

Deuteronomy 12:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Analysis

The concluding command: 'What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.' This establishes sola Scriptura (Scripture alone) principle. The Hebrew shamar (שָׁמַר, guard/observe) demands protection of God's revealed word. Two temptations are prohibited: adding to (yasaph, יָסַף) and subtracting from (gara, גָּרַע) Scripture. Human tradition must not supplement divine revelation; liberal reductionism must not edit uncomfortable commands. God's word is complete, sufficient, and authoritative. This command is repeated in Deuteronomy 4:2 and echoed in Revelation 22:18-19, framing all Scripture with this warning.

Historical Context

Later Judaism's oral law tradition arguably violated the 'add not' command—rabbinic fences around Torah added requirements God didn't mandate. Jesus criticized traditions that 'made void' God's commandments (Matthew 15:3-6; Mark 7:8-13). Conversely, liberal theology's editing Scripture to remove 'offensive' parts violates 'diminish not.' The Reformation's sola Scriptura recovered this principle, rejecting both traditionalism and rationalism in favor of Scripture's final authority. Every generation faces pressure to add human wisdom or subtract difficult teachings.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do church traditions risk 'adding to' God's word when elevated to equal authority with Scripture?
2. In what ways does modern theology 'diminish' Scripture by rejecting difficult doctrines or moral commands?
3. How do we maintain Scripture's authority while applying it to situations not directly addressed in biblical times?

Interlinear Text

אֵת	וְ	אֲתָךְ	מִצְוֹה	אֲנֹכִי	אֲשֶׁר	הַדָּבָר	כָּל	אֵת
		H853		H595	H834		H3605	H853
			soever I command			What thing		
			H6680			H1697		
וְ	אֵל	עַל	יוֹ	תִּסֵּף	לֹא	לַעֲשֹׂה	וְ	תִשְׁמַר
		H5921			H3808			
				it thou shalt not add		to do		you observe
				H3254		H6213		H8104
						תִּגְבַּע		מִמֶּנּוּ
						thereto nor diminish		H4480
						H1639		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:2 (Parallel theme): Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Joshua 1:7 (Parallel theme): Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Proverbs 30:6 (Parallel theme): Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Deuteronomy 13:18 (Parallel theme): When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Matthew 28:20 (Parallel theme): Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.