

House and Riches Opposed to Prudence

Proverbs 19:14

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“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord.” - Proverbs 19:14 (Cp. 18:22).

Perhaps one of the most common misconceptions in our society today concerns the love of money and the pursuit of material possessions throughout life. In the Bible we see that gold and silver were used as money, to buy and secure various necessary items. When describing various things and people throughout the Bible, those descriptions quite frequently included gold and silver as a part of the description.

Gen 13:2 *Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.*

Num 22:18 *Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.*

In both of these illustrations, Abram on the good side, and Balaam on the negative side, silver and gold are not meant to be understood as stuff kept in collection or as investments, etc. It is meant to be seen as what it was at that time - a kind of “coin of the realm” so to speak, both falling into the abundance category.

Interestingly, it was at the time of the Romans that copper was introduced as money or useful for expenses and other desirable things. We can see this a bit in the beginning of the days of Jesus:

Matt 10:9 *Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts,*

Both as wealth and as nits of what was kept in view of future need, it was referred to by weight or piece.

Gen 23:15 *“My lord, listen to me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead.”*

Gen 33:19 *And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money.*

Though not the ONLY time that such commodities were used in this, it was about the time of the Romans that money began to be stamped with an image, usually of the more significant figure in the given realm being spoken of. We see this Matt 22:20–21 with Jesus reference to the stamp of Caesar on money in the Roman empire.

²⁰ *And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?”* ²¹ *They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”*

Now, that is not to say that the bulk amounts of gold and silver were no long around or kept. They surely were. But this is one of the earliest mentions of coinage. But earlier than this “money” was usually taken by weight.

Gen. 23:16 *And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.*

Jer. 32:10 *And I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales.*

Interestingly, these bulk amounts of silver and gold were broken down into even small amounts, usually taken by weight, not, as we have said, in a number of coins, etc.

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Quite a number of the passages that make reference to money speak of such measurement. A number of the references to measurements of money, gold, silver etc. should actually be understood as references to weights of them:

One of the better known is a talent of gold which weight, in modern times, approximately 58.9 kilograms (or 130 lb.).

1 Kin 9:14 *Then Hiram sent the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold.*

A Talent of silver was essentially the same thing...though, naturally, the worth in the end would be different due to the fact that gold was more precious than silver.

1 Kin 16:24 *And he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; then he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill.*

2 Kin 5:22–23 *And he said, “All is well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.’ ”* **23** *So Naaman said,*

“Please, take two talents.” And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him.

It seems obvious that a silver talent was a worthy thing, but of much less worth than the same weight of Gold.

We also see what is called a “shekel” of silver. The Shekel was definitely a weight used of both silver and gold, the common standard both of weight and value among the Hebrews. It is estimated at 220 English grains, or a little more than half an ounce avoirdupois. In modern times this word (avoirdupois) most commonly refers to the system of weight measurement used for general merchandise, in which the pound is equal to 16 ounces, the ounce 16 drams, and the dram 27.344 grains. One can see that the Shekel was of a significant but attainable amount of silver or gold.

In the OT we read of the “shekel of the sanctuary” (Exodus 30:13 ; Numbers 3:47) which was equal to twenty gerahs (Ezekiel 45:12). There were shekels of gold (1 Chronicles 21:25), of silver (1 Samuel 9:8), of brass (17:5), and of iron (7). The weight itself would be essentially the same and worth similar dependent on what particular metal we speak of. When it became a coined piece of money, the shekel of gold was equivalent to about 2 pound of our money. Six gold shekels, according to the later Jewish system, were equal in value to fifty silver ones.

Judg 17:10 *Micah said to him, “Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance.” So the Levite went in.*

2 Kin 15:20 *And Menahem exacted the money from Israel, from all the very wealthy, from each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land.*

The Shekel was also subdivided into a half a shekel also called a bekah.

Ex 30:15 *The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.*

There was also what was called “one-third of a shekel” with the according weight and worth as we have spoken of already.

Neh 10:32 *Also we made ordinances for ourselves, to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:*

Likewise we also read of one-“fourth of a shekel”. These later measurement drive home the idea that the worth of these are derived from their weight and the metal they comprised and not, as in our society, on a societally

determined thing. Our pennies, nickels, dimes, etc. are not worth any more than our government (or a foreign government) states they are worth. In fact, silver dollars, gold coinage, etc. are worth more and make good investments! That was not the case in ancient Israel.

1 Sam 9:8 And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God, to tell us our way."

The lowest or finest of the measurement of gold or silver in Israel was what we see mentioned as a "Gerah" the twentieth of a shekel

Num 3:47 you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs.

Just to be thorough, there was also what was called the Minah, which worth seems to be unsure in our day, though it most certainly was not in Jesus' days.

