

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 How has Christ's priesthood superseded the Levitical judicial role?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

וַיָּבֹאוּ shall come near H5066	וְהַכֹּהֲנִים And the priests H3548	בְּנֵי י the sons H1121	לֵוִי of Levi H3878	כִּי H3588	בָּחַר H0	וְהָיָה hath chosen H977
יְהוָה for them the LORD H3068	אֱלֹהֶיךָ thy God H430	לְשֵׁךְ תָּמִיד to minister H8334	וּלְבָרְךָ unto him and to bless H1288	בְּשֵׁם in the name H8034		
יְהוָה for them the LORD H3068	וַעֲלֵ H5921	פִּיָּהֶם and by their word H6310	יְהוָה H1961	כָּל H3605	יָבִי shall every controversy H7379	
וְכָל H3605	נִגְעָה: and every stroke 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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