

Isaiah 9:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.

Analysis

Verse 15 clarifies verse 14's metaphor. The 'ancient and honourable' are the head (leadership); the lying prophet is the tail (misleading followers). The inversion is significant—prophets should be heads (spiritual leaders), but false prophets become tails (lowest, most despised). 'The prophet that teacheth lies' is singled out for special condemnation. False teaching doesn't just fail to help; it actively destroys. This underscores the critical importance of sound doctrine—eternal consequences hang on whether teaching aligns with God's revealed truth.

Historical Context

Israel's false prophets contradicted God's word through Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos. They prophesied prosperity and peace when judgment was imminent (cf. 1 Kings 22 where 400 false prophets contradicted Micaiah). Archaeological evidence includes pagan shrines at Dan and Bethel where state-sponsored false religion flourished. When judgment came, these prophets' lies were exposed, but they had already led millions to destruction.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do we distinguish true biblical teaching from persuasive but false doctrine?
2. What are characteristics of false teachers in our contemporary context?
3. Why is doctrinal accuracy not just academic but literally a matter of eternal significance?

Interlinear Text

זָקֵן	וְנָשׂוּא	כְּנִיּוֹם	הוּא	רֹאשׁ אִשׁ	וְנָבִיא
The ancient		and honourable	he	is the head	and the prophet
H2205	H5375	H6440	H1931	H7218	H5030
מְוָרָה	שֶׁקֶר	הוּא	הַזָּנָב:		
that teacheth	lies	he	he is the tail		
H3384	H8267	H1931	H2180		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 29:10 (Prophecy): 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.

Matthew 24:24 (Prophecy): For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Ezekiel 13:19 (Parallel theme): And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

1 Samuel 9:6 (Parallel theme): And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

