

## Strange Women (Part Two)

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In last month's article, we were introduced to two immoral women, Miss Babylon, representative of this world's culture apart from God, and Miss Heresy, symbolic of false religion. These two lie in wait for the simple and gullible, to appeal to their desires and to lead them astray.

However, we also saw that in Proverbs 7 God has given us a formula for avoiding their deceptions and traps. God instructs us to keep His words and commandments to the point of treasuring them—because they will save our lives, particularly spiritually! We are to make His law the apple of our eye and cherish it.

Miss Heresy will try her best to sneak around the laws of God, whether by replacing them with traditions and human ordinances, or by doing away with it completely, saying it is no longer necessary now that we "believe." Miss Babylon also hates God's law because it "cramps her style."

If we obey God's instructions, we will be rejected by this world and culture for being "strange." We will be so unlike the rest of the world that we will soon be set apart from it. We will certainly need God's help to remain separate once this occurs!

### Beyond Knowledge

Proverbs 7 continues: "Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words" (verses 4-5).

Besides following the codified laws and instructions of God, we are also told to take it to the next level, looking beyond the phrases beginning with "thou shalt" or "thus saith the Lord." We must go beyond just basic knowledge. Anybody can take a checklist of dos and don'ts and see if a specific situation applies in a literal or legalistic manner. God tells us to *understand* the command for the principle behind it, so we can apply it widely beyond a specific incident.

Understanding the principle, then, allows us to be *wise*. The basic definition of *wisdom* is "the right application" or "the right action" based on what we understand. This is echoed in Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who *do* His commandments."

To be protected from these strange women, we need to have an understanding of godly principles and then act accordingly. To gain this wisdom and understanding, we must fear and obey God. To put it briefly, we need to have a good relationship with God. If we have the right relationship, we will begin to see things as He does; the things that are "strange" to Him will also become "strange" to us.

Solomon adds:

For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the

street near her corner; and he took the path to her house. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. (Proverbs 7:6-9)

He describes this young man as *simple* in the bad sense of the word—he is *foolish*, inconsiderate, unthinking. He is "open" to all impressions of evil. He lounges near the house of ill repute, not necessarily because he *plans* to sin, but he does not seem all that opposed to it either! He is hanging out at a certain time and place, open to whatever might happen—no definite plans, just waiting to see how it goes. He lacks the understanding to discern the evil that is present, as well as the wisdom and courage to resist the flatteries and temptations of the seductress. In contrast, though unstated, the pure in heart—those who understand the dangers—would be at home, occupied with things that are more wholesome.

In applying this to ourselves and our efforts to forsake Babylon and steer clear of false doctrines and teachers, we can see that our individual application of verses 1-5—keeping God's commandments and making wise decisions—will help to determine whether or not we are foolish and lacking judgment. If we highly esteem God's instruction, in the letter and the spirit of the law, and if we fear God and keep His commandments, we will have the wisdom and understanding that this young man lacks.

A common saying runs, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." This young man may not have intended to get into trouble. He may not have *planned* to do anything wrong, but his approach is not aligned with I Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication." Paul says, "Turn around and run the other way!" The young man's approach is not one of foreseeing the dangers and avoiding them (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12), and thus he is called *simple* and *devoid of understanding*.

In the same way, if our approach is not one of striving to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, avoiding false teachers and doctrines, in essence, we are planning to fail!

### **Tactics of Strange Women**

The story of the foolish young man continues:

And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. (Proverbs 7:9-12)

The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* says this about verse 11:

"Stubborn [*rebellious*, NKJV]." The same word as is applied to Israel represented as an untamed and refractory heifer (Hosea 4:16). Having cast off the wholesome yoke of religious and social restraints, she is ready for every sin. Instead of the soft and gentle voice of feminine modesty, she is "loud," and full of words flowing from assurance. A modest woman shrinks from undue publicity, and is a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5), and industrious (Proverbs 31:10-31); but she "wanders about from house to house" (I Timothy 5:13); disliking home labor, she resorts to places of amusement, the dance, etc.

