

Deuteronomy 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

Analysis

Covenant obedience serves as evangelistic witness—'this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations.' The Hebrew 'chakhmah' (wisdom) and 'binah' (understanding) indicate not mere intellectual knowledge but practical righteousness reflecting divine character. God's law, when lived out, demonstrates His superiority over pagan religions and philosophies. This verse anticipates the Reformed doctrine of sanctification as the church's primary apologetic—transformed lives validate gospel truth (1 Peter 2:12). Israel's obedience was to magnify Yahweh's glory before watching nations.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern nations had various law codes (Hammurabi, Lipit-Ishtar, etc.), yet Israel's Mosaic law was unique in deriving from the one true God. Surrounding peoples would observe Israel's just social order, humane treatment of the poor, weekly Sabbath rest, and Year of Jubilee provisions—all radically different from pagan societies. This distinctiveness served as testimony to Yahweh's wisdom and moral superiority.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this verse emphasize that obedience to God's Word serves as powerful testimony to unbelievers?
2. In what ways should Christian ethics distinctly differ from secular culture to demonstrate divine wisdom?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמְרֵתֶם	וְעַשִּׂיתֶם	כִּי	וְאֵל	חֲכָמַתְכֶם
Keep	therefore and do	H3588	H1931	them for this is your wisdom
H8104	H6213			H2451
וְיִנְתְּךָ מִ	לְעֵינֵי	עַם	אֲשֶׁר	יִשְׁמָע וְ
and your understanding	in the sight	of the nations	H834	which shall hear
H998	H5869	H5971		H8085
כָּל	הַחֻקִּים	הָאֵלֵּה	וְאָמַר וְ	עַם
H853	H3605	H428	and say	of the nations
	all these statutes		H559	H5971
H2706				
חָכָם	וְיָבִין	הַגּוֹי	הַגָּדוֹל	הַזֶּה:
is a wise	and understanding	nation	Surely this great	H2088
H2450	H995	H1471	H1419	

Additional Cross-References

Job 28:28 (Parallel theme): And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Psalms 111:10 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

1 Kings 4:34 (Parallel theme): And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

2 Timothy 3:15 (Parallel theme): And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 19:7 (Parallel theme): The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Proverbs 1:7 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Jeremiah 8:9 (Parallel theme): The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

James 3:13 (Parallel theme): Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Proverbs 14:8 (Parallel theme): The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

Malachi 3:12 (Parallel theme): And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.