

1 Samuel 7:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Analysis

And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Samuel emerges as Israel's spiritual leader, his prophetic authority now fully established. His message contains the classic prophetic call to repentance with four imperatives. First, 'return' (Hebrew 'shuv') - the fundamental concept of repentance as turning back to God. Second, 'put away' ('sur') the foreign gods - repentance requires removal of idols, not merely adding Yahweh to the pantheon. Third, 'prepare your hearts' ('kun') - establish, fix, or direct the heart toward God alone. Fourth, 'serve him only' ('avad') - exclusive devotion expressed in practical obedience. Samuel's conditional promise ('if...then') reflects covenant theology: blessing follows obedience. The specific mention of 'Ashtaroth' (Canaanite fertility goddesses) indicates the syncretism plaguing Israel - they had blended Yahweh worship with local cult practices.

Historical Context

Ashtaroth (plural of Ashtoreth) represented the Canaanite fertility goddess, often worshiped alongside Baal. Archaeological evidence confirms widespread Israelite participation in Canaanite cult practices during this period. Samuel's role as judge-prophet placed him in the tradition of Moses - combining civil authority with prophetic proclamation.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What 'foreign gods' compete for your heart's devotion alongside the true God?
2. How does Samuel's four-fold call to repentance provide a pattern for spiritual renewal today?

Interlinear Text

אָם	לֵאמֹר	יִשְׂרָאֵל	בֵּית	כָּל	אֶל	שְׁמוּאֵל	לֵאמֹר
	saying	of Israel	unto all the house			And Samuel	
	H518	H3478	H1004	H3605	H413	H8050	H559
יְהוָה	אֶל	שָׁבִים	אֶת	לְבַבְךָ	בְּכָל		
unto the LORD		If ye do return		with all your hearts			
H3068	H413	H7725	H859	H3824	H3605		
וְהַעֲשֵׂתָּר וְתִ	מִתּוֹכָךְ	הַנֶּכֶר	אֱלֹהֵי	אֶת	הָסִירוּ		
and Ashtaroth	from among	the strange	gods		then put away		
H6252	H8432	H5236	H430	H853	H5493		
לְבַד וְעָבַד הוּא	יְהוָה	אֶל	לְבַבְךָ	וְהִכֵּן יְנוּ			
and serve	unto the LORD		with all your hearts	you and prepare			
H905	H3068	H413	H3824	H3559			
פְּלִשְׁתִּים:	מִיָּד	אֶתְּךָ	וַיַּצֵּל				
of the Philistines	you out of the hand		him only and he will deliver				
H6430	H3027	H853	H5337				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 4:8 (References God): And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Deuteronomy 13:4 (References God): Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Matthew 4:10 (References God): Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Deuteronomy 6:13 (References God): Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Isaiah 55:7 (References God): Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Joshua 24:14 (References God): Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

Joshua 24:23 (References God): Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

John 4:24 (References God): God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Deuteronomy 10:20 (References God): Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

1 Kings 8:48 (Parallel theme): And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: