

Numbers 4:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.

Analysis

The prohibition 'they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die' establishes boundaries around divine mysteries. The Hebrew *bala* (when...are being covered) indicates even momentary glimpsing brought death. This teaches that God reveals only what He chooses; presumptuous curiosity about divine secrets is deadly. The severity underscores human finitude before infinite holiness. New Testament revelation unveils what was hidden (Ephesians 3:3-5), but only at God's appointed time and through His appointed means.

Historical Context

This command prevented Kohathites from satisfying curiosity about the sacred objects they transported but could never use. They carried the ark containing the law they were not priests to administer. This illustrates the veil that stood between God and man until Christ rent it (Matthew 27:51).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's restriction on seeing holy things teach us about revealed versus secret things?
2. What presumptuous curiosity might we have about divine mysteries not yet revealed?
3. How has Christ's work unveiled what was previously hidden from God's people?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	יְבֹא	לְרֹא	וְתִכְבַּל	עַ	אַתָּה	בְּקַדְשָׁ
H3808	But they shall not go in	to see	are covered	H853	when the holy things	
H935		H7200	H1104		H6944	

לֹא תִּמְתַּחַת
lest they die

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 6:19 (Parallel theme): And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

Exodus 19:21 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

Leviticus 10:2 (Parallel theme): And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Numbers 4:15 (Holy): And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not

touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Numbers 4:19 (Holy): But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden:

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