

Numbers 16:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

Analysis

Divine Judgment Manifested: This verse marks the climactic moment of God's judgment upon Korah's rebellion. The Hebrew phrase תִּבְקַע הַאָדָם (tibaqa hadamah, "the ground split") emphasizes the supernatural nature of this event—this was no ordinary earthquake but a direct divine intervention. **Immediate Causation:** The text notes this occurred "as he had made an end of speaking," demonstrating the precise timing of God's judgment and Moses' prophetic authority.

The phrase "clave asunder" translates the Hebrew בָּקָע (baqa), meaning to split or cleave, used elsewhere of the Red Sea parting (Exodus 14:16). This linguistic connection suggests God was demonstrating His same power that delivered Israel from Egypt. **Theological Significance:** This event established a precedent that challenging God's appointed leadership brings immediate and terrible consequences, reinforcing the priesthood's sanctity and Moses' unique role as mediator between God and Israel.

Historical Context

Context of Korah's Rebellion: This judgment occurred during Israel's wilderness wandering, likely around 1445-1444 BC. Korah, a Levite, led 250 prominent Israelites in challenging Moses and Aaron's authority, claiming that all the congregation was holy. The rebellion represented both political uprising and

religious schism.

Wilderness Setting: The Israelite encampment was organized with the Tabernacle at center and tribes positioned around it. The dramatic opening of the earth would have been witnessed by thousands, creating an unforgettable communal memory. This event became a permanent warning in Israel's history, referenced in later scriptures (Numbers 26:10, Deuteronomy 11:6, Psalm 106:17) as an example of divine judgment against rebellion.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the immediate timing of God's judgment ("as he had made an end of speaking") teach us about God's vindication of His servants?
2. How does the splitting of the ground compare to other miraculous acts of God in the Exodus narrative, and what theological connections exist?
3. Why was such dramatic and public judgment necessary for this particular rebellion?
4. What does this event reveal about the seriousness with which God views challenges to His established authority?
5. How should Christian leaders today understand this passage in relation to authority, accountability, and divine calling?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	אֵת	לְדִבָּר	כְּכָלָת	וְ	זִיהִי			
H3605		H853		H1961				
	And it came to pass as he had made an end		of speaking					
	H3615		H1696					
תְּמִימִים:	אַשְׁר	בָּאָדָם	הַ	וְתַּבְקַע	עַ	בְּאֶלְהָה	בְּזִבְחָר	יִם
all these words	H428	clave asunder	that the ground	H834	H8478			
H1697		H1234		H127				

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 11:6 (Parallel theme): And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel:

Numbers 27:3 (Parallel theme): Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons.

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