself,
Yet for all our science, we cannot create consciousness.

You have made the world more beautiful than anyone can imagine,
Yet for all our art, no artist can trump the beauty of a butterfly's wing.

You loved the world so much that You saved it from its evil,
Yet for all our philosophy, we cannot agree what good and evil are.

You have revealed Yourself throughout the history of the world,
Yet for all our spirituality, we stumble at the foot of the Cross.

You, Lord, have always been there in Creation for us to find,
Yet for all our striving, it is You who find us not we who find You.

May we respond to Your touch, and follow You.

Bible Study - Proverbs 8:27-31

²⁷ When He established the heavens, I was there,
when He formed the horizons on the surface of the oceans,

²⁸ when He strengthened the skies above,
when He fixed the well-springs of water deep below,

²⁹ when He set the boundaries of the seas
so that the waters might not go beyond His command,
when He marked out the foundations of the earth,

³⁰ It was then that I was beside Him, the master craftsman;

*and I was his delight each day, always bringing Him joy,
31 rejoicing in His whole world
and delighting in humanity.*

Review

This passage is a small part of a magnificent poem about wisdom and creation which begins at verse 22 of Proverbs 8. If you have not read the previous study on verses 22 to 26, then I strongly suggest that you read this before reading this study today. Very important points were raised in yesterday's studies that are essential to our understanding of both wisdom and creation. The passage we have read today is the voice of wisdom speaking about her role in creation, and everything she says relates to what happened on days 2 and 3 in the record of creation in Genesis 1. For this reason, whatever people say about the role of wisdom at the beginning of creation (see previous study), the poem as a whole highlights her involvement in the very fabric of the world in which we live and exist. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that wisdom is 'built in' to our world, and consequently morality, reason, truthfulness and goodness are observable within God's created order.

Most of the verses in today's passage refer to the structure of the world as it was understood in ancient times. The world was thought to be a flat disc with edges (which is what is meant by the 'horizons' in 8:27), and with a dome of air above it (see 8:28). Waters were thought to exist above the dome (which fell on the earth as rain, 8:28), and waters were also believed to exist below the earth, from where the rivers, seas and oceans had their source (the 'well-springs of water' mentioned in 8:28). These ideas are strange to us today because we are used to a more scientific explanation of these things. However, we cannot pretend that the Bible does anything other than reflect the beliefs of the people who wrote it under God's inspiration. If we place ourselves in their position, then it is obvious that today's poem talks about wisdom as being present with God throughout the detailed processes of creating the structure of the world (during days 2 and 3, Gen 1:6-13).

It does not take too much thought to conclude that just as the ancients believed wisdom was part of the structure of the world they knew, so we can go further and say that God's wisdom is integral to our understanding of the world in which we live today. God's wisdom is to be found in physics, chemistry, geology and the many sciences that explore the reality of our world today. As a matter of fact, these 'sciences' evolved in the context of a world order in which Christian faith provided the moral basis and foundation of social order, and people assumed God was 'there' in creation, waiting to be found. The history of science and Christianity over the last three hundred years has become rather complex, of course, and it is marked as much by rebellion against the church as co-operation with it (largely due to the stubborn nature of the established churches in different countries, whether Catholic or Protestant). Science and its companion engineering, has of course been taken over now by every nation, society and world order, frequently for their own political reasons and for economics and wealth creation; but its modern origins are unmistakably within the Christian search for reason and order in the universe.

You will not hear any of this within the way that our secular world teaches and describes the history of science and its great achievements in technology and engineering. However, the Christian should be inspired by the truth of what God has done through countless thousands of godly scientists and engineers who have found truth and reason and even morality within the worlds of science and even academia. In verse 30, I have kept to the traditional translation of wisdom as a 'master craftsman'. In the light of what is said by the whole poem, it seems to me that a good translation might be 'master technician' or 'master scientist'! Certainly verses 30 and 31 express the joy of all wisdom, knowledge and science in the work of God's creation.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Discuss why there is perceived to be a great divide between science and religion in our own day.
2. God has made the whole earth. Does it matter that the way this is described in Genesis is different from the way science describes it today?
3. To what extent should the church be involved with the world of science, technology and engineering today?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Many people have grave difficulty with the whole issue of Genesis 1 and how we understand the world to have been made. I strongly suggest that we focus on attempting to see how God was involved in the processes of creation, and all that follows from this. In this way, we can appreciate how wisdom has been integral to creation, and this means we must conclude that creation is not 'neutral', but that it is good. This enables us to say that the world in which we live must be valued, loved and protected, because through wisdom, it is God's gift to us.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Do you honour and appreciate the world in which you live? How do you do this? I do not ask these questions to make you feel guilty, but to encourage you to consider these things carefully before God. It is what he says about them that is important.*
- *Pray for scientists who have no appreciation of the God who made the world, because they have never been taught about Him or come across Him. Pray that through their research they may find God.*

Final Prayer

Holy and majestic Father; You have seen civilisations come and go, and You have seen people respond to the good and evil in the world in many different ways. By Your Holy Spirit, guide us as we seek to do what is right and good for the sake of the world and all who live in it. Protect us from all evil we pray; AMEN