

Isaiah 66:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

Analysis

The judgment continues: "For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many." God "pleads" (shaphat—judges/contends) with all flesh using fire and sword— instruments of warfare and judgment. The comprehensive scope "all flesh" (kol-basar) emphasizes universal judgment—no one escapes scrutiny. "The slain of the LORD shall be many" is sobering—rabbu chalalei Adonai—those slain by God will be numerous. This isn't warfare between humans but divine judgment directly from God. From a Reformed perspective, this describes the final judgment when Christ returns as conquering King (Revelation 19:11-21). The imagery of sword appears in Revelation 19:15, 21: "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." God's word (sword) and holiness (fire) execute comprehensive judgment on all who opposed Him. The scope is vast—most of humanity faces this judgment (Matthew 7:13-14), tragically confirming the doctrine of particular redemption—many perish, few are saved.

Historical Context

This prophecy was partially fulfilled in historical judgments—Assyria and Babylon destroying nations, Rome destroying Jerusalem (AD 70). Each foreshadowed eschatological judgment. Jesus warned that judgment would be severe (Matthew 24:21-22, Luke 21:20-24). Revelation describes massive casualties when Christ returns to judge (Revelation 14:17-20, 19:17-21). The 'many' who are slain contrasts with the 'remnant' who are saved (Isaiah 10:22, Romans 9:27),

confirming that election is particular—God saves some from deserved judgment while justly punishing others. This isn't arbitrary but righteous—all deserve judgment; grace saves some.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How should the reality of 'many' being slain in judgment affect our understanding of evangelism's urgency?
2. What does God 'pleading' with all flesh through judgment reveal about divine justice?
3. How does the comprehensive scope of judgment ('all flesh') emphasize that no one naturally escapes?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	בְּאֵשׁ	יְהִיָּה:	נְשָׁפֵט	וּבְחֶרֶב וּ	אַתָּה	כָּל
H3588	For by fire	of the LORD	plead	and by his sword	H854	H3605
	H784	H3068	H8199	H2719		
בְּשֶׁר	יְהִיָּה:	מְלָא				
with all flesh	shall be many	and the slain	of the LORD			
H1320	H7231	H2491	H3068			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 30:30 (References Lord): And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lightning down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.

Isaiah 27:1 (Word): In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

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