

The Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus

Jesus is our Wisdom, like Proverbs, with 51 chapters

Source: <http://biblia.com/bible/sir.htm#Are%20You%20Sick>

The Greeks titled it "**the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach**", or "**the Wisdom of Sirach**". The Talmud calls it "**Wisdom**", while Rabbinic writers commonly quote it as **Ben Sira**. The name "**Ecclesiasticus**," meaning "Church" or "Preacher" was due to the great success and extensive use which the primitive church made of this book in presenting moral teaching to catechumens and to the faithful. It was first written in Hebrew, and afterwards translated into Greek, by Jesus, the grandson of the author (also named Jesus Sirach).

Sirach is a book like **Proverbs**, but larger, with 51 chapters and over 60 themes... hundreds of wise sayings to live at home, at work, with neighbors, friends, enemies... **Wisdom** is the central theme, and the **fear of the Lord** is the principle of wisdom, the root of wisdom, the fullness of wisdom, and the crown of wisdom (chapter 1). The second part of the Sirach is dedicated to **the Glory of God**, in Nature and in the protection of his chosen people (chapters 42 to 51).

The great success of Sirach in the early days of Christianity was due to the right teachings of wisdom, fear of the Lord, God, inculcating virtue and branding vice and sin... and a most varied of thoughtful rules for self-guidance in joy and sorrow, in sickness and health, in struggle and temptation, in social life, with friends and enemies, rich and poor, with the good and wicked, the wise and the foolish, in trade, business, and, above all, in one's own house and family in connection with the training of children, and the way in which a man ought to behave towards his own wife and women generally.

The Book, in Two Parts:

Most subjects are treated in several chapters, like in Proverbs, but with more themes.

- **Prologue:** Written for the Greek translation by Jesus, the grandson of the Author, Jesus son of Sirach (Prologue and 50:27).

- 1- Wisdom and Wise Sayings...** over 60 themes! (chapters 1-42):
- [Wisdom and Knowledge... Rhema and Logos](#): chapters 1,2,3,4,6,10,14,15,19,20,21,24,33,34,35,37,51.
 - [Fear of the Lord](#): chapters 1,2,10,15,16,19,21,23,25,32,33,34,40,50.
 - [Commandments of the Lord](#): 1:23, 2:6,15,16, 15:15, 19:17, 23:27 or 37.
 - [Trials of the Believer](#) (2)

- [Are You Sick?... What the Bible says You should do](#) (38).
- [Other themes](#)

2- The Glory of God (chapters 42-51):

- [In Nature](#) (42-43).
- [In the History of Israel](#) (44-50).
- Two Hymns (51):
 - Hymn of thanksgiving (51:1-17).
 - Hymn of Wisdom (51:18-38)..... Pray them by yourself, they are glorious!

Wisdom and Knowledge

Sirach, as Proverbs, shows two ways to know God: By "Logos" (knowledge) and by "Rhema" (wisdom)... by "Logos" is an intellectual "knowledge", like when you study the properties of an apple, the color, chemical composition, external and internal structure... but you still have not tasted the apple!... when you taste the apple, that's "Rhema", "Wisdom".

Paul and Isaiah also distinguish between the gift of Wisdom and the gift of Knowledge (1Cor.12:8. Is.11:2).

Proverbs teaches: *Get wisdom, get understanding... Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.* (Prov.4:5-7, all chapter 4, 2:6, 3:13,19, 5:1, 8:1,9,11)... *How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!* (16:16).

Sirach starts and ends with wisdom:

- *All wisdom comes from the LORD and with him it remains forever* (1:1).
- The Hymn of Wisdom (51:13-30)... *When I was young and innocent, I sought wisdom. She came to me in her beauty, and until the end I will cultivate her. As the blossoms yielded to ripening grapes, the heart's joy, My feet kept to the level path because from earliest youth I was familiar with her...* (51:13-15).

The Song of Songs, more on Rhema, Wisdom.

In all places Wisdom (Rhema), goes before Knowledge or understanding (logos)... with the heart you will know God better and faster than with the intelligence... our mind is too small to understand God, but love is as big as God, because God is love, and the heart is the best way to God.

Wisdom is the central, dogmatic, and moral idea of the book, **described under two important aspects:**

1- In relation to God, it is eternal (1:1), unsearchable (i:6-7), universal (24:6). It is the formative, creative power of the world (24:3), yet is itself created (1:9, 24:9), and is nowhere treated as a distinct, subsisting Divine Person.

2- In relation to man, wisdom is depicted as a quality which comes from the Almighty and works most excellent effects in those who love Him (1:10-13). It is almost identified with the "fear of God" (1:16).

It is a priceless treasure, to the acquisition of which one must devote all his efforts, and the imparting of which to others one should never grudge (6:18-20, 20:32-33).

