

Psalms 106:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

Analysis

This verse continues describing judgment on Korah's rebellion. 'A fire was kindled in their company' refers to the fire from the LORD that consumed the 250 men offering incense (Numbers 16:35). These men had presumed to offer incense, a privilege reserved for Aaron's priesthood. 'The flame burned up the wicked' emphasizes that this was divine fire executing judgment. Fire is frequently associated with God's holiness and judgment (Hebrews 12:29: 'our God is a consuming fire'). The consuming fire demonstrates that approaching God presumptuously, without authorized access, brings destruction. This prefigures the truth that only through Christ, our great High Priest, can we approach God's holiness safely (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Historical Context

The 250 leaders who offered incense were prominent men ('famous in the congregation,' Numbers 16:2), yet their status didn't grant them priestly privileges. Their destruction by fire demonstrated that God's holiness cannot be approached casually or by self-appointed means. Later, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's sons) were similarly consumed by fire for offering 'strange fire' (Leviticus 10:1-2), showing that even priests must approach God on His terms, not their own.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does judgment by divine fire teach about God's holiness and our approach to worship?
2. How does the destruction of unauthorized priests prefigure Christ as our only access to God?
3. In what ways do people today presume unauthorized access to God?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּבְעַר	אֵשׁ	בְּעֵדָתָם	לִהְיוֹת	תִּלְהֹט	רָשָׁעִים:
was kindled	And a fire	in their company	the flame	burned up	the wicked
H1197	H784	H5712	H3852	H3857	H7563

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:29 (Parallel theme): For our God is a consuming fire.

Numbers 16:46 (Parallel theme): And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

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