Luke 19:13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'

One of the more commonly referred to denominations of money was what was called the "Denarius". Its' worth was similar to our "10 dollar gold piece" in the 18-1900's. Its' definition was based on the worth of what it was a conglomeration of. The coin was worth 10 of what the society said it worth. It was actually representative, in Roman society, of a workers' daily wage in silver. Interestingly, Nero cut the value of the denarius in half.

Matt 20:2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Mark 6:37 But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?"

We also read, in the NT, of what is called the "Penny", which was essentially the same as a denarius, but in the smallest form, or one days' wage for the common laborer.

Matt 5:26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Luke 12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God."

Lastly, we read of the "Mite". Whereas the Denarius was equal to a day's wage in the early NT era, the mite was the smallest of the forms of "money" that we see in society at the end of the OT era and beginning of the NT era.

Mark 12:42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

Luke 21:2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.

Back to our consideration of Proverbs 19:14:

“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord.” - Proverbs 19:14 (Cp. 18:22).

And so we can conclude, then, that the reference to “house” and to “riches” are what they, most obviously, refer to; the enjoyment and ultimate dispersion of the family makeup and possessions.

One receives inheritance as a family blessing (a result of human birth), but a wise wife (cf. 31:10–31) is a result of divine blessing. Cf. 12:4; 18:22; 31:10–31.

Verse 13 can be understood to give a bit of balance to v. 14 in the recognition that family life can be painful and some wives are a great burden to their husbands. The term “**continual dripping**” brings to mind a leaking roof. This is not a minor irritation but a source of structural damage that can make a house uninhabitable. The point is that such a woman ruins her house (see 14:1). Verse 14 of ch. 19 implies not only that a **prudent wife is a gift from the LORD** (such a wife is actually a prominent character types in Proverbs), but also that she manages the household so well that she increases its assets. So, the phrase “inheritance of Fathers” probably ought to be understood to say “**inherited from fathers**”. **House and riches** come in the ordinary course of things, in contrast to the prudent wife, who is a sign of special favor.

To review our interpretation once again; the contrast is better marked if we substitute (as it is proper that we do) “*but*” for “*and*” between the two clauses of this proverb. “*House and riches*” come in the natural order of things to a son as the inheritance transmitted by his forefathers. “**But**—a prudent wife” is a blessing he (the husband or father) has to seek, and it should be sought as “*from the Lord,*” though not without the use of the man’s own faculties, and, when obtained, to God the glory should be given.

As is often the case, there are some illustrations are useful to us at this point:

- To the first man the Lord God Himself brought the wife as His own special gift.
- From Him Abraham (himself thus richly endowed) sought a prudent wife for his son, his faithful servant helping him with his prayers, and Isaac accepting her as God’s gift.
- Wonderfully also was it brought about in the providence of God that Ruth should become the wife of Boaz.

- Still more, that the blessed Mary, the Virgin Mother of our Lord Jesus, so eminent a pattern of prudence, should, saving all scandal, be united in marriage to Jesus' human father (though NOT His father of the flesh); Joseph.
- God's hand was visibly in these marriages, but if from Him cometh "every good gift," and if a wife be "a good thing" (18:22), how much more is "a good wife" His special gift! And with that knowledge, one to be sought with great diligence and care, not to mention prayer and earnest seeking God.

By way of application, we ought to be sure to see that matrimony is a "holy estate" of God's ordaining and must be treated as such. Viewed thus, it may immensely contribute to a man's happiness and sanctification. Outside of God's plan and His blessing, it is what could be seen as a fruitful cause of misery and evil. Like other misused privileges, what should have been "for wealth" becomes "an occasion of falling."

- "A contentious woman", we're told, will turn a house into a torture chamber (ver. 13).
- An unchaste wife gives the deathblow to her husband's happiness (12:4).
- A foolish partner plucks down the prosperity of her home (14:1).

But a "prudent wife" is the very opposite of all these. She has studied and learnt the art of preserving peace by adapting herself to her husband's ways, throwing herself into his pursuits, soothing his temper. She is too modest and circumspect ever to give cause for jealousy. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, and" (by her wise frugality) "she will do him good and not evil." Surely such a wife is **far more precious** than inherited "house and lands"!

But she is not to be obtained, like them, as a matter of course. She must be sought, and that with prayer, in which parents may help. It seems sure that had they a deeper and more profound realization of the issues of such a step as marriage, would they not seek a wife for their son "of the Lord"? Did the young man look before him, would he not estimate prudence in a woman above beauty and riches? It does, of course, seem certain that good husband is also from the Lord.

In short, unions, prevented by prayer and wise considerations, are the marriages which are made in heaven.
