

1 Corinthians 9:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

Analysis

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Paul shifts from secular analogies (soldier, farmer, shepherd) and Torah principle (ox) to Levitical practice. Old Testament priests received portions of sacrifices and temple offerings (Lev 6:16-18; 7:6-10; Num 18:8-32). Those who served at the altar ate from the altar—God instituted material support for sacred service.

The Greek *hierourgeo* (ἱερουργέω, "minister about holy things") and *prothusiasterion* (προθυσιαστήριον, "wait at the altar") emphasize cultic service. Paul argues by analogy: if God provided for Old Covenant priests, He certainly intends provision for New Covenant ministers who proclaim a superior gospel. This is not legalism but continuity—God's character remains consistent across covenants. He honors those who serve Him by ensuring their needs are met through those they serve.

Historical Context

The Levitical priesthood had no land inheritance (Num 18:20); God was their portion. They lived from tithes, firstfruits, and sacrificial portions. This created a reciprocal system: the people supported priests, and priests mediated worship and taught Torah. Paul draws on this familiar model to argue that New Covenant

ministers—who offer spiritual sacrifices (Rom 12:1) and teach God's Word—deserve similar provision.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the Levitical system of priestly support establish a theological precedent for ministerial provision?
2. What is the relationship between Old Covenant priests and New Covenant gospel ministers (1 Pet 2:9)?
3. How does God's provision for priests reveal His character and priorities?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ τὰ ἱερὰ ἐργαζόμενοι
not Do ye that G3588 G3588 about holy things they which minister
G3756 G1492 G3754 G2413 G2038

ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐσθίουσιν οἱ τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ
of the things of G3588 the temple live G3588 G3588 at the altar
G1537 G2411 G2068 G2379

προσεδρεύοντες τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ συμμερίζονται
and they which wait G3588 at the altar are partakers
G4332 G2379 G4829

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 6:26 (Holy): The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation.

1 Corinthians 10:18 (Sacrifice): Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

1 Samuel 2:28 (Sacrifice): And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

Deuteronomy 10:9 (Parallel theme): Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him.

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