

Hebrews 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Analysis

Human oaths invoke 'someone greater' as witness and judge, ending disputes. The Greek 'antilōgia' (dispute/contradiction) shows an oath's settling function. This establishes the principle: oaths by a superior authority provide assurance. God, having no superior, swears by Himself (6:13), providing ultimate certainty. Reformed theology sees covenant oaths as God's gracious accommodation to human need for assurance.

Historical Context

Oath-taking was central to ancient Near Eastern legal and covenant practices. Invoking deity to witness oaths made them binding and violations subject to divine punishment. Jesus regulated but didn't abolish oath-taking (Matthew 5:33-37, 26:63-64).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Why do oaths provide assurance, and what does this teach about human nature?
2. How does God's self-oath provide stronger assurance than any human oath?

Interlinear Text

ἄνθρωποι μεν γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὁμιλούσιν καὶ
men verily For by G3588 G3173 swear and G2532
G444 G3303 G1063 G2596 G3660
πάσης αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογίας πέρας εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ
of all is to them strife an end for confirmation G3588
G3956 G846 G485 G4009 G1519 G951
ὅρκος·
an oath
G3727

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 22:11 (Parallel theme): Then shall an oath of the LORD be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good.

Hebrews 6:13 (Parallel theme): For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,