

Isaiah 5:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

Analysis

Judicial corruption—'justify the wicked for reward' and 'take away the righteousness of the righteous'—inverts justice, the very foundation of God's throne (Psalm 89:14). Accepting bribes to acquit the guilty while condemning the innocent violates explicit Torah prohibitions (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19). This perversion of justice particularly incenses God, as it directly opposes His character. The New Testament similarly condemns those who call evil good (Romans 1:32).

Historical Context

Prophetic literature consistently indicts judicial corruption (Isaiah 1:23; Micah 3:11; Amos 5:12), showing it was endemic. Leaders enriched themselves while denying justice to the vulnerable.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do modern legal and social systems sometimes justify the wicked while condemning the righteous?
2. What 'rewards' tempt us to compromise justice in our spheres of influence?

Interlinear Text

מַצְדִּיק י	רָשָׁע ע	ע קב	ש חד	וְצַדִּיק ת	צַדִּיק ים
Which justify	the wicked	for	reward	the righteousness	of the righteous
H6663	H7563	H6118	H7810	H6666	H6662
וְסָר יָרֵוֹ	מִמֶּנּוּ:				
and take away					
H5493	H4480				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 10:2 (Parallel theme): To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!

Psalms 94:21 (Righteousness): They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

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

James 5:6 (Righteousness): Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

Isaiah 1:23 (Parallel theme): Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Micah 3:11 (Evil): The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

Micah 7:3 (Evil): That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

Proverbs 17:23 (Evil): A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Proverbs 24:24 (Righteousness): He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Righteousness): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

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