

Isaiah 8:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Analysis

The command to consult 'the law and the testimony' provides the proper alternative to occultism. 'Law' (Torah) and 'testimony' (prophetic witness) together constitute divine revelation—God's written word. The conditional 'if they speak not according to this word' establishes Scripture as the standard for testing all teaching. The verdict 'there is no light in them' pronounces darkness and deception on any teaching contradicting Scripture. This is the Reformed principle of sola Scriptura—Scripture alone is our supreme authority, the sole infallible rule of faith and practice.

Historical Context

In Isaiah's time, the law (Pentateuch) and testimony (prophetic writings) were the available Scriptures. These provided sufficient guidance without consulting spirits. The phrase 'to the law and to the testimony' became a rallying cry during the Reformation, as Reformers insisted Scripture alone—not tradition, councils, or papal decrees—was the final authority. This verse grounds the Protestant principle of biblical supremacy over all human wisdom and spiritual experiences.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do we make Scripture our primary source of guidance rather than subjective experiences or feelings?
2. What does it mean practically to test all teaching against 'the law and the testimony'?
3. How does commitment to biblical authority protect us from deception and false teaching?

Interlinear Text

וְאִמְרוּ לֹא אִם וְלִתְעוּדָה הָ לְתוֹכָהּ הָ
To the law and to the testimony if they speak
H8451 H8584 H518 H3808 H559

שֶׁחֵרָ: לֹא הָיָה אֵשׁ רַחֵם הָ כִּדְבָר רַחֵם
not according to this word it is because there is no light
H1697 H2088 H834 H369 H0 H7837

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 1:19 (Word): We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

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

John 5:39 (Word): Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Isaiah 8:16 (Word): Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

Acts 17:11 (Word): These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Psalms 119:130 (Word): The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Proverbs 4:18 (Light): But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Jeremiah 8:9 (Word): The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Micah 3:6 (Parallel theme): Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.