

Proverbs 29:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

Analysis

When the righteous 'are in authority, the people rejoice,' but when the wicked rule, 'the people mourn.' The Hebrew 'rabah' (increase/multiply) and 'mashal' (rule) create contrast. Righteous leadership produces joy; wicked rule brings groaning. Reformed theology recognizes government as God's gift for human flourishing. Righteous rulers promote justice, peace, and prosperity; wicked rulers bring oppression and suffering. This grounds Christian political responsibility—we should work for righteous governance that enables human flourishing under God's standards.

Historical Context

Israel's history illustrated this repeatedly: righteous kings like Hezekiah and Josiah brought reform and joy; wicked kings like Manasseh and Jehoiakim brought oppression and judgment.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you work toward righteous governance in your political involvement?
2. What characteristics of righteous vs. wicked rule do you see in contemporary governance?
3. How should this verse shape your political priorities and engagement?

Interlinear Text

בְּרַבּ וֹת	צַדִּיקִים	יִשְׂמְּחוּ	עַם:	וּבְהִשָּׁל ל
are in authority	When the righteous	rejoice	the people	beareth rule
H7235	H6662	H8055	H5971	H4910
כִּי שָׁ ע	יֵאָנֶחַ	עַם:		
but when the wicked	mourn	the people		
H7563	H584	H5971		

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:12 (Righteousness): When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Proverbs 11:10 (Righteousness): When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

Esther 8:15 (Parallel theme): And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

Proverbs 28:28 (Righteousness): When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

Ecclesiastes 10:5 (Evil): There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler:

Esther 3:15 (Parallel theme): The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

Revelation 11:15 (Parallel theme): And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

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