

Numbers 16:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

Analysis

Moses and Aaron pray: 'O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?' This title emphasizes God's sovereignty over all human life - He gives spirit/breath to every person (Gen 2:7, Job 12:10, Zech 12:1). The prayer appeals to God's justice, arguing that corporate punishment for individual sin violates His character. God's response vindicated this appeal - separating the righteous from Korah's company before judgment (v.23-27). This demonstrates God's discrimination in judgment, punishing guilty while sparing innocent. The title foreshadows Hebrews 12:9, 'the Father of spirits,' emphasizing God's authority and knowledge of each person.

Historical Context

This prayer came after God threatened to destroy the entire congregation for Korah's rebellion (v.21). Moses and Aaron's intercession distinguished between active rebels and the rest of Israel, appealing to God's just character. God's acceptance - commanding the congregation to separate from the rebels - showed that corporate punishment falls only on those who actively participate in or support sin. The earth swallowing Korah's company (v.31-33) and fire consuming the 250 offering incense (v.35) dramatically demonstrated God's precise justice. This principle continues - God judges individuals, not indiscriminately punishing the innocent with the guilty (Ezek 18).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. When praying for justice, do you appeal to God's revealed character and attributes as your basis for confidence?
2. How does God's knowledge as 'the God of the spirits of all flesh' comfort you that He judges righteously, knowing each heart?

Interlinear Text

וּפָלּוּ	עַל	פְּנֵיהֶם	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	אֵל	אֱלֹהֵי	רוּחַ
And they fell	H5921	upon their faces	and said	O God	the God	of the spirits
H5307		H6440	H559	H410	H430	H7307
לְכָל	בֶּשָׂר	הָאִישׁ	אֶחָד	יַחַטֵּא	וְעַל	כָּל
H3605	of all flesh	man	shall one	sin	H5921	H3605
	H1320	H376	H259	H2398		
הַקְּעִדָּה	תִּקְצֹף:					
with all the congregation	and wilt thou be wroth					
H5712	H7107					

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 27:16 (Spirit): Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

Job 12:10 (Parallel theme): In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Zechariah 12:1 (Spirit): The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

Hebrews 12:9 (Spirit): Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (Spirit): Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Isaiah 57:16 (Spirit): For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

Romans 5:18 (Parallel theme): Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Genesis 18:32 (Parallel theme): And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

Numbers 14:5 (Parallel theme): Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

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.