

Psalms 82:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

Analysis

They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course. God's indictment expands: corrupt judges lack both knowledge and understanding. **"Know not"** (לֹא יָדְעוּ/lo yade'u) and **"neither will they understand"** (וְלֹא יִבְיִנוּ/velo yavinu) describe willful ignorance. These aren't mere intellectual deficits but moral failures—refusal to acknowledge truth, rejection of wisdom, blindness to justice's requirements.

"They walk on in darkness" (יִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּחֹשֶׁךְ/yithalleku) depicts persistent, habitual evil. Walking suggests the course of life; darkness represents moral and spiritual blindness (Proverbs 4:19, John 3:19, 1 John 2:11). These judges stumble through life without light, their judgments reflecting their own darkness rather than God's righteous standards.

"All the foundations of the earth are out of course" reveals injustice's cosmic consequences. When judges pervert justice, society's very foundations (מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ/mosdei erets) shake and totter (מִתְמוֹת/mot). Justice is foundational to social order; its corruption destabilizes everything. This anticipates Psalm 11:3, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Moral order sustains creation itself; its violation threatens cosmic chaos.

Historical Context

The ancient Near East understood justice as maintaining cosmic order (Egyptian *ma'at*, Mesopotamian *kittu*). Judges weren't merely resolving disputes but upholding the moral structure of reality established by divine decree. When Israelite judges corrupted justice, they didn't just harm individuals—they threatened the covenant community's very existence. God's judgment came through Babylonian exile (586 BC) partly because of systemic judicial corruption (Jeremiah 5:28, Ezekiel 22:29).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does judicial and governmental corruption in our society threaten 'the foundations of the earth'—social stability and moral order?
2. What does it mean to 'walk in darkness' while holding positions of authority—how can leaders guard against willful ignorance of truth?
3. How can the church speak prophetically against systemic injustice without becoming merely political?

Interlinear Text

א ל א	יָדַע וְ	א ל א	יָב ינו	בְּחֹשֶׁךְ ה
H3808	They know	H3808	not neither will they understand	on in darkness
	H3045		H995	H2825
יִתְהַלְּכוּ	אֲנִי מִן הַ	כָּל	מִן הַ	אֲרֶצַּ:
they walk	are out of course	H3605	all the foundations	of the earth
H1980	H4131		H4144	H776

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 11:3 (Parallel theme): If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Proverbs 2:13 (Darkness): Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

Romans 1:28 (Parallel theme): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Micah 3:1 (Parallel theme): And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

Psalms 14:4 (Parallel theme): Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Proverbs 1:29 (Parallel theme): For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

1 John 2:11 (Darkness): But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

John 12:35 (Darkness): Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

Isaiah 59:9 (Darkness): Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

Isaiah 5:7 (Parallel theme): For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

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