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PROVERBS TO LIVE BY

PROVERBS 14:4 AND 13:4

Some people have difficulty understanding the real meaning of some of the Proverbs. The one today could be puzzling to some people, especially those with no agricultural background. Let us see what this one says on a literal basis, then examine the message it is sending.

Proverbs 14:4 (KJV) says, ***“Where no oxen are, the crib is clean, but much increase is by the strength of the ox.”*** The “crib” is where the harvest crop or processed grain is kept. For example, a “corn crib” is where the ears of corn would be stored.

Oxen were used to process much of Israel’s harvest. Wheat would be trodden out with a millstone. The oxen would be attached to a yardarm attached to the millstone, and go around and around, moving the millstone in turn which was grinding the wheat. It then would be collected from the ground.

If there were no oxen to do the heavy work, there would be no grain in the crib. If you wanted to have food stored in your crib, the strength (and work) of the ox is how you would get your increase.

What this is telling us for real life today is that it takes work to gain what you need for sustenance or for life in general. Laziness (no oxen) will get you nothing. Figuratively, you are the ox. You need to work for what you need.

This also applies to the economic system of socialism in which those who work support those who are unwilling to work. Socialism violates the principle put forth in this Proverb. Yes, God will supply all our need. But the scriptures also warn against being a sluggard, i.e., a lazy person who is not diligent in work. God does not honor that, so do not expect Him to supply that which you should be doing for yourself or family.

Psalms 13:4 addresses that. ***“The soul of the sluggard desireth and has nothing. But the soul of the diligent (worker) shall be made fat (have plenty).”***

The Proverb of the oxen and crib spoke in terms that the people of that day clearly understood. Likewise, many of Jesus’ parables also used illustrations relating to their culture in order to express a hidden meaning.

When you come across something in the Bible that you do not understand, ask Holy Spirit to show you its meaning. That is what He does. He guides us into all truth.