

Isaiah 5:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

Analysis

The fifth woe targets intellectual pride—those 'wise in their own eyes' and 'prudent in their own sight.' The doubled phrases emphasize self-referential wisdom that rejects divine revelation. This describes autonomous human reason exalted above God's revealed truth. Proverbs warns repeatedly against such self-conceit (Proverbs 3:7, 26:12). Paul identifies this as characteristic of human fallenness (Romans 1:22).

Historical Context

In Isaiah's era, political advisors advocated human alliances over trust in God. Their 'wisdom' led Judah to rely on Egypt and Assyria rather than covenant faithfulness, proving folly disguised as prudence.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you balance use of human reason with submission to biblical revelation?

2. In what areas might you be trusting your own understanding rather than acknowledging God?

Interlinear Text

ה וי	חֲכָמִים ים	בְּעֵינֵיהֶם	וְגַד	פְּנֵיהֶם
Woe	unto them that are wise	in their own eyes	H5048	in their own sight
H1945	H2450	H5869		H6440

נְבֹנִים:
and prudent
H995

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 3:7 (Parallel theme): Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Romans 12:16 (Parallel theme): Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Proverbs 26:12 (Parallel theme): Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Proverbs 26:16 (Parallel theme): The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Romans 1:22 (Parallel theme): Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

John 9:41 (Parallel theme): Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Job 11:12 (Parallel theme): For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.

Romans 11:25 (Parallel theme): For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

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