

# *Wisdom Sees the Final End*

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Author: David Finney

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.” Psalm 37:37-38 KJV.

One of the themes evident in reading the inspired wisdom literature is the focus on the final end of our beliefs and actions. We ought not have spiritual myopia (2 Pet 1:9) and have the pleasure or pain of this present moment be the determining factor in what we choose to do and think. Just as the proverbial butterfly flapping its wings starts a chain reaction which reverberates through the world, so every choice we make has consequences, good and bad, impacting our destiny. Wisdom is concerned with the final outcome of every matter. Take the Psalm above. The righteous are persecuted by the wicked (Ps 37:32); the wicked are powerful and prosper (Ps 37:35); it would seem “wise” then to give up our faith and throw in our lot with the wicked, to want their life of ease (Ps 73:1-16). But were we to envy them and stumble, we would be deluded and deceived, for what shall the wealth of the present fleeting moment profit, if the eternal end be complete destruction (Ps 37:38; 73:17-20). The Hebrew word which ties these passages together can be transliterated ‘Acharyth. The KJV translates it “end.” Others “future” or the more explicit, “final destiny.” This latter rendering rightly communicates the force of its usage in the wisdom literature.

Consider the book of Proverbs. A structure of the book can be discerned in the text: chapters 1-9 are bracketed by defining wisdom as the fear of the LORD (1:7; 9:10) and presents a contrast between two ways, represented by two women, lady wisdom (1:20-33; 2:4; 3:13-18; 4:5-9, 13, 20; 7:4; 8:1-9:12), and the adulterous woman (2:18-19; 5:3-14; 6:24-29, 32-35; 7:5-27; 9:13-18). Chapters 10-24 are proverbs of Solomon. Chapters 25-29 are additional Solomon proverbs compiled by Hezekiah. Chapters 30-31 record the wisdom of Agur and Lemuel. The book begins with the instruction of a father and ends with the instruction of a mother. Our word ‘acharyth is found 13 times in Proverbs. The adulterous woman seems sweet in the moment (5:3), but her ‘acharyth is bitter and leads to death (5:4-5, 11). There is a way which seems right with a man, but its ‘acharyth is the way of death (14:12; 16:25). Do not look at the wine when it is red, when it goes down smoothly; its ‘acharyth bites like a serpent and stings like a viper (23:31-32).

So what about our 'acharyth? Are our choices leading to a glorious eternity with God, even if now we seem to suffer for them in the present (Rom 8:18)? Or are we seeking to have our best life now, closing our eyes to the bitter disappointment of our 'archaryth (Mark 8:36-37)?

“Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.” Proverbs 19:20 KJV