

Psalms 106:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.

Analysis

This verse describes God's judgment on the Korah rebellion. 'The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan' records the miraculous and terrifying judgment (Numbers 16:31-33). 'Covered the company of Abiram' shows the earth closed over the rebels and their families. This unprecedented judgment demonstrated God's fierce protection of His appointed leadership and the seriousness of challenging divinely-established authority. The ground literally opening and swallowing rebels alive was a unique judgment in Scripture, emphasizing the extraordinary nature of their sin. It also prefigures hell—eternal separation from God, swallowed up in judgment.

Historical Context

Numbers 16:31-35 records that the earth split beneath the rebels' tents, swallowing them, their families, possessions, and followers alive into Sheol. The earth closed over them and they 'perished from among the congregation.' Fire then consumed the 250 men offering incense. The survivors feared they would 'all die' (Numbers 17:12-13), recognizing the severity of rebellion against God's order. The censers of the rebels were hammered into plating for the altar as a warning memorial (Numbers 16:36-40).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does this extraordinary judgment teach about the seriousness of rebellion against God's authority?
2. How should God's past judgments affect our approach to spiritual leadership and order?
3. In what ways does the earth swallowing rebels prefigure eternal judgment?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|
| תִּפְתָּח | אָרֶץ | וַתִּבְלַע | דָּתָן | וַתִּכְסֵה | עַל | עֵדָת |
| opened | The earth | and swallowed up | Dathan | and covered | H5921 | the company |
| H6605 | H776 | H1104 | H1885 | H3680 | | H5712 |

אַבִּירָם:
of Abiram
H48

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 26:10 (Parallel theme): And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign.