

Joshua 24:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

Analysis

Joshua's final exhortation calls Israel to exclusive covenant loyalty. The threefold command—'fear...serve...put away gods'—encompasses comprehensive devotion. The phrase 'fear the LORD' (yiru et-Yahweh, יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה) means reverential awe, not terror—covenant respect acknowledging God's holiness. 'Serve him in sincerity and truth' (ivdu oto betamim uveemet, עֲבֹדוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּתָמִים וּבֶאֱמֶת) uses tamim (תָּמִים, completeness/integrity) and emet (אֱמֶת, truth/faithfulness)—demanding wholehearted, authentic worship. The command 'put away the gods' (hasiru et-elohim, הִסִּירוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים) requires active removal of idols. The reference to 'gods your fathers served beyond the flood' recalls Abraham's idolatrous background (Genesis 11:31, 12:1), while 'in Egypt' acknowledges Israel's exposure to Egyptian polytheism. Even after conquest, idolatrous tendencies persisted. Joshua demands decisive repentance. From a Reformed perspective, this shows that conversion requires turning from all rival allegiances to serve God alone—repentance and faith are inseparable.

Historical Context

This covenant renewal occurred at Shechem near the end of Joshua's life (c. 1390-1380 BCE). Shechem held deep covenant significance—where Abraham first received God's promise (Genesis 12:6-7) and Jacob buried foreign gods (Genesis

35:4). The mention of ancestral gods 'beyond the River' (Euphrates) indicates some Israelites retained household idols from Mesopotamian origins. Egyptian religious influence from 400 years in Egypt also persisted. Archaeological discoveries of household idols (teraphim) in Israelite sites confirm ongoing syncretism. Joshua's call echoed earlier covenant renewals (Exodus 24, Deuteronomy 29-30) and anticipated future reformatations (2 Kings 23, Nehemiah 9-10). The call for 'sincerity and truth' opposed mere external compliance—God demands heart transformation, not ritual performance.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What 'gods your fathers served'—inherited family traditions, cultural idols—compete with exclusive worship of God?
2. How does 'sincerity and truth' challenge merely external religious observance without heart transformation?
3. What specific idols must you 'put away' to serve God wholeheartedly?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה ה	יְרֵאוּ אֹ	אֵת	יְהוָה:	וְעַבְדוּ	אֵת ו	בְּתִמְיָם
H6258	Now therefore fear	H853	the LORD	and serve	H853	him in sincerity
	H3372		H3068	H5647		H8549
וּבִאֱמֻנָה	וְהִסִּירוּ	אֵת	אֱלֹהֵי יָם	וְעַבְדוּ	אֲשֶׁר	
and in truth	and put away	H853	the gods	H834	and serve	
H571	H5493		H430		H5647	
אֲבוֹתֶיךָ	בְּעַרְבָּ	הַנֶּהָר	וּבְמִצְרַיִם	וְעַבְדוּ	אֵת	
which your fathers	on the other side	of the flood	and in Egypt	and serve		H853
H1	H5676	H5104	H4714	H5647		
יְהוָה:						
the LORD						
H3068						

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 12:24 (Truth): Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

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,

Genesis 35:2 (References God): Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

Psalms 119:1 (References Lord): Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2 Corinthians 1:12 (Sin): For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Joshua 24:23 (References God): Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

Ezekiel 20:18 (Parallel theme): But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols:

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

Deuteronomy 18:13 (References God): Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

Joshua 24:2 (References God): And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.