

Leviticus 21:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them.

Analysis

Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them.

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 five main offerings (burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt) addressed different aspects of relationship with God, all fulfilled in Christ's comprehensive sacrifice.

The holiness demanded in Leviticus becomes possible through Christ, who both satisfies God's righteous requirements and transforms believers by His Spirit.

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. Archaeological discoveries at sites like Ugarit reveal Canaanite religious practices Israel's laws explicitly rejected, confirming the Bible's historical reliability and the distinctiveness of Israelite worship.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's holiness, as revealed in this verse, shape your understanding of worship, obedience, and daily living?
2. What does this verse teach about the costliness of true worship and dedication to God?
3. How does this verse help you understand both God's justice and His mercy in salvation?

Interlinear Text

בְּמִזְבֵּחַ כִּי אֶל אֶל אֶל
unto the altar
H413 H4196

לֹא הַפְּרֵכְתָּא בְּאֶל
unto the veil
H3808 H6532

וְאֶל אֶל
Only he shall not go in
H935 H3808

לֹא יָגַשׁ מִזְבֵּחַ
nor come nigh
H3808 H5066

מִזְבֵּחַ כִּי
because he hath a blemish
H3588 H3971

לֹא בָּזֵב
H0 H3808

מִקְדָּשָׁם
do sanctify
H6942

אָנֹכִי כִּי
I am the LORD
H3068 H589

אָנֹכִי כִּי
not my sanctuaries
H853 H4720

אָנֹכִי כִּי
that he profane
H2490

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 21:12 (References Lord): Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD.

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