*Adam Clarke's Commentary* adds:

... she is never at rest, always agitated; busily employed to gain her end, and this is to go into the path of error. [She turns aside,] preferring any way to the right way. And, therefore, it is added, her feet abide not in her house; she gads abroad; and this disposition probably first led her to this vice.

It is significant to note how universal and unchanging these descriptions are. Proverbs, written roughly 3000 years ago, still paints a vivid picture in our minds, making it easy to imagine these events. The attitude and approach of the actors are not strange depictions to us, even within the context of our modern world. A common thread and an identical attitude spans the millennia. This pattern is readily identified as Satanic, for the Devil tries to lure us away from the truth with false religion and the culture of Babylon in the same way a prostitute lures young men.

The description of seduction in Proverbs 7:13-21 includes several indicators of the tactics and approaches that Satan has used for thousands of years to lure people away:

So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him: "I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home on the appointed day." With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him.

First, notice how she appeals to the senses. This woman has prepared the perfect environment for her seductions, and everything about her approach is meant to be attractive to his sight, smell, and touch, even his emotions. In fact, the only thing she does not try to use on him is real logic. But the atmosphere here is just perfect for what she is intending.

In the same way, this world entices us with everything that is attractive to our carnal human nature. A simple definition of "Babylon" is a system dedicated to living life apart from God. It emphasizes

- » gaining material wealth—so we can live independent of God's providential care.
- » gaining power and influence—so we can exert control rather than having someone control us.
- » physical pleasure—on pleasing the self, rather than serving others.
- » fashion, self-image, and being noticed—so that we can attract attention, rather than *pay* attention to others in encouragement or other forms of service.

Babylon tries to entice us with all these things, but without any real thought about the consequences or showing the other side of the coin.

James 4:4 sounds a clear warning against Miss Babylon:

You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband's enemies. Don't you realize that making friends with God's enemies—the evil pleasures of this world—makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God. (*The Living Bible*)

## Miss Heresy

Up to this point, we have not focused on false religion, but it is a very real danger. We sometimes do not recognize that our enemy, Babylon, comes in the form of its daughters—that of Catholic or Protestant doctrine—but we should have proved these things wrong early in our conversion. A common theme of the New Testament is its warnings against false teachers, doctrines, and brethren; heresies; human wisdom; intellectual vanity; and general deception. These warnings are for our benefit! The threat and allure of Babylon might be more visible to us, but the peril of being deceived by a false religion is still very real. Satan's first interaction with mankind was a deception, and he still operates by this pattern.

Miss Heresy calls to us in the same way that Miss Babylon appeals to us. Religious deception often speaks to our emotions with "feel-good" messages that absolve the listener of personal responsibility, painting a picture that many find irresistible—like the one the strange woman of Proverbs 7 painted for the young man. They cause us to doubt by eroding our convictions and replacing them with uncertainties.

Just like the seducer who says, "Everything will be okay. We won't get caught," false doctrines and teachers often focus on the wrong principle. Even though it may even be a true principle, by slanting it or applying it in the wrong way, it can twist our understanding and damage our faith. False teachers and doctrines also appeal to our vanity. The foolish young man succumbed through flatteries—she puffed up his ego and self-image until he would follow her anywhere.

Paul explains it in II Corinthians 11:3-4:

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.

For this reason, God commands us to "test all things; hold fast what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). This is why for decades we heard, "Don't believe me—believe your Bible!" and why God has given us His Word: so we can see if the things we hear meet the standard He has given to us.

Finally, we should notice the conclusion and moral of the story in Proverbs 7:

Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life. Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to [Miss Babylon's] ways, do not stray into [Miss Heresy's] paths; for [Miss Babylon] has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by [Miss Heresy] were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death. (verses 22-27)

God puts before us life and death, blessing and cursing, and tells us, almost pleads with us, to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19). He wants to recognize us, and He wants us to recognize Him, and this means following ways that are not *strange* to Him.