

Deuteronomy 4:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

Analysis

The command 'take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves' (Hebrew 'shamar me'od') demands utmost vigilance against idolatry. The reason—'ye saw no manner of similitude'—reiterates that God revealed Himself through Word, not form. Any attempt to represent God visually constitutes rebellion against His self-revelation. This verse grounds the second commandment in redemptive history—since God chose to reveal Himself through spoken Word at Sinai, any image-based worship violates His revealed will. The Reformed tradition's opposition to religious images rests on this foundation.

Historical Context

Israel's monotheism stood radically opposed to ancient Near Eastern polytheism, which relied heavily on idol worship. Egypt had animal-headed deities; Canaan worshiped Baal through bull statues and Asherah poles; Mesopotamia filled temples with divine images. God's formless revelation at Sinai distinguished Israel's worship from surrounding paganism. Yet Israel repeatedly violated this command (golden calf, Exodus 32; Jeroboam's calves, 1 Kings 12:28; widespread idolatry leading to exile).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's formless revelation at Sinai establish the foundation for the prohibition of religious images?
2. In what ways might modern Christians subtly violate the spirit of this command through visual-based worship or entertainment-driven services?

Interlinear Text

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|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------|---------------|------------|
| וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם | מֵאֵד | לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם | כִּי | לֹא | רָאִיתֶם |
| heed | Take ye therefore good | unto yourselves | H3588 | H3808 | for ye saw |
| H8104 | H3966 | H5315 | | | H7200 |
| כֹּל | תְּמוּנָה | בִּיּוֹם | דָּבָר | יְהוָה | אֵלֵיכֶם |
| H3605 | no manner of similitude | on the day | spake | that the LORD | H413 |
| | H8544 | H3117 | H1696 | H3068 | |
| בְּחֹרֶב | מִתּוֹךְ | הָאֵשׁ: | | | |
| unto you in Horeb | out of the midst | of the fire | | | |
| H2722 | H8432 | H784 | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 40:18 (Parallel theme): To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

Deuteronomy 4:12 (References Lord): And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.

Joshua 23:11 (Good): Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

Psalms 119:9 (Parallel theme): Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Proverbs 4:27 (Parallel theme): Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Proverbs 4:23 (Parallel theme): Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Jeremiah 17:21 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;

Deuteronomy 4:9 (Parallel theme): Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

Malachi 2:15 (Parallel theme): And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.