

Proverbs 2: Pursuing the Path of Wisdom/Lady Wisdom (9.11.22)
“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

- I. There are two kinds of speech in Proverbs Ch. 1-9:
 1. The instruction of a Father (and Mother) to a son. “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and forsake not your mother’s teaching.” Prov. 1:7
 2. The instruction of Lady Wisdom to all young men passing by. “Wisdom calls aloud in the street, in the market she raises her voice.” Prov. 1:20

- II. Two “paths” to follow
 - The “path” is a metaphor for one’s life.
 - There is a crooked (2:15), and dark (2:13) path marked by danger, which ends in death, which is contrasted with a path that is both straight and well lit.

- III. These “paths” reach their climax in Proverbs 9, as two women speak from high places
 - Lady Wisdom: Whoever is simpleminded turn aside here... Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Abandon simplemindedness and live. March on the path of understanding (embrace the rest of the Proverbs to come). Prov. 9:4-6
 - Lady Folly: Whoever is simpleminded turn aside here... Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is pleasant. Prov. 9:16-17
 - The location of the dual voices calling for young followers is not coincidental: “ In ancient Near Eastern cities the temple... was the building on the highest point. Thus, it is clear that Woman Wisdom is a personification of Yahweh’s wisdom, and ultimately of Yahweh himself. Woman Folly represents the false gods and goddesses that seek to lure the Israelite away from the true God. **Thus the choice between Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly is no less than a fundamental religious choice between the true and false gods...** Thus, if one wants to know how the world works and thus to successfully navigate life, one had better know this woman, Yahweh’s wisdom—that is, Yahweh himself.” Tremper Longman

- IV. Woman Wisdom and God: Proverbs 8
 - “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts long ago.” Prov. 8:22 NRSV, but translations of “created” vary widely.
 - How can Woman Wisdom be God and the firstborn of creation? Is this a literal description? How far should we take this comparison?

V. New Testament Perspectives on Jesus and (Lady) Wisdom

Jesus is Wise

- “The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him...and Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor.” Luke 2:40 and 52
- “They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” Mark 1:21-22

Jesus is Wisdom Itself

- “God made Christ to be wisdom itself.” 1 Corinthians 1:30
- In Christ “lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:3

Jesus is (Lady) Wisdom?

- “Wisdom is proved right by **her actions** (a reference to himself by way of referencing Proverbs).” Matthew 11:19
- “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation (literal translation of Greek would read “firstborn of all creation”), for through him God created everything in the heavenly realm and on earth. He made the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.” Colossians 1:15-17
- “This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s new creation.” Revelation 3:14
- Jesus was “in the beginning...with God...he created everything there is.” John 1:1-3
- “We are taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have shown that he is the reason (logos) of whom the whole human race partake, and those who live according to reason are Christians.” Justin Martyr, written around 150

VI. Christological Concerns

- The classical concern with an interpretation of Proverbs 8 in reference to Jesus is **Christological. Jesus was not created (Arianism), Jesus was begotten.**
- Here we find, as with any image, the limits of the biblical imagery we find in Proverbs 8. Remember, Proverbs is **poetry and metaphor.**
- **Additionally, Jesus is identified by John as the “Logos,” not “Sophia,” which is another word for wisdom that is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Prov. 8.** If John had intended to make that connection, John would have used “sophia,” but John used “logos.”

For Next Week: “Like a thornbush brandished by the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.” Proverbs 26:9

