

## Proverbs of Solomon – Proverbs 30-1-6

There is a bit of mystery in these verses. For example, who are these people, and what should we make of their names? Every thing in the Bible has been placed there by the Holy Spirit for a reason, but sometimes determining that reason is difficult. There are no other references to Agur and Ucal, so the Lord is not leading us to specific events, and we can't learn anything more about them from other scriptures. Ithiel is a name mentioned in Nehemiah, but because of the years, that was obviously not the same man.

What if we said, these are not real people and we should look for lessons only in the meaning of their names. What if they are allegories? Agur is described as the son of Jakeh, and as a word "*Jakeh*" has its root in the idea of obedience. Could we say that Agur was who he was out of obedience to some divine commission? Agur was a child of obedience. It would be marvelous if on each of our tombstones there were the words, "*A child of obedience.*" Ucal literally means "*eat,*" "*devour*" or perhaps "*devourer.*" Was he known to devour, or soak up, everything that Agur ever told him? Was he a good student? There is certainly nothing wrong with that. But is that God's lesson for us? Ithiel is a really interesting name and creates confusion, because it means "*God has arrived,*" and thus it is related to "*Immanuel*" – "*God with us.*" Are we to look at Ithiel as the preincarnate Christ, and if so for what purpose? He is learning from Agur. Or is his name simply a statement "*God has, or God will, become incarnate*"? In that way it might be like "*Joshua*" which means "*Jehovah saves.*" Going back to Agur, some scholars say that Agur was a title rather than his name; it means "*gatherer*" or "*collector.*"

Personally, I shy away from mystical interpretations and explanations, but there are many better men who relish them. I could be entirely wrong when I picture these as four ordinary men who lived in the day of Solomon. But that is what I'd like to do this evening, and I think we can learn a good lesson from them.

Let's try to picture Agur as an older man with two students sitting before him. **Verse 1 – "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh ... even unto Ithiel and Ucal."** Let's say that Agur has been the long-time amanuenses of King Solomon – his "*gatherer*" or "*collector.*" He has been the scribe whose job it was to listen for and then to record all these pithy proverbs. Now, he is getting old; his hearing isn't as sharp as it once was, and his hand-writing isn't as clear. He has a couple of young men who would like to take his place someday in the throne room of the King. For the sake of a lesson, let's picture the next five verses as part of Agur's instructions to some people who aspire to his profession.

### **He begins with humility and self-abasement.**

*"Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy."* There are a lot of modern gospel preachers who need to memorize and meditate on Agur's words. This should be the attitude of anyone who represents, records or re-transcribes the Word of God. More often than not, the preacher is no smarter than those who are listening to his message. And today's minister does not have special revelation from God; he's bound to the centuries old written Word. There is no room – and there is no reason – for pride when it comes to the Gospel ministry.

Agur says, "In the light of the wisest man in history, King Solomon, who was directly blessed of God with this grace...." "In respect to the words which I have been recording, I am nothing but a talking donkey, like Balaam's ass. Some may pat me on the back for transcribing the proverbs of the King, but a thirty-year-old cassette recorder could do that. You young men, who want to take my place, may look at me with awe, but I know myself to be nothing. I am as brutish as any other man – no, I am more brutish, more simple, sinful and foolish than everyone else. I am the chiefest of sinners, whom the Lord has chosen to save and use for His glory." Agur says, "My mind has always been weak, childish and beast-like, and it is deteriorating rapidly. I have not had a great education – '*I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.*' My spiritual understanding – my knowledge of holy things – is not equal to the years and opportunities which the Lord has given to me to learn and grow. I have been recording and pondering these Proverbs for a long time, but they have not benefitted me as well as I would have liked."

That may have been Agur's testimony and the way he viewed himself, but, in reality, it may have been entirely different. Paul described himself as "*the chiefest of sinners,*" but by that time he was a highly profitable servant of God. He called himself "*the chiefest of sinners,*" but he had been made a saint of God – saved and sanctified. And part of the practical expression of that holiness was his humble self-abasement. It was the same with Agur, and David, and every great servant of the Lord. "I am nothing but a stenographer in the hand of the Almighty, but I am happy, very happy, to be of service."

