

Proverbs: Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly (Proverbs 9)

Author: Dr. August Konkel | Session 10

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Abstract

In Proverbs 9, Dr. August Konkel concludes the introductory section of Proverbs by contrasting Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly as two competing invitations offering the choice between life and death. Lady Wisdom prepares a grand banquet hall supported by seven pillars of completeness, inviting the simple to receive instruction, wine, and true understanding. In contrast, Lady Folly personifies the deceptive seduction of human self-sufficiency, secular rationalism, and self-aggrandizement, which ultimately lures guests into the depths of Sheol. Konkel emphasizes that human reason cannot reform an irrational scoffer and asserts that true wisdom must begin with the fear of a transcendent God who is separate from creation.

Outline

I. Introduction to Proverbs 9: The Conclusion of Proverbs 1–9

- A. Contrast between two competing invitations: Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly
- B. The ultimate choice presented to humanity: Life versus Death
- C. Transition from the introductory framework to the individual proverb collections

II. The Invitation and Banquet of Lady Wisdom (vv. 1–6)

- A. Lady Wisdom as a generous householder
 - 1. Preparation of a grand banquet hall supported by seven pillars (symbolizing completeness and universal access)
 - 2. Preparation of sustenance: slaughtered meat, poured wine, and set tables
- B. The call to the simple and naive
 - 1. Dispatching of servers with explicit instructions
 - 2. Appeal to those lacking sense and recognizing their need for intellectual and spiritual growth
 - 3. Promise of food, wine, and walking in the path of understanding

III. Dealing with the Irrational: Fools, Scoffers, and Epistemology (vv. 7–12)

- A. The futility of reasoning with the irrational

1. Warning against answering a fool according to their folly
2. Risk of becoming irrational when debating those unwilling to learn

B. Critique of modern epistemological premises

1. The Enlightenment and Kantian premise: knowledge restricted strictly to five senses and human reason
2. Dismissal of transcendent revelation and spiritual knowledge as psychological aberration
3. The fundamental divide between secular rationalism and biblical epistemology

C. The foundation of true wisdom

1. Wisdom as a lifelong process of continuous instruction
2. Integrity versus deception (the winking eye bringing pain/etzev)
3. Wisdom beginning with the knowledge of the Holy (Qodeshim)
4. God (Yahweh) as separate from creation, uncreated, and the ultimate source of life and truth

IV. The Seduction and Banquet of Lady Folly (vv. 13–18)

A. Lady Folly as the personification of human self-sufficiency

1. Roots in Enlightenment, deism, rationalism, and modern self-aggrandizement
2. The primordial seduction: the human desire to be 'as God, knowing good and evil'

B. The public presence and lure of Lady Folly

1. Positioned in high public places (educational institutions and high society)
2. Alluring those who lack sense with the false narrative of human supremacy

C. Deception, theft, and ultimate destruction

1. The illusion of 'stolen water is sweet' (forbidden indulgence and spiritual theft)
2. Modern parallels to ancient symposia and orgies celebrating human self-achievement
3. The inevitable outcome: guests of Lady Folly end in the depths of Sheol (death and destruction)

V. Conclusion: The Crucial Choice

A. Summary of the two banquets: Wisdom's feast of life versus Folly's banquet of death

B. Reiteration that the fear of God is the essential starting point for all true wisdom