

Proverbs 9:1-12 (NIV)

¹Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. ²She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. ³She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. ⁴“Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment.

⁵“Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. ⁶Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.

⁷“Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. ⁸Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. ⁹Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

¹⁰“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. ¹¹For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. ¹²If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.”

20-09-01-Our Response to Epiphany

Epiphany, enlightenment, wisdom, foolishness, naivety, immaturity
Prov 9:1-12

Our response to wisdom’s invitation determines our destiny.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture reading)

–*Christ’s epiphany [manifestation] to the world called for a response, and it still does.* [**Henry Vaughan**, a 17th Cent. poet, starts his poem “The World,” with a contrast: “I SAW Eternity the other night / Like a great Ring of pure and endless light, / All calm, as it was bright, / And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years / Driv’n by the spheres / Like a vast shadow mov’d, / In which the world / And all her train were hurl’d;” He then describes how Time dissolves worldly pursuits of passion, power and possessions, and he ends by contrasting foolish and wise responses.]

–The modern word *epiphany* is an *enlightenment*, an “*ah-ha*” moment, an *insight*, or a *glimpse of truth*. These, too, call for a response.

–In **Prov 9**, *Wisdom*, personified as a lady calls to those wandering in the city to *come feast with her*. She depicts how God offers *epiphanies of truth* to humanity. In exploring this passage, we’ll see the importance of our response. **HOM.idea.** Here are 2 preliminary questions...

I. Who Is Wisdom Personifying and What is Her Goal?

A. In one respect, she seems to represent Christ, who is...

1. Co-creator and co-eternal with God– **John 1:1-3**. In the beginning was the Word [*logos = reasoning, spoken logic*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
 - a. Wisdom was at creation, too– **Pro 8:30-31**. Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and **delighting in mankind**.
 - b. Her “delighting in mankind” shows a natural bond with humanity, having, from the start, a concern for our welfare.
2. Also, Scripture clearly identifies Christ with *God’s wisdom*– **1 Cor 1:24**, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and **the wisdom of God**. (Jesus is **God’s logic!**)

B. **BUT wisdom is a woman**, contrasted with the *adulterous woman* in other places in Proverbs. (The Bible calls OT Israel *God’s wife*, and the NT Church of believers *the Bride espoused to Christ*.)

1. In fact, God broadcasts His wisdom from the Bride– **Eph 3:10**, His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold **wisdom of God** should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

2. And listen to Rev 22:17, The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (As the Bride calls people to come drink, so does *Lady Wisdom* in— v.3-5, *She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.”*)

TRANS: *Lady Wisdom* may stand for both Jesus & His Church. When He indwells *His Bride*, she invites people to drink in “the wisdom of God.” The one who hears and drinks “the water of life,” also learns to invite: “let him who hears say, “Come!” When *Lady Wisdom* sends “out her maids and calls from the highest point of the city,” that’s us! Did you know our response to Jesus turned us into maid-servants of Lady Wisdom? Our response to wisdom’s invitation determines our destiny.

II. But Why Is the Call of Wisdom Ignored or Mocked?

- A. Wisdom tells us in v.7-8, “Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.”
1. In essence, Jesus said the same thing in Mat 7:6, “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.”
 2. How can we recognize “a mocker” or a stubbornly “wicked” person, to whom we shouldn’t try sharing “sacred... pearls” of *wisdom*?
- B. We start by realizing the nature of humanity’s moral mechanics:
1. In creating us, God gave *the will* priority over *the mind*. (In other words, our choices determine what we let our minds believe.)
 2. Jesus referred to this aspect of human nature, when He said in John 7:17 (NRSV), Anyone who **resolves** to do the will of God will **know** whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.

TRANS: A “mocker” denies *wisdom*. The “wicked” puts that denial into practice! Sound arguments and reasoning will never change stubborn unbelief: “He convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” Openness to Lady Wisdom is a *chosen attitude*. “‘Let all who are simple come in here!’ she says to those who lack judgment.” She makes her appeal only to willing listeners. So, let’s be among them, because **our response to wisdom’s invitation determines our destiny**. Finally, a last question...

III. What Does *Lady Wisdom* Offer the Responsive Heart?

- A. Jesus, *God’s Wisdom*, came to win a Bride, to build a Church, and to call all receptive sinners to come be transformed by her ministry — v.1-2, *Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.*
1. She offers the “seven pillars” listed in James 3:17. But the **wisdom** that comes from heaven is first of all **pure**; then **peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere**. (God enables these virtues, if we respond to Wisdom’s invitation!)
 2. Jesus said of His Table in John 6:56, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.” (*Wisdom “has also set her table.”*)
 - a. She calls in v.5, “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.” [“food” = *lechem*, (bread); from it we get *Beth-lehem*, (house of bread)]
 - b. This “mixed... wine” is water plus wine. (Jesus gives us both His “blood” and His “living water”— John 6:55, “For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink,” and John 7:37b-38, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”)
 3. Wisdom says in v.6, *Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding, then tells us how in v.10*, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
 - a. Godly fear transforms “a mocker,” but that’s just “the beginning...”
 - b. Wisdom’s further epiphanies are meant to increase our “knowledge of the Holy One.”— v.9, *Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*

CONCLUSION:

—[Vaughn’s poem “The World” ends with these lines: “Yet some, who all this while did weep and sing, / And sing, and weep, soar’d up into the Ring, / But most would use no wing. / O fools (said I,) thus to prefer dark night / Before true light, / To live in grots, and caves, and hate the day / Because it shews the way, / The way which from this dead and dark abode / Leads up to God, A way where you might tread the Sun, and be / More bright than he. / But as I did their madnes so discusse / One whisper’d thus, / This Ring the Bride-groome did for none provide / But for his bride.”]

—*The will, guided by godly fear and open to more wisdom, will gain higher ground, soaring “up into the Ring” of Eternity. Such responsiveness to Lady Wisdom determines our destiny. She concludes by saying in v.12, “If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.” Let’s be wise by responding to her invitation and feasting at her table of God’s wisdom for the rest of our days.*