

PROVERBS 7 – SEDUCTION & CHAUVENISM STILL UNCHANGED

Some things never change. People act the same way today as they did thousands of years ago. At least in some situations.

Take the way young men get seduced by conniving women, for example. And the male-oriented chauvinistic approach to this matter as another example.

The two come into focus in a perceptive paragraph of the Jewish scriptures, Proverbs 7:7-23. It's sandwiched in among an assortment of clever sayings, warnings, and poems all on the general theme of being a wise and prudent person.

You can almost picture some old sage trying to instruct a circle of upper-middle-class youth in the ways of the world. In this case the teacher wants to warn his young charges against being seduced by strange women.

He has been around long enough to see how it works. From his second-story window he has watched a certain young man strolling down the sidewalk one evening.

As he turns the corner near a notorious woman's house, the lady "accidentally" bumps into him. She gives him a hug and a kiss, looks him in the eye, and propositions him.

"You're just the man I've been looking for," she insists. "I've got supper in the oven and paisley sheets on my bed."

"Come on in," she continues, "and we'll make love until the sun comes up. My old man's gone on a two-week trip."

It takes just a little more smooth talk, and the young man is following her inside. Just the way cattle are led into the slaughter house, suggests the wise man, with result that are just as deadly.

The scene is at least 3,000 years old, but for all practical purposes it could be describing a tete-a-tete arranged last pay day between a street corner hooker and a sailor on Cinderella leave. Some things never change.

But take a second look at this passage, and you'll notice something else. It's told entirely from a man's point of view.

In fact, virtually every similar warning in the book of Proverbs is from the same perspective. They are all warnings to young men against being taken in by seductive women.

No doubt that must have been something of a problem in ancient times. But surely there must have been a few lascivious males on the prowl too.

Yet there's not a single warning to young women to be beware of smooth-talking Romeos. No perceptive descriptions of street corner amorosos who try to prove their machismo by talking lonely girls into one night stands.

No doubt the male-oriented approach to such matters was simply a characteristic of the time. Ancient oriental societies were largely run by and for men.

And the biblical documents were all products of that kind of culture. So it's not surprising that they appear chauvinistic by modern standards.

Yet even something as frustrating as a male-oriented warning against seductive females is the kind of feature which makes the biblical literatures provokingly contemporary.

It just goes to show. Some things never change.

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