

Deuteronomy 21:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

Analysis

And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried. Priestly involvement ensures religious authority oversees this legal-ceremonial ritual. The Levites' presence sanctifies the proceedings and represents God's perspective in determining community innocence.

The phrase the LORD thy God hath chosen establishes divine appointment. Priests serve not by human selection but God's sovereign designation. Their authority derives from divine commission, making their declarations authoritative.

Their dual function - minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD - connects worship and benediction. Priests mediate between God and people, offering worship upward and pronouncing blessing downward. This mediatorial role makes them appropriate authorities for this cleansing ritual.

The statement by their word shall every controversy...be tried gives priests judicial authority. They don't merely perform rituals but adjudicate disputes and determine legal matters. This foreshadows Christ's perfect mediation combining prophet, priest, and king.

Historical Context

Levitical priests served throughout Israel's history as religious and legal authorities. Their training in the law made them suitable judges for complex cases requiring divine wisdom.

This role continued until the destruction of the temple ended the Levitical system. Christ's superior priesthood replaces the inadequate Aaronic mediation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does priestly involvement in legal matters teach about integrating worship and justice?
2. How does divine appointment of priests establish their authority?
3. In what ways does the priestly mediatorial role foreshadow Christ?
4. Why is it appropriate that religious authorities oversee ceremonial legal proceedings?
5. How has Christ's priesthood superseded the Levitical judicial role?

Interlinear Text

בָּמְרָבָבָן כִּי לְוִי בָּנָי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְנִגְשֵׁה
shall come near And the priests the sons of Levi H3588 H0 hath chosen
H5066 H3548 H1121 H3878 H977

בְּשֵׁם יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵי יְהֹוָה לְשֵׁרֶת וְאַלְפָה יְהֹוָה וְלֹבֶר רְאֵשׁ מִלְּבָד
for them the LORD thy God to minister unto him and to bless in the name
H3068 H430 H8334 H1288 H8034

בְּרִיבָה כָּל יְהֹוָה וְעַל פִּيقָם הַיְמִינָה
for them the LORD and by their word shall every controversy
H3068 H5921 H6310 H1961 H3605 H7379

נִגְעָה: וְכֹל
and every stroke
H3605 H5061

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 23:13 (Blessing): The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever.

Deuteronomy 10:8 (Blessing): At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.

Malachi 2:7 (Word): For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Deuteronomy 18:5 (References God): For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever.

Deuteronomy 19:17 (References Lord): Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;

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