

Woodland Baptist Church
Wednesday February 5, 2014
Seeking Wisdom Together - Proverbs 9:1-18
Two Houses, Two Banquets

1) Introduction

- a) As we come to Proverbs 9, we are confronted with a choice. The passage portrays two houses, one on either side of the road. On one side, a house stands open, with an elegant lady named Wisdom inviting us in. On the other side of the road, another house stands open, with a seductive lady named Folly inviting us in. Which way will we turn?¹
- i) The Banquet Table so far: Proverbs chapter 1—wisdom preserves us from violent people. Chapter 2—wisdom enters our hearts with peace of conscience. Chapter 3—wisdom improves us financially. Chapter 4—wisdom elevates our status in society. Chapter 5—wisdom makes sex better. Chapter 6—wisdom gets us up off the sofa and successfully accomplishing worthy goals. Chapter 7—wisdom protects us in temptation. Chapter 8—wisdom opens our eyes to the joyous creation in which we live. And that’s just for starters. God is setting a good table for us.²
- b) The Proverb has four movements:
- i) Wisdom inviting us to a Banquet at her home
- ii) The sad reality of scoffers/mockers’ rejection of the invitation, persecution of those that try to get them to listen and their increasing spiral downward.
- iii) A reminder about the “Fear of the Lord” as the source for positive guiding principles in life.
- iv) Folly inviting us to a banquet at her home.

¹ Ortlund Jr., Raymond C. (2012-03-07). Proverbs: Wisdom that Works (Preaching the Word) (p. 123). Good News Publishers. Kindle Edition.

² Ibid, kindle.

2) READ PROVERBS 9

- a) **Psalm 84:10-12** - Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. 11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. 12 Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

3) Verses 1-6 **Wisdom is INVITING us to a BANQUET at her home**

- a) **1 Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, 4 "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says, 5 "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."**

i) **1** Wisdom's house has a strong foundation

- (1) The fact that the house has seven pillars indicates that is a magnificent and solid construction and the number seven indicates perfection and completeness.³

ii) **2** Description of the feast

- (1) Meat was a delicacy reserved for only special occasions and the wine being "mixed" indicates that it had some spice added to it to make it taste different/better.

iii) **3** dispatch of the servants as heralds

- (1) Calling from the "highest point in the city" indicates a Godward direction of the what will be heard; plus, most of the time the Temple was constructed in the highest point in the city.

³ Longman

iv) 4-6 Words of invitation

(1) In the ancient near east, for a woman to invite a man to a meal has erotic overtones. What woman wisdom wants is an intimate relationship with the man.⁴

b) The choice is not good conduct versus bad, though that choice is life-shaking; it is at bottom the choice between true worship and false, between Yahweh whose sovereignty and order make wisdom what she is and the fatal attractions of immorality and idolatry for whom folly is the pitchwoman.⁵

4) Verses 7-9 Disciplining **FOOLS** can be a **FUTILE** task

a) **7 Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. 8 Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you. 9 Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.**

i) 7 Rejection by wicked scoffers

(1) What is a mocker/scoffer? A scoffer is anyone who never accepts correction. He thinks other people really need his opinions. He is easily offended. He is above other people. And if someone seems to threaten his superiority, he scoffs. He mocks. He mouths off. He denigrates.⁶

ii) 8-9 Admonitions to teachers

(1) Mockers respond to criticisms with an attack; that, after all, is what mocking is - making fun of others, putting them down. The NT also warns us not to “give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you” (Matt. 7:6).

(2) **2 Peter 2:17-22** - regarding false teachers

⁴ Longman

⁵ Hubbard, David (2004-07-30). The Preacher's Commentary - Volume 15: Proverbs: Proverbs (p. 113). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Ortlund