**Then he told his students, "My primary job is to glorify the name of God."**

*"Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?"* Don't look at me and think that I have privileged access to the

throne of God; I haven't been ascending to Heaven and descending again with all this divine wisdom. *"Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"*

Agur may properly cast down any thoughts of his own personal knowledge and wisdom, but the man had some serious spiritual insight. And by the way, notice that he referred to *"his prophecy"* in **verse 1**. *"The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal..."* When he spoke of *"prophecy"* it wasn't in the sense of foretelling the future – there is no prophecy of that sort in the **Book of Proverbs**. This *"prophecy"* was the more common forth-telling God's Word – teaching, preaching and expounding. Agur was like a preacher of God's Word, but in his case he was first a listener and recorder. And yet, there is almost a prophetic reference to the words of Paul in **Ephesians 4** – a reference to Christ. *"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (The Christ who) descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."*

Agur was prophesying, in the sense of preaching, when he urged his young students to consider the Lord. What might he have known about the incarnation of Christ – the Second Person of the God-head? What did he understand about the God-head – the Trinity? *"What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"* Did he point to one of those students and ask him about *"Immanuel"*? The Name of God is *"Jehovah," "Elohim," "El"* and *"Adonai."* And what is His Son's name? *Jehovah," "Elohim," "El," "Adonai"* and it will be *"the Lord Jesus Christ."* This is deep theology for the people of God, but for the day and age of Solomon it was so deep as to be considered almost heretical. Agur might have had a really profitable ministry in days of the incarnation, explaining, illustrating and elucidating the doctrine of Christ.

*"Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth?"* Wouldn't this man have thrilled with excitement to witness the calming of the Galilean storm? It was the Son of God who said, *"Peace be still"* and *"the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."* David said, *"He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses"* – **Psalm 33:7**. *"HE gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: ... HE appointed the foundations of the earth"* – **Proverbs 8:29**.

How well might Agur have preached from **Colossians 1:13-17** – *"God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."* Paul said, *"In (God, the Son) we live and move and have our being."* **Acts 17:28**. In **Hebrews 1:3** he said that God's son *"upholds all things by the word of his power."* This is good prophesying Agur. *"Amen, preach it, brother."*

**The 3rd thing Agur tells his students is: "My personal comments are not comparable to the Word of God."** *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."* What could you buy if you had a dollar for every time I have embarrassed myself? Try as I might, not every word from this preacher comes out pure. Sometimes I have accidentally used inappropriate words which have made me blush. Sometimes I misread the pure word of God, making the mistake mine, not God's. Sometimes I have misquoted other people. Sometimes I have just said stupid things. I am simply a human being, and other human beings, I make mistakes, and sometimes I sin. But God is holy and every word of God is pure. *"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."* And because you can trust the words of the Lord, you may hide behind them as a perfect shield. *"The Lord is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."* Do you suppose that Agur was inserting a little evangelism in his lesson to these young men? Gentlemen, trust in the Lord – *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."*

Then getting back to their potential future ministry, *"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."* Can you imagine what trouble Agur might have been in if he had altered the King's words? He was an amanuenses not an editor. What if he had included his own ideas and tried to give them authority by using

Solomon's name? Under many kings he would have been executed.

I fear for those religious leaders who deliberately manipulate God's words in order to promote their own agenda.

Westcott and Hort, and their mistranslating children are probably in Hell today. Some, like the Mormons, Catholics, Adventists and others, add their own words to the Word of God, and they are found to be liars. More common among Baptists and other professed Bible believers are those who add their own misunderstandings to the Word of God.

We all need to go back to the beginning of Agur's comments – *“Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.”* With what authority can I change the Word of God? I certainly can't claim supernatural wisdom. *“Surely I am more brutish than any man.”*

Looking at Ithiel and Ucal in the eye, Agur tells them to take their prospective job seriously. Carry it out for the glory of God and the honor of the King. *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word (preach nothing but God's Word); be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”*