

Numbers 27:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The daughters' testimony about their father—"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"—establishes his righteous character. They distinguished their father from Korah's rebels (Numbers 16) who died under divine judgment. The phrase 'but died in his own sin' acknowledges that Zelophehad died under the wilderness generation's judgment for unbelief at Kadesh (Numbers 14:29-35), but had not committed the aggravated rebellion of Korah. This nuanced distinction shows that degrees of sin exist, though all sin brings death. Some die in general judgment; others in special judgment for particular wickedness.

Historical Context

Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16) resulted in immediate, spectacular judgment—the earth swallowed the rebels and fire consumed their 250 followers. This divine wrath marked their sin as uniquely heinous—challenging God's appointed priesthood. The wilderness generation's death sentence, while still judgment, came through natural death over forty years. The daughters distinguished their father from the worse category, arguing he deserved inheritance despite dying under general judgment.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Scripture distinguish between degrees of sin and judgment?
2. What does it mean that all die for sin, but some face special judgment?
3. How should we evaluate people who die under general judgment versus specific divine wrath?

Interlinear Text

בַּתְּ וָךְ	כִּי הַ	לֹא	וְהַ	מִתְ	בְּמִדְבָּר	מִתְ	אָבִינוּ	אָבִינוּ
Our father	but died	in the wilderness		H1931	H3808	H1961	and he was not in	
H1	H4191	H4057					H8432	
בְּעִדָּת	בְּפָעָד יְמִ	עַל	וְהַ	מִתְ	בְּעִדָּת			
in the company	of them that gathered themselves together	H5921	וְהַ				against the LORD	
H5712	H3259						H3068	
בְּעִדָּת	קָרְבָּן	מִתְ	וְבָנִים	לֹא				
in the company	of Korah	H3588	in his own sin	but died				
H5712	H7141	H2399	H4191	H1121			H3808	
לֹא	בְּ	וְ						
H1961	H0							

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 18:4 (Sin): Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Numbers 14:35 (References Lord): I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

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