

Numbers 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Analysis

God's warning through Moses to Aaron reflects the seriousness of priestly responsibility and the danger of presumptuous worship. The tribe of the Kohathites faced unique peril because they handled the holiest objects yet were not priests themselves. This verse emphasizes that proximity to holy things without proper mediation leads to death, not blessing. The Reformed doctrine of total depravity is illustrated here—even the Levites, set apart for God's service, could not approach holiness carelessly.

Historical Context

This warning preceded detailed instructions about how Aaron and his sons must cover the sacred objects before the Kohathites could approach them. Earlier, Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, had died for offering unauthorized fire, making this warning particularly poignant for Aaron.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this warning against casual approach to holy things challenge contemporary worship practices?
2. What does the death penalty for improper worship reveal about God's holiness?
3. In what ways does Christ's mediation remove the fear of approaching God while maintaining reverence for His holiness?

Interlinear Text

לֵאמֹר: מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָיָה יְהוָה רַב־
spake And the LORD unto Moses saying
H1696 H3068 H413 H4872 H559

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