

Numbers 16:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

Analysis

Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment—God commands Moses and Aaron to hibadlu (הִבְדַּל, separate/distinguish yourselves), the same root used for sacred separation (Leviticus 20:26). The phrase va'akhaleh otam ke'rega (וְאַכְלֵה אֶתְּמָנָע, 'I may consume them in a moment') reveals that the entire congregation—not just Korah's 250—faces destruction for their complicity.

This is corporate judgment: the people chose sides, and choosing against God's anointed is choosing against God. Yet God warns the righteous first—grace precedes wrath. Moses and Aaron's intercession (v. 22) shows they understood their mediatorial role, prefiguring Christ who 'ever liveth to make intercession' (Hebrews 7:25). The 'moment' (rega) emphasizes how swift divine judgment can be—one instant from rebellion to ruin.

Historical Context

This is Israel's fourth major rebellion (grumbling at Marah, golden calf, Taberah, Kadesh-barnea), but the first where God threatens to destroy the entire nation except Moses and Aaron. Earlier, Moses was exempted alone (Exodus 32:10); now Aaron shares the promise, validating his priesthood.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. When have you been called to 'separate' from a group movement you discerned was opposing God, even at social cost?
2. How does God's warning to Moses and Aaron before judgment demonstrate His character—both just (punishing sin) and merciful (protecting the righteous)?

Interlinear Text

בָּתָגָעַ: אַתָּה H853 them in a moment H7281

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 32:10 (Parallel theme): Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

Numbers 16:45 (Parallel theme): Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

Revelation 18:4 (Parallel theme): And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plaques.

Psalms 73:19 (Parallel theme): How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Exodus 33:5 (Parallel theme): For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

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