

PROVERBS 31

JOEL W. HARDER

Good King Lemuel



- Solomon?
 - Chapter 31 begins the third division
 - ✦ Could still be Solomon using a pseudonym
 - ✦ Qoheleth = Teacher ; Ekklesiastou
 - Oracle of his mother
 - ✦ Bathsheba?
 - Jewish legend: Solomon admonished for indulging in magic with his Egyptian wife.
 - “No evidence for this.” – Allen P. Ross
- Israelite King?
 - “son” and “king” have Aramaic spelling
- Unknown?

Ideal Godly Man



- Leader
- Ruler
- Simply a godly man
 - Beware sexual immorality
 - Beware drunkenness
 - ✦ Inattentiveness
 - Beware injustice
 - Beware suffering

Reading Exegetically



- **Genre:** Poem and an acrostic
- **Audience:** Written to Jewish Culture for the purpose of describing holistic embodiment of wisdom
 - **Relationships:** Family, Husband/Wife, Community
 - **Location:** In the home, in the community, in the workplace
- **Language:** “Wisdom is a feminine noun, and the woman is an excellent example of wisdom by virtue of the variety of applications it receives – at home, in the market, with charity, in business...” —A.P. Ross
- **Theme:** The embodiment of wisdom herself

Poetic Interpretation



- Suggests this is not simply a list of characteristics for godly women
- Three context clues
- **FIRST: Poetry (Acrostic)**
- **SECOND: Hymnody**
 - Hymns written to God, Prov. 31 written to wife of noble character
 - Compare to Psalm 111

Psalm 111 & Prov. 31



V1(a): Hallelujah	v13: works bring her praise
v3: Lord's work is honorable (hadar)	v25: ascribes strength and dignity (hadar) to the woman
v4: Lord is gracious, full of compassion	v26: ascribes the law of compassion to the woman
v5: Lord provides food (terep)	v15: woman provides food (terep)
v10: Fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom (motto of Prov.)	v30: woman fears the Lord

Poetic Interpretation



- Three context clues
- FIRST: Poetry (Acrostic)
- SECOND: Hymnody
 - Hymns written to God, Prov. 31 written to wife of noble character
 - Compare to Psalm 111
- THIRD: Heroic Literature
 - “ode to a champion” – v10. the woman of valor (excellent or noble character) is same expression found in Judges
- “Putting these three observations together, one would conclude that Proverbs 31:10-31 is a hymn to Lady Wisdom, written in the heroic mode.” Allen P. Ross

It's still a Great List!



- Suggests this is not simply a list of characteristics for godly women – but it is a great list for any one desiring to live wisely!
- V10-12: Praise in General
- V13-15: Industrial Pursuits of the Household
 - Wife and House are inseparable terms in Jewish culture and vernacular
 - Context of Marriage – Eph. 5:21: “Submitting one to the other” to build together a home that is a venue for grace to manifest
 - Context of Singleness – Homes ought to be more than where we lay our head down at night, but they are to be agents of grace and mercy

List Cont'



- V16-18: Financial Enterprise
- V19-21: Provides for the Family and the Poor
 - V21: “scarlet” could be read as “two cloaks” suggesting either double garment for the cold weather, or an extra garment to give to one in need
- V22-24: Distinction by Industry
 - Industry is textiles – Purple, fine linen – suggests success
- V25-27: Wisdom and Prosperity
- V28-29: Merits are Recognized
- V30-31: Summation

