

Proverbs 22:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

Analysis

The person who wanders from understanding's path will dwell 'in the congregation of the dead.' Understanding means practical wisdom that fears God and follows His ways. Departing from this path leads to spiritual death and ultimately eternal separation from God. The 'congregation of the dead' depicts the realm of departed spirits—those who died in sin. This isn't annihilation but conscious existence in death's domain. The verse warns solemnly: persist in folly and you join the damned. Remain in understanding and you have life. There are only two paths and two destinations: wisdom leads to life; folly leads to death. Choose this day whom you will serve.

Historical Context

Hebrew thought understood Sheol as the realm of the dead. While Old Testament eschatology was less developed than New Testament teaching, the reality of post-mortem existence and judgment was affirmed.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Are you walking in the way of understanding or drifting toward the congregation of the dead?
2. What specific choices reveal whether you're on wisdom's path or folly's road?

Interlinear Text

נִתְנַשֵּׁא | לְפָרָב וְתַךְלֵל עַשְׁק
He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches and he that giveth
H6231 H1800 H7235 H0 H5414

רִאשְׁנָה לְעַשְׁר אֶנְדָּל לְמַחְסּוּרָה:
to the rich shall surely come to want
H6223 H389 H4270

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 12:5 (Parallel theme): For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

James 2:13 (Parallel theme): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Proverbs 28:3 (Parallel theme): A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

Proverbs 14:31 (Parallel theme): He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.