

Job 31:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.

Analysis

This is an heinous crime (קַיִ-הִיא זִמְמָה, ki-hi zimmah)—the word zimmah denotes premeditated lewdness or a wicked scheme, not mere impulse. It's used in Leviticus 18-20 for sexual abominations worthy of death. **An iniquity to be punished by the judges** (עָוֹן פְּלִימִים, avon peliylim) identifies adultery as a civil crime requiring judicial punishment, not just private matter.

Job recognizes three dimensions of adultery:

1. moral—it's zimmah, deliberate wickedness
2. legal—it requires judicial punishment
3. theological—it's ultimately sin against God (v. 12).

This comprehensive understanding anticipates Jesus's teaching that lust itself is adultery (Matthew 5:28), showing the heart-level nature of sexual sin. The judges (peiylim) were Israel's covenant enforcers, maintaining community holiness.

Historical Context

Mosaic law prescribed death for adultery (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22). Unlike surrounding cultures where adultery was primarily a property offense against the husband, Israel viewed it as covenant violation against God. The judges' involvement shows adultery wasn't private morality but public justice. Job's era likely predates Sinai, yet he demonstrates the same moral awareness, suggesting natural law knowledge of sexual boundaries.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing adultery as 'zimmah' (premeditated wickedness) challenge modern views of sexual sin as mere weakness?
2. What does Job's understanding of accountability to human judges teach about the church's role in addressing sexual immorality?
3. How does viewing sexual sin as cosmic covenant-breaking rather than private choice transform our approach to purity?

Interlinear Text

כִּי

אֵלֶּא

הַ

זַמְּרָה

אֵלֶּא

הַ

שְׁמַרְמָה

H3588

H1931

For this is an heinous crime

H1931

H2154

yea it is an iniquity

H5771

פְּלִילִים:

to be punished by the judges

H6414

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 20:10 (Parallel theme): And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Job 31:28 (Judgment): This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.

Genesis 38:24 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

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