

Lamentations 3:66

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.

Analysis

The imprecatory prayer concludes with finality: **"Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD."** The Hebrew tirdof be-af vetashmideim mitachat shemei YHWH (תִּרְדּוּף בְּאַף וְתַשְׁמִידִם מִתַּחַת שְׁמַיִם יְהוָה) requests complete judgment. Tirdof (תִּרְדּוּף, "pursue, persecute") means to chase down relentlessly—the same verb used earlier when enemies hunted the speaker (verse 52). Now the request is that God pursue them.

"Destroy them in anger" uses vetashmideim be-af (וְתַשְׁמִידִם בְּאַף). Shamad (שָׁמַד) means to destroy, exterminate, annihilate. Be-af (בְּאַף, "in anger") indicates divine wrath as the motive. The phrase "from under the heavens of the LORD" (mitachat shemei YHWH, מִתַּחַת שְׁמַיִם יְהוָה) means complete removal from earth—total destruction. This echoes Deuteronomy 25:19: "thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Theologically, this represents the ultimate imprecatory request—complete destruction of the wicked. It shocks modern sensibilities but reflects biblical realism about evil's end. Psalm 37:20 declares: "the wicked shall perish...they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." Malachi 4:1 promises: "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." Revelation 20:14-15 describes the final execution: "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire...whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Lamentations 3:66's prayer will be fully answered in final judgment.

Historical Context

This concluding verse of the imprecatory section requests what God promised and eventually executed. The enemies who persecuted Jeremiah were destroyed when Jerusalem fell. The nations that gloated over Judah's destruction eventually faced their own annihilation. Babylon, seemingly invincible in Jeremiah's time, fell within 70 years. Edom ceased to exist as a nation. Assyria vanished from history.

"From under the heavens of the LORD" emphasizes that God owns the earth. The heavens are the LORD's, and therefore He determines who inhabits the earth beneath them (Psalm 115:16, 24:1). When God removes someone "from under heaven," they are completely destroyed. The flood destroyed the old world (Genesis 6-7). Sodom and Gomorrah were obliterated (Genesis 19). Pharaoh's army drowned (Exodus 14). Judgment is real and total.

The New Testament shows that this ultimate destruction awaits the finally impenitent. Matthew 25:41 quotes Jesus: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." 2 Thessalonians 1:9 describes: "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." The phrase "from under the heavens" finds its ultimate fulfillment in eternal separation from God's presence—removal not just from earth but from all blessing and life. This sobering reality should motivate both godly living and urgent evangelism.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this final imprecatory request challenge our tendency to minimize biblical teaching about God's wrath and final judgment?
2. What does 'from under the heavens of the LORD' teach about God's ownership of the earth and His authority to remove the wicked?

3. In what ways do imprecatory prayers express confidence in God's justice rather than personal vindictiveness?
4. How should the certainty of final judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) affect both our evangelistic urgency and our patient endurance under persecution?

Interlinear Text

תִּרְדּוּ	בְּאַף	וְתִשְׁמִידוֹם	מִתַּחַת	שָׁמַיִם
Persecute	them in anger	and destroy	H8478	from under the heavens
H7291	H639	H8045		H8064

יְהוָה:
of the LORD
H3068

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 8:3 (Parallel theme): When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

Jeremiah 10:11 (Parallel theme): Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

Deuteronomy 25:19 (References Lord): Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Lamentations 3:43 (Parallel theme): Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.