

Deuteronomy 10:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Analysis

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God—The Hebrew yare (fear) combines reverential awe and obedient submission, not servile terror. This fear is relational, grounded in God's covenant character (v. 17-19). **Him shalt thou serve** (avad, serve/worship) demands exclusive allegiance. **To him shalt thou cleave** uses dabaq (cleave/cling), the same word for marital union (Genesis 2:24), depicting covenant intimacy and loyalty.

Swear by his name means invoking Yahweh as witness to oaths, affirming He alone is the ultimate authority and truth. Jesus's 'You cannot serve two masters' (Matthew 6:24) and His identification as the bridegroom (John 3:29) echo this covenantal exclusivity. Paul commands us to 'cleave' to Christ (Romans 12:9, using the Greek equivalent). The trilogy—fear, serve, cleave—defines total devotion that prefigures union with Christ.

Historical Context

Moses preached this on Moab's plains as Israel prepared to enter a land saturated with Baal worship and fertility cults. The command to 'cleave' to Yahweh alone anticipated the constant temptation toward syncretism that would plague Israel throughout the Judges and monarchy periods.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What competing allegiances (career, comfort, popularity) tempt you to divide your loyalty from 'cleaving' exclusively to Christ?
2. How does the marital imagery of 'cleaving' to God deepen your understanding of covenantal relationship with Christ?

Interlinear Text

את	תְּאַלְּפָה	יב	יהִנֵּה	ה	תִּירְאֶה	א	את	וְ	תַּעֲבֶר	ד	בְּ	וְ
H853	the LORD	H430	thy God		Thou shalt fear	H3372		H853	him shalt thou serve	H0		
	H3068		H430						H5647			
תְּדַבֵּר	כְּ		וּבְשָׁם	וְ	תַּשְׁבַּע:							
and to him	shalt thou cleave		by his name		and swear							
	H1692		H8034		H7650							

Additional Cross-References

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

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.

Deuteronomy 11:22 (References God): For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

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.

Psalms 63:11 (References God): But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

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.

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