

Numbers 18:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

Analysis

Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle (בָּקַר qarab, to approach/draw near)—The verb used for priestly approach to God now becomes forbidden for laity. **Lest they bear sin, and die** (יִנְعַל nasa avon, bear iniquity)—This phrase indicates fatal guilt, not mere ritual impurity. After Korah's rebellion (ch. 16-17), God reinforced the boundary between holy and common.

This exclusion anticipated the gospel breakthrough: Christ's torn veil grants all believers priestly access (Hebrews 10:19-22). The same approach that meant death under Moses now means life through Christ. The Levites' mediating role prefigured Christ's unique mediation—"there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Historical Context

This command follows immediately after Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's rebellion (Numbers 16), where 14,700 Israelites died for challenging priestly boundaries. The people's fear (17:12-13) led to this formal separation, establishing clear zones of access that protected Israel from further casualties due to unauthorized approach to God's holiness.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the deadly exclusion from the tabernacle deepen your appreciation for Hebrews 10:19—"confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus"?
2. What modern attitudes toward God's holiness might this verse correct?
3. How does the Levites' mediating role help us understand why Christ's priesthood is both necessary and sufficient?

Interlinear Text

אַל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב וְיַעֲקֹב וְיִצְחָק אַל
H3808 come nigh H7126 H5750 H1121 Neither must the children of Israel H3478 H413

לֹא כִּי מֹעֵד לְשֵׁאת אֶת קָרְבָּן מִזְבֵּחַ כִּי מִזְבֵּחַ לְמִזְבֵּחַ
the tabernacle of the congregation lest they bear sin and die H168 H4150 H5375 H2399 H4191

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 22:9 (Sin): They shall therefore keep mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I the LORD do sanctify them.