

Numbers 17:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

Analysis

Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?—The rhetorical question (האם תמננו לגוע (ha'im tammnu ligvo'a, 'shall we cease from dying?') expresses resignation to inevitable death. The phrase **cometh any thing near** (הקרב הקרב haqarev haqarev, double verb form) emphasizes any approach whatsoever to God's dwelling resulted in death for unauthorized persons.

This verse sets up God's answer in chapter 18—establishing priestly duties, tithes, and offerings to maintain sanctified access to divine presence. Israel's question 'shall we be consumed with dying?' receives God's response: 'No, but you must honor the priestly system I've established.' The New Testament fulfills this by Christ's once-for-all sacrifice opening the way into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:11-12).

Historical Context

Chapter 18 directly responds to this verse's terrified question by delineating priestly and Levitical responsibilities that would protect the congregation from divine wrath. God's solution to Israel's fear was not abolishing holiness requirements but establishing proper mediatorial systems.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does this verse's terror of approaching God illuminate the magnitude of Christ's achievement in opening access to the throne?
2. What does Israel's question 'shall we be consumed?' teach about the incompatibility of human sin and divine holiness?
3. How should churches balance reverence for God's holiness with celebration of Christ-purchased access to His presence?

Interlinear Text

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Whosoever cometh any thing near

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