It is a disposition of the heart which prompts man to practice the virtues of faith, hope, and love of God (2: 8-10), of trust and submission (2:18-23, 10:23-27; etc.); which also secures for him happiness and glory in this life (34:14-20, 33:37-38). It is a frame of mind which prevents the discharge of the ritual law, especially the offering of sacrifices, from becoming a heartless compliance with mere outward observances, and it causes man to place inward righteousness far above the offering of rich gifts to God (35).

Fear of the Lord

Fear of the Lord is the principle of wisdom, the root of wisdom, the fullness of wisdom, and the crown of wisdom (chapter 1).

A fear of the Lord which consists in respect to God, worship, reverence, praise... and the best way is **following His Commandments** (1:23, 2:6,15,16, 15:15, 19:17, 23:27 or 37).

The Commandments of the Lord are not meant to restrict our activities, but like the Laws of Traffic, they are to help us to live a happy and wealthy and healthy life... if we pass the red light or drive into the sidewalk or outside the road, we may hurt others and ourselves... like the lost sheep or the prodigal son of Luke 15, they are great for today, after Christ!.

To drive a car, we need the accelerator and the brakes... the accelerator in life is the love, the brakes is the fear of the Lord... we go nowhere without accelerator, but no one would dare to drive without good brakes... both of them, love and fear, come by faith.

Fear of the LORD is glory and splendor, gladness and a festive crown. Fear of the LORD warms the heart, giving gladness and joy and length of days. He who fears the LORD will have a happy end; even on the day of his death he will be blessed. (1:11-13)

Trials of the Believers:

Chapter 2:

- 1- *My son, when you come to serve the LORD, prepare yourself for trials.*
- 2- *Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity*
- 3- *Cling to him, forsake him not; thus will your future be great.*
- 4- *Accept whatever befalls you, in crushing misfortune be patient;*
- 5- *For in fire gold is tested, and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation.*
- 6- *Trust God and he will help you; make straight your ways and hope in him.*

7- You who fear the LORD, wait for his mercy, turn not away lest you fall.

This statement of Sirach reminds us Hebrews 12:5-12, *the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son* (Heb.12:6)... also Prov.3:11 and Job 5:17.

Are You Sick?... What the Bible says You should do:

The Bible says you have to do if you are sick, in Ecclesiastics 38 and James 5:

1- Ecclesiasticus or Sirach 38:9-15:

9- My son, in thy sickness do not get impatient, but pray to the Lord, and he shall heal thee.

10- Turn away from sin and order thy hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all offence.

*11- Give a sweet sacrifice, and a memorial of fine flour, and make a fat offering, and then give place to **the physician**.*

12- For the Lord created him: and let him not depart from thee, for his works are necessary.

13- For there is a time when thou must fall into their hands:

14- And they shall beseech the Lord, that he would prosper what they give for ease and remedy, for their conversation.

15- He that sinneth in the sight of his Maker, shall fall into the hands of the physician.

2- [James](#) 5:14-16:

14- Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

15- And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

16- Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

So, what to do if you are Sick?:

1- Do not get impatient, trust in the Lord... always trust in God, in Jesus (Ecc.38:9).

2- Pray to the Lord, and He shall heal you! (Ecc.38:8)... that's a great promise!... and the first prayer should be of thanks-giving, giving thanks for the sickness!... because we have to give thanks to God for every thing and in all circumstances (Eph.5:20, 1Thes.5:16-18).

And, of course, you ultimately are going to die!... and your death may be the best healing of God for you at that time, to bring you to the eternal happiness in Heaven, praise the Lord!

3- Call the elders of the Church, and let them pray over you, and anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord...and the prayer of faith will make you well, and will raise you up!... that's a big promise of Jam.5:15, alleluia!

4- Make a good Confession of Sins: *"Turn away from sin and order thy hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all offence."* (Ecc.38:10)... *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* (Jam.5:16)... see [What to do when We Sin](#)

Confess all your sins, but most specially the sins of rancor, resentment, hatred, grudge... because if we don't forgive others, we can't even pray the Our Father where we ask God to forgive us the way we forgive others (Mat.6:12-15).

5- Offer the Holy Mass, *"Give a sweet sacrifice, and a memorial of fine flour, and make a fat offering"* (Ecc.38:11)... the memorial we have in Christianity is the Holy Mass, to offer the Father the Lamb of God, Jesus crucified and risen, praise the Lord!

6- Call the Physician, go to the Hospital (in Ecc.38:11-15)... it is usually the first thing we do, but it should be the last!... and in the quotation of James it is not even mentioned!... by the time you go to the Doctor you may be already healed!, praise the Lord!

Most of the times the sickness will not be healed by a miracle, that will be the extraordinary... the ordinary, the usual way is to be healed by God but using the skills, good care and compassion of a doctor and nurse, and the care and compassion of relatives, friends, neighbors...

Other Themes:

Trust in God, chapters 2,11,16,17,18,23,39,42,43,51.

