

Isaiah 1:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Analysis

The imagery of the strong becoming 'tow' (dried flax—highly flammable) and their work a 'spark' depicts self-destruction: human achievement apart from God becomes fuel for judgment's fire. The phrase 'they shall both burn together' emphasizes totality—neither person nor accomplishment survives. This eschatological judgment parallels Christ's teaching on hay, wood, and stubble consumed by fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15) and anticipates the final judgment where unrighteousness is utterly destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-12).

Historical Context

Despite political strength and economic prosperity under Uzziah and Jotham, Judah's moral corruption made them spiritually combustible. Military might and material wealth couldn't avert coming judgment.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What human strengths or achievements might we be trusting in that will ultimately prove to be 'tow'?
2. How does this verse shape our understanding of what endures versus what will be consumed in judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְבָאָרֶת	אֲזַנְצָרָה	לְבָאָרֶת	וְפָאָרֶל	לְבָאָרֶת	וְבָאָרֶת
H1961	And the strong	shall be as tow	and the maker	of it as a spark	burn
H2634		H5296	H6467	H5213	H1197
וְבָאָרֶת	אֲזַנְצָרָה	לְבָאָרֶת	וְפָאָרֶל	לְבָאָרֶת	וְבָאָרֶת
and they shall both	together	H369	and none shall quench		
H8147	H3162		H3518		
שְׁנַיְתָּם	אֵין יָמַרְתָּם	מִכְבָּה:			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 66:24 (Parallel theme): And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Ezekiel 32:21 (Parallel theme): The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.