



CLARE PRIORY CHRISTMAS 2016

THE PROLOGUE

WELCOME

- ▶ Introduction to John
- ▶ The history of the Prologue
- ▶ John the Baptist
- ▶ Background in Wisdom and Philosophy
- ▶ Commentary I
- ▶ Commentary II

SEQUENCE

- ▶ Wisdom Literature
- ▶ Lady Wisdom
- ▶ Stoicism and the Logos
- ▶ Philo of Alexandria
- ▶ Benefits for reading the Prologue
- ▶ Conversation

WISDOM LITERATURE

▶ (a) WL as a wide phenomenon

▶ Bible	Context	Text	Source
▶ Proverbs 427-430	Mesopotamia	Story of Ahiqar	ANET
▶ Job	Mesopotamia	Bab. Theodicy	ANET 601-604
▶ Proverbs	Egypt	various	ANET 504-524
▶ Qoheleth	Egypt	Dispute over Suicide	ANET 405-7

WISDOM LITERATURE

▶ **The characteristics of wisdom books of the Bible**

- ▶ a) a minimum of interest in salvation history (Torah and prophets)
- ▶ b) little interest in Israel as a nation or in its history
- ▶ c) a questioning attitude to the problems of life: suffering, inequality, death etc.
- ▶ d) a search for how to master life and understand how humans should behave before God;
- ▶ e) a great interest in the universal human experiences which affect all people and not just believers in YHWH.
- ▶ f) A joy in the contemplation of creation and God as Creator.
- ▶ g) shift of interest from the community to the individual.

LADY WISDOM

- ▶ *Proverbial and Tractate Wisdom*
- ▶ Job 28
- ▶ Prov 1-9
- ▶ Sir 24
- ▶ Avot 1:2
- ▶ Baruch 3:9-44
- ▶ Wisdom 7:7-9:18

JOB 28

- 1 "Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a **place** for gold to be refined.
- 2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from ore.
- 3 Miners put an end to darkness,
and search out to the farthest bound
the ore in gloom and deep **darkness**.
- 4 They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation;
they are forgotten by travellers,
they sway suspended, remote from people.

JOB 28

20 "Where then does **wisdom** come from?

And where is the place of **understanding**?

21 It is **hidden** from the eyes of all living,

and **concealed** from the birds of the air.

22 Abaddon and Death say,

'We have heard a **rumour** of it with our ears.'

JOB 28

- 23 "God **understands** the **way** to it,
and he **knows** its **place**.
- 24 For he **looks** to the ends of the earth,
and **sees** everything under the heavens.
- 25 When he gave to the wind its weight,
and apportioned out the waters by measure;
- 26 when he made a **decree** for the rain,
and a **way** for the thunderbolt;
- 27 then he **saw** it and **declared** it;
he **established** it, and **searched** it out.
- 28 And he said to humankind,
'Truly, the **fear of the Lord**, that is **wisdom**;
and to depart from evil is **understanding**.'

PROVERBS 8:22-31

22 **The LORD created** me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.

23 Ages ago **I was set up**,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

24 When there were no depths **I was brought forth**,
when there were no springs abounding with water.

25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, **I was brought forth—**

26 when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.

PROVERBS 8:22-31

- 27 When he established the heavens, **I was there,**
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- 28 when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
- 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
- 30 **then I was beside him, like a master worker;**
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
- 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

SIRACH 24

- 1 Wisdom praises herself,
and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.
- 2 In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth,
and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory:
- 3 **"I came forth from the mouth of the Most High,
and covered the earth like a mist.**
- 4 I dwelt in the highest heavens,
and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.
- 5 Alone I compassed the vault of heaven
and traversed the depths of the abyss.
- 6 Over waves of the sea, over all the earth,
and over every people and nation I have held sway.
- 7 Among all these I sought a resting place;
in whose territory should I abide?

SIRACH 24

LITURGY

- 8 "Then the Creator of all things gave me a command,
and my Creator chose the place for my tent.
He said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob,
and in Israel receive your inheritance.'
- 9 **Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me,
and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.**
- 10 In the holy tent I ministered before him,
and so I was established in Zion.
- 11 Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place,
and in Jerusalem was my domain.
- 12 I took root in an honoured people,
in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.

SIRACH 24

TORAH

23 All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,
the law that Moses commanded us
as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.

MISHNAH (AVOT 1:2 II)

Simeon the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the great assembly.

He would say: "On three things does the world stand:

"On the Torah

"and on Temple service,

"and on deeds of loving kindness"

BARUCH 3:9-4:4

9 Hear the commandments of life, O Israel;

[Hear O Israel - Sh^ema Yisrael]

give ear, and learn wisdom!

10 Why is it, O Israel, why is it that you are in the land of your enemies,

that you are growing old in a foreign country,

that you are defiled with the dead,

11 that you are counted among those in Hades?

12 **You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom.**

13 If you had walked in the way of God,

you would be living in peace forever.

