

Deuteronomy 17:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;

Analysis

Served other gods, and worshipped them (עבד, avad; שחה, shachah)—two Hebrew verbs: 'served' (enslavement, working for) and 'bowed down' (physical prostration). Idolatry involves both internal allegiance and external ritual.

Specific examples: **the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven** (אֶלְאָהָה הַשְׁמָיִם, tzeva hashamayim)—astral worship prevalent in Mesopotamia and Canaan. Star-worship appears sophisticated—observing creation's order—but **which I have not commanded** exposes the problem: God commands worship, not human reason or cultural practice. Romans 1:25 describes this: worshiping creation rather than Creator. Josiah's reforms targeted precisely this (2 Kings 23:5).

Historical Context

Astral deities dominated ancient Near Eastern religion: Shamash (sun god), Sin (moon god), Ishtar (Venus). These weren't primitive superstitions but sophisticated cosmologies linking celestial cycles to agriculture, governance, and fate. Israel's temptation toward astral worship intensified during Assyrian dominance (2 Kings 21:3-5). Deuteronomy 4:19 warns against this specific idolatry.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does worshiping creation (nature, science, 'the universe') rather than the Creator manifest in modern secular thought?
2. What cultural practices seem reasonable or sophisticated but contradict God's explicit commands?

Interlinear Text

לֹא מִשְׁתַּחַת חָוֹם אֶחָר יִם אֱלֹהִים יְשִׁיבָד יְלָבָד

H1980

and served

H5647

gods

H430

other

H312

and worshipped

H7812

H0

בְּשָׁמָם יִם אֶבְּאָלָה לְכָל אֵין וְלֹא מִשְׁנָן

them either the sun

H176

or moon

H3394

H176

לְכָל

H3605

or any of the host

H6635

of heaven

H8064

לֹא אֶשְׁר

H834

which I have not commanded

H6680

אֶזְרָחִים

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 19:5 (Parallel theme): They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

Jeremiah 32:35 (Parallel theme): And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass

through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Jeremiah 7:31 (Parallel theme): And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

Deuteronomy 4:19 (Worship): And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

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