

Deuteronomy 12:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

Analysis

The blood prohibition: 'Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.' This reiterates Levitical law (Leviticus 17:10-14). Blood represents life (nephesh, נֶפֶשׁ) and belongs to God. Pouring blood on ground shows respect for life and acknowledges God as life-giver. The comparison 'as water' indicates complete drainage—blood must not be consumed. This command persists even in decentralized slaughter, maintaining theological principle: life is sacred, blood must be offered (poured out) to God. New Testament Jerusalem council maintained this prohibition (Acts 15:20, 29), though debated whether ritual or moral.

Historical Context

Blood prohibition predates Mosaic law (Genesis 9:4). Ancient Near Eastern cultures had varying blood practices; some consumed blood in ritual. Israel's prohibition distinguished them and taught life's sanctity. Pagan sacrifice often involved drinking blood to commune with gods. Yahweh's prohibition emphasized His transcendence—humans don't 'consume' divine life but receive it as gift. Christ's blood shed and 'drink' (John 6:53-56) paradoxically fulfills and supersedes this, as His blood brings life rather than taking it.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does blood representing life teach about the seriousness of Christ's atonement—life poured out for life?
2. How does the blood prohibition instill respect for life and prevent casual violence?
3. How do we understand Jesus's command to 'drink his blood' (John 6) in light of this prohibition?

Interlinear Text

תְּשַׁפֵּךְ אֶל־עַל־הָאָרֶץ בְּכָל־בָּדָם לֹא תֹאכֵל לְכַדְמֵי כְּבָדָם

H7535 the blood H3808 Only ye shall not eat H5921 it upon the earth H8210 ye shall pour

H1818 H398 H776 H4325

כְּבָדָם

as water

H4325

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 9:4 (Blood): But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Deuteronomy 15:23 (Blood): Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

Acts 15:29 (Blood): That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.