

Deuteronomy 6:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Analysis

The triple command 'fear the LORD...serve him...swear by his name' defines comprehensive covenant loyalty. The Hebrew 'yare' (fear) includes reverential awe producing obedience. 'Serve' ('abad') indicates devoted worship and daily life orientation toward God. Swearing by God's name means invoking Him as ultimate witness to truth. Together, these commands require exclusive devotion—heart, actions, and speech aligned with God alone. This verse restates the first commandment's demand for undivided loyalty. Jesus quotes this text when rejecting Satan's temptation (Matthew 4:10), demonstrating its continuing authority.

Historical Context

Israel constantly battled temptation to syncretize Yahweh worship with Canaanite religion—fearing Baal for rain, serving Asherah for fertility, swearing by pagan gods. The prophets condemned this divided loyalty (1 Kings 18:21, Zephaniah 1:5). True covenant relationship requires exclusive worship. The early church faced similar pressure to acknowledge Caesar as lord or burn incense to Roman gods, yet remained faithful to Christ alone despite persecution. Exclusive allegiance distinguishes genuine faith from religious pluralism.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do the three commands (fear, serve, swear) together require comprehensive devotion affecting heart, actions, and speech?
2. In what ways does modern culture pressure Christians toward religious pluralism or divided loyalties, and how should believers resist?

Interlinear Text

וּבְשֵׁם יְיָ וְתַעֲבֹד וְאָתָּה יִירָא אֱלֹהֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱתָ
H853 the LORD H3068 thy God H430 Thou shalt fear H3372 H853 and serve H5647 by his name H8034

וְתִשָּׁבַע:

him and shalt swear
H7650

Additional Cross-References

Luke 4:8 (References God): And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Matthew 4:10 (References God): Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Deuteronomy 10:20 (References God): Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Deuteronomy 13:4 (References God): Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Leviticus 19:12 (References God): And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

Isaiah 45:23 (Parallel theme): I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Isaiah 65:16 (References God): That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Psalms 63:11 (References God): But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

Jeremiah 12:16 (References Lord): And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

Deuteronomy 10:12 (References God): And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,