- b) "Do not underestimate the power of perverseness" is the sage advice of the wise. So perverse is it that attempts to "correct" or "rebuke" it end in "shame" and "harm" to the teacher (v. 7). The arrows of instruction seem to bounce off their target and ricochet to strike the one who launched them. "Shame" and "blemish" describe the insult, the embarrassment, and the sense of rejection that come from reaching out to help a victim of entrenched foolishness ("a scoffer") and getting your hand slashed in the effort. "Beware of the teacher's risks" is the gist of the saying.⁷
- c) Jesus' words about good soil in the parable of the seeds (Mark 4:1–20) and about shaking dust from the feet when the message of the kingdom was not received (Mark 6:11) are further comments on the practical truth of this passage for Christian leaders.⁸
 - i) Obviously this must be tempered with an understanding that we will not know whether or not this person is a mocker/scoffer until we have made some amount of effort to teach them. Paul always speaks of "long suffering," and "patience" when dealing with strong headedness. There obviously does come a time when you need to move on to someone else who is willing to listen. [my old classmate, Thomas]

5) **Verses 10-12** God is the only SOURCE of life GUIDING wisdom

- a) **10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11 For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. 12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.**
 - i) **10-11** Restatement of theme
 - (1) **Proverbs 1:7** - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
 - ii) **12** Reward for wise, suffering for the scoffer

⁷ Hubbard, David (2004-07-30). The Preacher's Commentary - Volume 15: Proverbs: Proverbs (p. 114). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

⁸ Ibid

6) **Verses 13-18** Folly is INVITING you to a BANQUET in her Home

a) **13 Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing. 14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, 15 calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way, 16 "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says, 17 "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" 18 But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.**

- i) **13** Folly as a scoffing woman - she is "unruly," "simple," and "knows nothing."
- ii) **14-15** Description of setting

(1) Notice there is no description of her home - no "7 pillars," there is no comparison to this home as compared to the other.

- iii) **16-17** Words of Invitation
- iv) **18** Summary Appraisal

b) Her call to the passersby repeats the exact words of wisdom's cry (v. 16; see v. 4). She too appeals to the naive young men who play the game of life without a full deck of common sense.

- i) The beginnings of the two calls are the same, but the two consequent elaborations of the invitation are very different. True, both are invitations to a meal—probably a ritual banquet (v. 17; v. 5). But wisdom's menu is straightforward and aboveboard: bread and wine mixed with spices. Folly's offerings, on the other hand, have a shady, suspicious, seductive appeal to them: "stolen water," probably an echo of the allegory in 5:15–23 where water and fountain describe lovemaking between husband and wife; "bread eaten in secret," a picture of a forbidden meal which would lead to rebuke and perhaps banishment from the covenant community if participation in it were made public.
- ii) The combination conjures a scene of fornication and idolatry which can result only in spiritual and perhaps physical death.⁹

c) The teacher's final comment is telling (v. 18). You can find folly's guest list by reading the daily obituaries. "Dead" means "shades," gray spirits, bleak shadows of what were once vital but unknowing young people. What appears to

⁹ Hubbard

be a portal to pleasure—"the door of her house" (v. 14)—is the corridor to "hell" (Sheol, the grave or the grim abode of the dead where the full life of God never reaches). Bluntly but truly put, her past "guests" are now ghosts.¹⁰

7) CLOSE

- a) First, Wisdom builds her house, but Folly just sits there and expects us to be impressed. Second, Wisdom offers us meat and wine, but Folly offers us bread and water. Third, Wisdom is dealing honestly with us, but Folly is making glamorous promises that cannot come true. Fourth, Wisdom's followers live more and more forever, but Folly's playmates die a sugarcoated death before they even know what hit them.¹¹
- b) **Matthew 7:24- 27 - 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."**
- c) **Matthew 7:13-14 - 13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.(1**
 - i) Wisdom and folly vie for our human allegiance; (2) that ultimate choice lies with us and which call we answer, with whom we choose to eat; (3) scoffers can be so hardened in their choice that they do harm to the teacher who challenges them; the wise are so open to wisdom's call that even her rebuke will spark their affection; (4) behind wisdom's invitation stands Yahweh; to say yes to wisdom is to respond in reverent obedience to Him; (5) to heed folly's call is to forsake the land of the living and to join the company of the dead.¹²⁶

¹⁰ Hubbard

¹¹ Ortland

¹² Hubbard, David (2004-07-30). The Preacher's Commentary - Volume 15: Proverbs: Proverbs (p. 112). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.