

Isaiah 9:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail,
branch and rush, in one day.

Analysis

God's judgment targets leadership first. 'The ancient and honourable' (elders/nobles) and 'the prophet that teacheth lies' (false prophets) are 'the head.' 'The rush and bulrush' (marsh plants—flexible, hollow) represent common people following corrupt leadership—'the tail.' The metaphor of cutting off head and tail indicates comprehensive judgment affecting all social strata. Corrupt leadership bears special responsibility and receives proportionate judgment. This reflects the Reformed principle that teachers face stricter judgment (James 3:1).

Historical Context

Northern Israel's leadership was notoriously corrupt during its final decades. Kings like Pekah and Hoshea were assassins who murdered predecessors (2 Kings 15:25, 30). False prophets promised peace when judgment loomed (Micah 3:5-7). Religious leaders taught syncretism, mixing Yahweh worship with Baalism. When Samaria fell (722 BC), these leaders were executed or exiled first, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy precisely.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does corrupt spiritual leadership multiply damage throughout communities?
2. What responsibility do we bear for carefully evaluating the teachings we accept?
3. In what ways should church leaders be held to higher standards of accountability?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּכַּרְתָּ	יְהוָה	מִשָּׁבַע ל	רֹאשׁ	וְזֶנֶב	כַּף ה
will cut off	Therefore the LORD	from Israel	head	and tail	branch
H3772	H3068	H3478	H7218	H2180	H3712

וְאֶגֶם	יּוֹם	אֶחָד:
and rush	day	in one
H100	H3117	H259

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 18:8 (References Lord): Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Isaiah 19:15 (Parallel theme): Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.