

Deuteronomy 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

Analysis

The prohibition includes aquatic creatures—"likeness of any fish that is in the waters.' This completes the comprehensive ban covering all creation realms: land, air, and sea, corresponding to Genesis 1 creation domains. No aspect of creation may represent the Creator. Ancient religions deified seas and water creatures (Dagon, Leviathan mythology), yet Scripture insists these are merely creatures under God's sovereign control (Psalm 104:25-26). The exhaustive prohibition underscores God's transcendent otherness—He is categorically different from all created things.

Historical Context

Philistine religion centered on Dagon, depicted with human upper body and fish tail (1 Samuel 5:1-5). Mesopotamian creation myths featured Tiamat, the chaos sea-monster goddess. Canaanite religion included Yam, sea deity opposing Baal. Israel's coastal neighbors worshiped marine deities, making fish idolatry a constant temptation. God's absolute prohibition established that He alone controls seas and sea creatures, all of which serve His sovereign purposes.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the comprehensive nature of this prohibition (land, air, sea) emphasize God's absolute transcendence over all creation?
2. What does the prohibition of sea creature imagery teach about God's sovereignty over realms that ancient cultures considered chaotic and divine?

Interlinear Text

בְּלֹא תִּבְנֶה יְהֹוָה
בְּאָדָם הַ
רַמֵּשׁ שְׁמַר
כָּל תְּבַנֵּה יְהֹוָה
The likeness H3605 of any thing that creepeth on the ground The likeness H3605
H8403 H7430 H127 H8403
לֹא־אָרֶץ מִתְּחַת בְּמִים אֲשֶׁר דָּג הַ
of any fish H1710 that is in the waters H4325 beneath H8478 the earth H776

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