

Proverbs 30:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;

Analysis

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer. This verse comes from Agur son of Jakeh's wisdom collection, specifically from a teaching on four small creatures that embody profound wisdom (vv. 24-28). The Hebrew *nemalim* (נְמָלִים, "ants") are described as *am* (אֵם, "a people")—a term typically applied to human nations or communities, emphasizing their organized, collective nature. Though *lo-az* (לֹא-אֶז, "not strong") physically, ants demonstrate remarkable wisdom through diligent preparation.

The phrase "prepare their meat in the summer" uses *yakin* (יָכִין), meaning to establish, make firm, or prepare with foresight. Ants work tirelessly during harvest season to gather and store food for winter when foraging becomes impossible. This displays several wisdom principles:

1. **awareness of seasons and timing**
2. **diligent labor when opportunity exists**
3. **planning for future needs,**
4. **overcoming physical limitations through strategic effort.**

The proverb's placement among other small-but-wise creatures (rock badgers, locusts, spiders) teaches that wisdom is not measured by size, strength, or inherent power but by prudent application of whatever resources one possesses.

The ant's industriousness directly confronts the sluggard's rationalization that circumstances prevent productivity (Proverbs 6:6-11; 24:30-34). True wisdom recognizes limitations but refuses to be limited by them, instead working diligently within present opportunities to secure future provision.

Historical Context

Agur's teaching in Proverbs 30 represents wisdom from outside Solomon's direct lineage, demonstrating that God's wisdom transcends individual authorship. In the ancient Near East, **nature observation formed a crucial component of wisdom literature**. Teachers used animals, plants, and natural phenomena to illustrate moral and practical truths.

Ants were well-known in ancient Israel and surrounding regions, and their industrious behavior was universally recognized. Unlike modern industrial societies with year-round food availability, ancient agricultural societies faced genuine scarcity if harvests were squandered or storage neglected. **Failure to prepare during abundance meant starvation during scarcity**. This reality made the ant's instinctive wisdom immediately applicable to human economic and household management.

The observation that ants work collectively without external supervision ("having no guide, overseer, or ruler"—6:7) would have impressed ancient peoples familiar with hierarchical labor systems. Israelite society understood both the blessings and burdens of centralized authority; the ant's self-motivated diligence offered a model of responsible stewardship without coercion. This wisdom remains relevant across all economic systems, validating both personal initiative and community cooperation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life (spiritual, financial, relational, physical) are you failing to prepare during seasons of opportunity for inevitable seasons of difficulty?
2. How does the ant's example challenge cultural tendencies toward instant gratification and living only for the present?
3. What specific "summer" opportunities has God given you right now to prepare for future ministry, relationships, or challenges?
4. How does recognizing your own weaknesses (like the ant's physical frailty) motivate diligent preparation rather than passive resignation?
5. In what ways does Christ's self-disciplined preparation for His earthly ministry (thirty years of preparation for three years of ministry) exemplify and elevate this principle?

Interlinear Text

הַ נְמָלִים	עַם	לֹא	עַזִּים	וְכֵן יִנּוּ	בְּקֵץ יוֹם
The ants	are a people	H3808	not strong	yet they prepare	in the summer
H5244	H5971		H5794	H3559	H7019
לְחֵמָם:					
their meat					
H3899					