

Isaiah 9:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.

Analysis

Wickedness is depicted as a consuming fire that burns briars, thorns, and forest thickets. The fire imagery suggests sin's self-destructive nature—wickedness ultimately consumes those who practice it. 'Kindleth' indicates how sin ignites easily and spreads rapidly. 'Mount up like the lifting up of smoke' portrays judgment as visible and inescapable. The fire represents both their sin and God's judgment—sin itself becomes its own punishment. This illustrates the Reformed doctrine of sin's intrinsic destructiveness.

Historical Context

Fulfilled in the chaos of Israel's final years: assassinations, coups, foreign invasions, and societal breakdown (2 Kings 15-17). The nation consumed itself through internal violence before Assyria administered final destruction. Archaeological evidence shows burnt destruction layers across northern cities. The 'smoke' of judgment was visible for miles as cities burned, first from civil war, then from Assyrian conquest.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does sin function as its own punishment, consuming those who practice it?
2. What does the fire imagery teach about sin's progressive, destructive nature?
3. In what ways do we see societies or individuals consumed by their own wickedness today?

Interlinear Text

פִּי	בִּעֹר הֵ	כְּאֵשׁ	רָשָׁע הֵ	שָׁמִ יר	וְשִׁית	וְתֹאכֵל
H3588	burneth	as the fire	For wickedness	the briers	and thorns	it shall devour
	H1197	H784	H7564	H8068	H7898	H398
	וְתִצֵּת	בְּסִבְכֵי י	הִי עֵר	וְתֹאבְכֻ ו		
	and shall kindle	in the thickets	of the forest	and they shall mount up		
	H3341	H5442	H3293	H55		
	גַּא וְת	עָשָׁן:				
	like the lifting up	of smoke				
	H1348	H6227				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 83:14 (Parallel theme): As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

Malachi 4:1 (Evil): 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.

Isaiah 5:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Nahum 1:10 (Parallel theme): For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

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