

Isaiah 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Analysis

This woe condemns moral relativism—calling evil good and good evil, redefining reality to suit sinful desires. The triple contrasts (evil/good, darkness/light, bitter/sweet) emphasize comprehensive moral inversion. This represents the ultimate corruption: not merely sinning but redefining sin as virtue. Such perversion makes repentance impossible and judgment certain, as conscience itself becomes corrupted.

Historical Context

False prophets in Isaiah's day declared 'peace' when judgment was coming, sweetening bitter truth. This moral confusion enabled continued sin while claiming divine approval.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. In what areas has contemporary culture inverted biblical categories of good and evil?
2. How can you maintain moral clarity when surrounded by relativistic thinking?

Interlinear Text

ה וי	הָאֲמָרִים	כָּ ע	וְלֹט וּב	וְלֹט וּב	כָּ ע	שָׁמַיִם	לְחֹשֶׁךְ
Woe	unto them that call	evil	and good	and good	evil	that put	darkness
H1945	H559	H7451	H2896	H2896	H7451	H7760	H2822
וְאֵל	וְאֵל	לְחֹשֶׁךְ	שָׁמַיִם	לָמָּר:	וְיָת וְק	וְיָת וְק	לָמָּר:
and light	and light	darkness	that put	bitter	and sweet	and sweet	bitter
H216	H216	H2822	H7760	H4751	H4966	H4966	H4751

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:15 (Evil): He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.

Luke 16:15 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Malachi 2:17 (Light): Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

Job 17:12 (Light): They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness.

2 Peter 2:1 (Parallel theme): But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Amos 5:7 (Parallel theme): Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

Malachi 3:15 (Evil): And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

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