

Deuteronomy 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The prohibition 'Ye shall not add unto the word... neither shall ye diminish ought from it' establishes Scripture's sufficiency and authority. God's word needs neither human supplement nor editorial reduction—it is complete and perfect as given. This principle protects against both legalism (adding requirements) and liberalism (removing demands). Revelation 22:18-19 echoes this warning, showing its enduring importance for preserving God's truth.

Historical Context

This command predates the completed biblical canon but establishes the principle of Scripture's integrity. Throughout history, heresies have resulted from either adding to Scripture (extra-biblical requirements) or subtracting from it (denying clear teachings). Faithful transmission of God's word requires neither addition nor deletion.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Where might you be adding human tradition to God's word or removing difficult truths?
2. How do you maintain proper balance between interpreting Scripture and altering its meaning?

Interlinear Text

מְצַוְּה אֲנֹכִי רַא שְׁבָרְךָ עַל תְּסִבְבָּר אֲשֶׁר אַל תְּשִׁלְחָנָה
H3808 Ye shall not add H5921 unto the word H834 H595 H6680
H3254 H1697 H4480

מְמֻטָּה וְאַתָּה מְמֻטָּה תְּגַרְעֵא וְאַתָּה מְמֻטָּה
H853 H3808 H1639 H4480

אֲלֹהִיכָּם יְהִי הָרָא אֲתָּה מְצֹוֹת תְּשִׁמְמָר
ought from it that ye may keep H853 the commandments H4687 H3068 H430
H8104 H1697 H4480

אֲתָּה אַנְכִּי אֲשֶׁר מְצַוְּה אֲנֹכִי
H834 H595 H6680 H853

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 12:32 (Parallel theme): What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

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

Joshua 1:7 (Word): 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.

Matthew 5:18 (Word): For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Galatians 3:15 (Parallel theme): Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (Word): Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

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