

Proverbs 1:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

Analysis

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; This verse begins Wisdom's pronouncement of judgment on those who reject her invitation (Proverbs 1:24-32). "I have called" uses the Hebrew qara (קָרָא), meaning to call out, proclaim, or summon—indicating clear, public, authoritative invitation. "Ye refused" employs ma'an (מָאָן), meaning to refuse, reject, or decline—not passive neglect but active refusal. This establishes culpability: wisdom has been offered and deliberately rejected.

"I have stretched out my hand" (natah yad, נָתַח יָד) is a gesture of invitation, appeal, and offered help. In ancient Near Eastern culture, an extended hand signified welcome, covenant offer, or rescue. "No man regarded" uses qashab (קָשַׁב), meaning to pay attention, heed, or give heed—indicating willful inattention rather than ignorance. The combination portrays wisdom as actively pursuing the simple and foolish, yet being spurned.

In Proverbs 1-9, Wisdom is personified as a woman publicly calling in the streets (1:20-21), contrasting with the seductive whispers of the adulteress in private (7:6-23). This public proclamation anticipates how God reveals truth openly through creation (Psalm 19:1-4), conscience (Romans 2:14-15), and ultimately Christ proclaimed to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Rejecting wisdom is therefore without excuse, bringing inevitable judgment (1:26-27).

Historical Context

Proverbs was compiled during Solomon's reign (971-931 BCE) with additions by later scribes (Proverbs 25:1). The book served as wisdom instruction for Israel's covenant community, particularly for training young men in godly living. Wisdom literature was common in the ancient Near East (Egyptian, Babylonian, and Mesopotamian parallels exist), but Proverbs grounds wisdom in 'the fear of the LORD' (1:7), making it distinctly theological.

The personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 serves multiple purposes: it makes abstract concepts concrete and memorable, it contrasts with the personified seductress (sexual immorality/idolatry), and it anticipates the revelation that Christ is God's Wisdom incarnate (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30). For ancient Israelites, wisdom wasn't merely practical skill but covenant faithfulness—living rightly before God and in human relationships.

This verse's warning about rejecting wisdom would resonate through Israel's history. Despite prophets calling the nation to return to God's ways, successive generations refused, stretched-out hands went unheeded, and judgment came through Assyrian and Babylonian conquests. Jesus later wept over Jerusalem's rejection of His repeated invitations (Matthew 23:37-39), demonstrating that spurning divine wisdom brings inevitable calamity. The New Testament applies this principle eschatologically: there is a day when opportunity for repentance ends (Hebrews 3:7-15, Revelation 22:11).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does wisdom's public calling differ from the private seductions of folly described elsewhere in Proverbs?

2. What does this verse teach about human responsibility when divine truth is clearly revealed?
3. How does the personification of wisdom in Proverbs anticipate Christ as God's wisdom incarnate?
4. In what ways might people today refuse wisdom's call and fail to regard her extended hand?
5. What does this passage reveal about the relationship between rejecting wisdom and facing judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְעַן יְהִי רָאשָׁנָה וְתַחַת יְדֵי אָתָּה יְהִי מִזְמָרָתָךְ
 H3282 Because I have called and ye refused I have stretched out my hand H369
 H7121 H3985 H5186 H3027

מִלְשִׁיבָן
 and no man regarded
 H7181

Additional Cross-References

Romans 10:21 (Parallel theme): But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Isaiah 65:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.

Jeremiah 7:13 (Parallel theme): And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

Isaiah 66:4 (Parallel theme): I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

Isaiah 50:2 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

Ezekiel 8:18 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

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