Summation of Proverbs

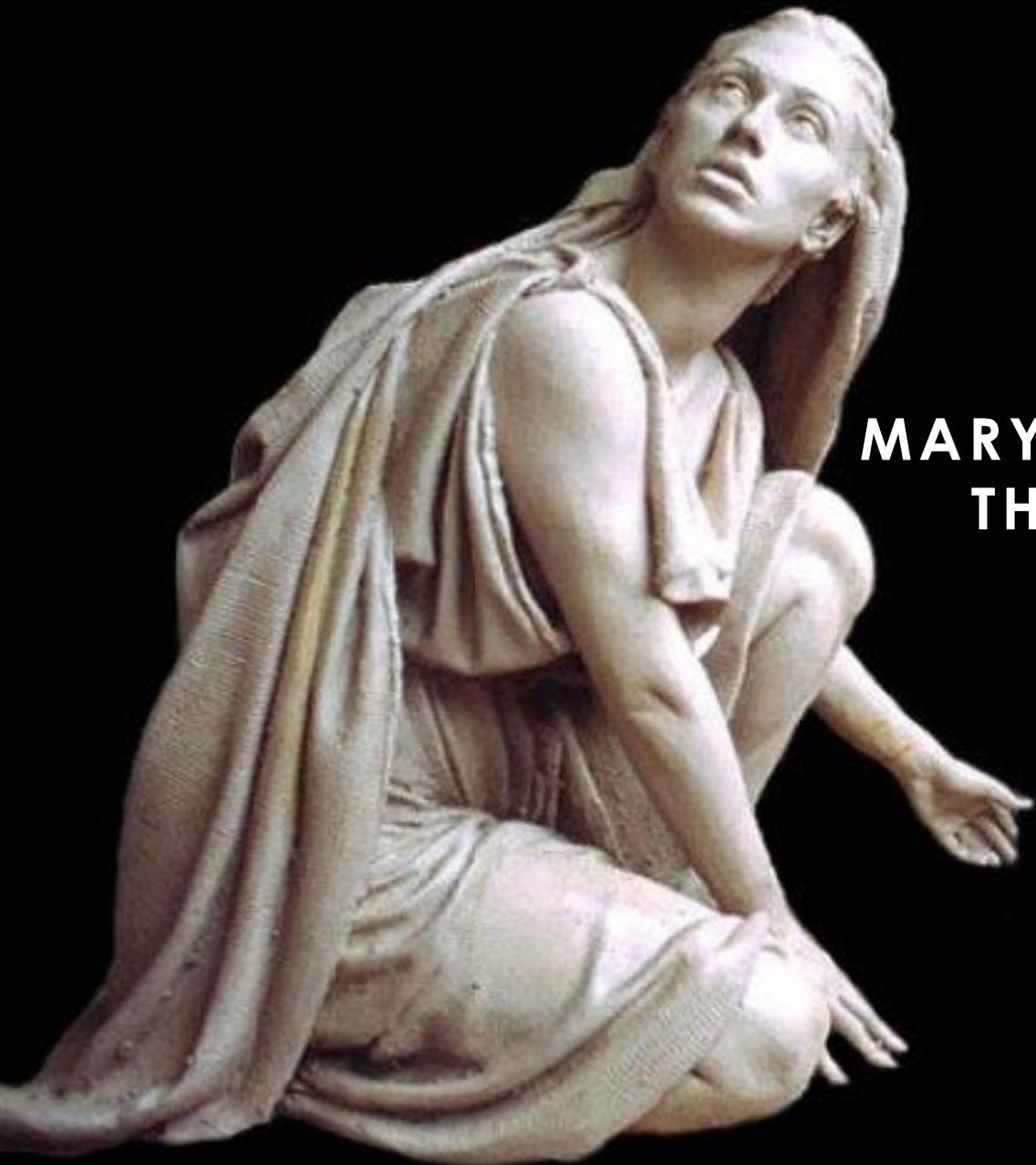


- With the emphasis on the fear of the Lord, “Thus does Wisdom, true even to herself, return in her last utterance to her first (1:7), and place once again the crown on the head of the godly.” - Thomas Perowne
- “Let all know about this kind of woman who, in piety, in devotion and with skill and diligence builds her home. Here is the foundation of society as Judaism sees it...
 - **Matt Carter: Women are the last bastion of morality...**
- “Over both man and woman stands God in whose honor these proverbial collections were made and reverently placed into the Biblical canon, so that later generations might listen, learn, and live more richly.” - W. Gunther Plaut

Biblical Womanhood



- Proverbs 31 lists the characteristics of the IDEAL Woman of Wisdom
- You will miss the mark at some point
- “Pursuing Biblical womanhood through a list of biblical attributes will ultimately fail. Your focus must be on Jesus! Jesus, who changes the heart.” – Trillia Newbell



**MARY MAGDALENE WITNESS
THE RESURRECTED LORD**
ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
ARTIST UNKNOWN

Comparable or Complimentary?



- The ideal man is to act with wisdom.
- The ideal woman is the embodiment of wisdom herself.