

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

אָמַר	לְאֹמֵר	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֶל	שָׁמֹאָה	לְ	לְאֹמֵר
saying	And Samuel	H413	H3605	unto all the house	H1004	of Israel
H559	H8050					H3478
בְּכָל	לְבָבְךָ מִ	אַתָּה מִ	שְׁבִים	אֶל	יְהֹוָה	
H3605	with all your hearts	H859	If ye do return	H413	unto the LORD	H3068
	H3824		H7725			
וְתַּעֲשֵׂתָר	וְתַּעֲשֵׂתָר	מִתּוֹךְךָ מִ	הַנֶּגֶק רֶ	אֱלֹהִים	אֶת	בָּסְרָה יְרָא
then put away	H853	gods	H5236	the strange	H8432	and Ashtaroth
H5493		H430				H6252
לְבָדָן	וְעַבְדֵה	הָוּ	יְהֹוָה	אֶל	לְבָבְךָ מִ	וְתַּעֲשֵׂתָר
you and prepare		with all your hearts	H413	unto the LORD	H3068	and serve
H3559		H3824				H905
וְיַעֲשֵׂתָה	לְיַעֲשֵׂתָה	מִיְצָרָאָה	מִיְצָרָאָה	מִיְצָרָאָה	פָּלָשָׁתִים:	לְיַעֲשֵׂתָה
him only and he will deliver	H853	you out of the hand	H3027	of the Philistines	H6430	
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: