

Leviticus 21:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

Analysis

And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

This verse falls within the section on **Priestly Holiness**. Higher standards for priests due to their sacred role, including restrictions on mourning practices and marriage.

The central theme of Leviticus is God's holiness and the call for His people to be holy. The Hebrew word qadosh (קָדוֹשׁ) means 'set apart' or 'sacred,' emphasizing both separation from sin and consecration to God's purposes. The Aaronic priesthood mediated between God and Israel, offering sacrifices and maintaining the tabernacle. This prefigured Christ's superior priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

The New Testament reveals that Christ's sacrifice accomplishes what the Levitical system could only symbolize—complete forgiveness and restoration of relationship with God.

Historical Context

Higher standards for priests due to their sacred role, including restrictions on mourning practices and marriage. Chapters 17-27, often called the 'Holiness Code,' expand covenant obligations beyond ritual to encompass all of life—sexuality, economics, justice, and relationships. The repeated refrain 'I am the LORD' grounds these laws in God's character and covenant relationship with Israel. Israel received these laws while encamped at Sinai, before entering Canaan. The laws prepared them for life in the promised land, distinguishing them from Canaanite practices and establishing their identity as God's holy nation. The portable tabernacle, central to Levitical worship, accompanied them through wilderness wanderings and eventually found permanent form in Solomon's temple. The tabernacle's design parallels ancient Near Eastern temple architecture, yet its portable nature and absence of divine images distinguished it from pagan temples.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's superior priesthood, prefigured in this verse, assure you of access to God and effective intercession?
2. How does this verse help you understand both God's justice and His mercy in salvation?
3. What practical steps can you take this week to apply the principles taught in this verse?

Interlinear Text

וּבְכָהָ	לְ	הַקְדֵּם וְלִ	מִאֵת יְ	אֲשֶׁר	עַל	יְצַק לְ	עַל
priest	And he that is the high	among his brethren		H834	was poured	H5921	
H3548	H1419	H251		H3332			
רְאֵשׁוֹ	שֶׁמֶן	הַמְשִׁיחָה	וּמְלָא	אֲתָה	לְלִבְשֵׁ	יְצַק	וְ
his head	oil	the anointing	and that is consecrated	H853	H3027	to put	
H7218	H8081	H4888	H4390	H3847			
אֲתָה	רְאֵשׁוֹ	אֲתָה	לְאַ	יִפְרַח	וְ	וְ	אֲתָה
his clothes	his head	H853	H3808	H6544	his clothes	H3808	
H899	H7218			H899			
רְמִם:							
nor rend							
H6533							

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 16:32 (Parallel theme): And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

Matthew 26:65 (Parallel theme): Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Leviticus 8:12 (Parallel theme): And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

Numbers 35:25 (Parallel theme): And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.