- *Trust God and he will help you; make straight your ways and hope in him* (2:6).
- *Good and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from the LORD.* (11:14).

Parents and children, chapters 3,7,16,22,30,42.

- *Children, pay heed to a father's right; do so that you may live. For the LORD sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. He who honors his father atones for sins; he stores up riches to him who reveres his mother...* (3:1-18).

- *He who loves his son chastises him often, that he may be his joy when he grows up. He who disciplines his son will benefit from him, and boast of him among his intimates* (30:1-13).

- **Patience and self-control**, 1,7,18, *Be informed before speaking* (18:18).
- **Humility**, 3,7,10, *My son, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.* (3:17)
- **Pride**, 3,6,7,10 *For the affliction of the proud man there is no cure; he is the offshoot of an evil plant* (3:27).

- **Sinner**, 3,4,6,7,15,17,28, *Do not plot to repeat a sin; not even for one will you go unpunished (7:8)*
- **Poor**, 3,4,7,17,28,29,31,35, *Be it little or much, be content with what you have (29:23).*
- **Rich**, 5,10,11,13,14,27,31. *The rich man labors to pile up wealth, and his only rest is wanton pleasure (31:3)*
- **Women**, 7,9,23,25,26,36, *Be not intimate with a strange woman, lest you fall into her snares (9:3)*
- **Wife**, *a gracious wife is more precious than corals (7:19).*
- **Men**, 8,9,17,33,40, *A man's goodness God cherishes like a signet ring (17:17)*
- **Friends**, 6,7,9,12,13,22,27,31, *A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure. (6:14).*
- **Servants**, *Let a wise servant be dear to you as your own self (7:21).*
- **Last Days**: *In whatever you do, remember your last days, and you will never sin (7:36).*
- **Priest**, *Honor God and respect the priest (7:31).*
- **Tongue**, *A kind mouth multiplies friends, and gracious lips prompt friendly greetings (6:5).*

The Glory of God In Nature (42:15 to 43):

All nature sings the glory of God, the sun, moon, stars, *As the rising sun is clear to all, so the glory of the LORD fills all his works (42:16)... The beauty, the glory of the heavens, are the stars that adorn with their sparkling the heights of God, (43:9)*

In Sirach, God is one and there is no God beside Him (36:5)... He is a living and eternal God (18:1).

It is the LORD who has made all things, and to those who fear him he gives wisdom (43:35)... At God's word were his works brought into being; they do his will as he has ordained for them (42:15).

The Gospel of John will say: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be (Jn.1:-3).*

God makes the rainbow, the lightening, the storm, *The thunder of his voice makes the earth writhe; before his might the mountains quake (43:11-16).*

He makes known the past and the future, and reveals the deepest secrets (42:19).

God is the one who creates the wind, and snow, and frost, and ice, and water, and clouds, the sea... all kinds of life, the monsters of the deep (43:17-27)... *Let us praise him the more, since we cannot fathom him, for greater is he than all his works (43:29).*

And although His greatness and mercy exceed all human comprehension, yet He makes Himself known to man through His wonderful works (16:18,23, 28:4).

Awful indeed is the LORD'S majesty, and wonderful is his power (43:30).

Lift up your voices to glorify the LORD, though he is still beyond your power to praise (43:31).

The Glory of God, In the History of Israel (44-50).

The godly people is the greatest glory of God... *The abounding glory of the Most High's portion (44:1-2).*

Sirach starts with Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (44)... up to Adam, *Glorious, too, were SHEM and SETH and ENOS; but beyond that of any living being was the splendor of ADAM (59:16).*

Yes, for Sirach, **Man is the choice handiwork of God**, who made him for His glory. He set him as king over all other creatures (17:1-8).
God bestowed upon man freedom, the power of choosing between good and evil (15:14-22), and will hold him accountable for his own personal deeds (17:9-16).

Sirach describes the glory of Moses, the Patriarchs, the Judges, the Kings, the Prophets... and makes a special mention of **the Priests**, the greatest glory of God:

Aaron, the priest, is described as crowned with honor and majesty (45:6-8)... and God looks like a jeweler when he prepared his splendid vestments, *The sacred vestments of gold, of violet, and of crimson, wrought with embroidery; The breastpiece for decision, the ephod and cincture with scarlet yarn, the work of the weaver; Precious stones with seal engravings in golden settings, the work of the jeweler (45:10-11).*

Sirach describes also at great length another two priests: Phinehas (45:23), and Simon the priest, his friend, to whom he dedicates a full chapter (50).

Yes, the delights of God are men and women, not the stars, but people!... and his greatest glory! (Prov.8:31, Ps.149:4).

But God, while tolerating moral evil, He reproveth it and enables man to avoid it (15:11-21).

In dealing with man, God is no less merciful than righteous: "He is mighty to forgive" (16:12)... and: "How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him" (17:28).

Yet, no one should presume on the Divine mercy and hence delay his conversion, "for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (5:6-9).