BARUCH 3:9-4:4

- 35 This is our God;
no other can be compared to him.
- 36 He found the whole way to knowledge,
and gave her to his servant Jacob
and to Israel, whom he loved.
- 37 **Afterward she appeared on earth
and lived with humankind.**
- 4:1 **She is the book of the commandments of God,
the law that endures forever.**

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Preface: Praise of Wisdom: 6:1-21

Introduction: (6:22-25)

(2) Solomon's Speech (7:1-8:21)

(3) Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom (9:1-18)

(4) Transition Section: Wisdom saves her own.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Structure

(a) Solomon like other humans (7:1-6)

(b) Solomon. prayed and got W. and riches (7:7-12)

(c) S. prays for eloquence about Wisdom. (7:13-22a)

(d) The Nature of Wisdom (7:22b-8:1)

(c*) S. sought Wisdom, source of knowledge (8:2-8)

(b*) S. sought Wisdom. as counsellor and comfort (8:9-16)

(a*) Solomon realises Wisdom. is a gift from God (8:17-21)

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

7:22b There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, **23** beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

- 24 For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;
because of her pureness
she pervades and penetrates all things.
- 25 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.
- 26 For she is a **reflection** of eternal light,
a spotless **mirror** of the working of God,
and an **image** of his goodness.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

- 27 Although she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God, and prophets;**
- 28 for God loves nothing so much as the person
who lives with wisdom.
- 29 She is more beautiful than the sun,
and excels every constellation of the stars.
Compared with the light she is found to be superior,
- 30 for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not prevail.
- 8:1 She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.

SUMMARY

Wisdom has a divine origin
She existed before creation
and had a role in creation

Wisdom is identified with the
divine Spirit and is immanent
in the world

Wisdom grounds the
coherence and permanence
of the cosmos

Wisdom has a special
mission to human beings:
revelation and blessing

Wisdom is part of Israel:
Shekinah / Torah/ Salvation
history

Wisdom is a gift, which calls
for discipline

Wisdom is personified as a
woman, as complementary

STOICISM AND THE LOGOS

- ▶ Stoicism is an ancient philosophy, encompassing a spiritual view of the universe, the promotion of virtue and the practice of spiritual exercises.
- ▶ It became the most popular of the popular philosophies in antiquity.
- ▶ Many thoughtful people were adherents such as Cicero, Augustus, Seneca and, most famously of all, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, success to Hadrian.

STOICISM AND THE LOGOS

- ▶ According to the Stoics, the universe is a material, reasoning substance, known as God or Nature, which the Stoics divided into two classes, the active and the passive. The passive substance is matter, which "lies sluggish, a substance ready for any use, but sure to remain unemployed if no one sets it in motion."
- ▶ The active substance, which can be called Fate, or Universal Reason (**Logos**), is an intelligent aether or primordial fire, which acts on the passive matter.

STOICISM AND THE LOGOS

- ▶ The universe itself is God and the universal outpouring of its soul; it is this same world's guiding principle, operating in mind and reason, together with the common nature of things and the totality that embraces all existence; then the foreordained might and necessity of the future; then fire and the principle of aether; then those elements whose natural state is one of flux and transition, such as water, earth, and air; then the sun, the moon, the stars; and the universal existence in which all things are contained.
- ▶ Chrysippus, in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, i.39

STOICISM AND THE LOGOS

- ▶ Stoic philosophy began with Zeno of Citium c. 300 BCE, in which the **logos** was the active reason pervading and animating the universe. It was conceived of as material, and is usually identified with God or Nature.
- ▶ The Stoics also referred to the seminal **logos** ("**logos spermatikos**"), or the law of generation in the universe, which was the principle of the active reason working in inanimate matter. Humans, too, each possess a portion of the divine **logos**.
- ▶ The Stoics took all activity to imply a **Logos**, or spiritual principle. As the operative principle of the world, the **Logos** was **anima mundi** to them, a concept which later influenced Philo of Alexandria, although he derived the contents of the term from Plato.

STOICISM AND THE LOGOS

- ▶ The divine logos is both physical and spiritual.
- ▶ It does not stand transcendent outside of the material world, but imbues and deifies it, although in differing degrees of purity.
- ▶ By looking at the beauty and appropriate development of the world, it is possible to develop a natural perception of God.
- ▶ Their monotheistic pantheism led the Stoics also to acknowledge the cosmos and parts of it (e.g., the planets) as gods (in the sense of manifestations of the one deity) move in that direction.

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

▶ Philo of Alexandria

- ▶ Philo (20 BCE - 50 CE), a Hellenised Jew, used the term **Logos** to mean an intermediary divine being, or demiurge.
- ▶ Philo followed the Platonic distinction between imperfect matter and perfect Form, and therefore intermediary beings were necessary to bridge the enormous gap between God and the material world.
- ▶ The **Logos** was the highest of these intermediary beings, and was called by Philo "the first-born of God." Philo also wrote that "**the Logos of the living God is the bond of everything, holding all things together and binding all the parts, and prevents them from being dissolved and separated.**"
- ▶ The Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) was identified with the **Logos** by Philo, who also said that the **Logos** was God's instrument in the creation of the universe.

BENEFITS FOR READING THE PROLOGUE

- ▶ The ancient hymn to **Wisdom** makes greater sense as the background to our present John 1:1-18.
- ▶ The use of **Logos** was already present in Judaism – as we see from Philo of Alexandria.
- ▶ **Logos** has a tremendous resonance for educated readers of the period.
- ▶ It helps us feel the shock of “**An the word became flesh**” – just as shocking as Paul’s “spiritual body” in 1 Cor 15.
- ▶ All this makes sense too of another text in the NT (next slide):

BENEFITS FOR READING THE PROLOGUE

Col 1:11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.