

Isaiah 29:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

Analysis

Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry (הַתִּמְהֹהוּ וְתִמְהֹהוּ הַשְׁתַּעֲשֵׂעוּ וְשֹׁעֲוּ, hitmahmehu utmahu hishta'ash'u vasho'u)—a cascade of imperatives calling for astonishment and dismay. The verb מהה (mahah) means to delay, linger in stunned amazement. **They are drunken, but not with wine** (שָׁקְרָו וְלֹא יִיְין, shakhru velo yayin)—they stagger in spiritual stupor, not alcoholic intoxication. **They stagger, but not with strong drink** (צָעָו וְלֹא שְׁקָר, na'u velo shekhar)—their reeling comes from divine judgment, not שְׁקָר (shekhar, beer/fermented drink).

Isaiah shifts from Assyria's defeat (vv. 1-8) to Judah's spiritual blindness. The people should be astonished at God's deliverance, but instead they remain in drunken stupor—unable to perceive spiritual realities. They're cognitively impaired, not by wine but by willful rebellion. This moral intoxication renders them incapable of discernment. Paul quotes this passage (Romans 11:8) regarding Israel's spiritual blindness to the Messiah.

Historical Context

Despite witnessing miraculous deliverance from Assyria (701 BC), Judah failed to maintain spiritual fidelity. Within a generation, King Manasseh led the nation into gross idolatry (2 Kings 21). The temporary reform under Josiah couldn't prevent eventual Babylonian exile. The spiritual drunkenness Isaiah diagnosed proved chronic and fatal.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 – Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does 'spiritual drunkenness' look like—being unable to perceive God's work despite evidence?
2. How can people witness God's miraculous intervention yet remain in stubborn unbelief?
3. In what areas might you be 'staggering' in moral confusion rather than walking in clear-minded obedience?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 17:6 (Parallel theme): And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Isaiah 19:14 (Parallel theme): The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.

Isaiah 49:26 (Parallel theme): And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

Isaiah 51:17 (Parallel theme): Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.

Isaiah 29:10 (Parallel theme): For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

Isaiah 1:2 (Parallel theme): Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

Jeremiah 23:9 (Parallel theme): Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

Jeremiah 25:27 (Parallel theme): Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.

Jeremiah 51:7 (Parallel theme): Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Jeremiah 2:12 (Parallel theme): Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.