

## Idolatry

### Exodus 32 - Aaron Made a Golden Calf

#### Int.

1. Aim: To show how God is opposed to the practice of idolatry and why.
2. **2 Chro. 33:1-10**
  - a. Manasseh began to reign as king when only 12
  - b. He did much evil
  - c. v. 7 "He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of I srael, I will put My name forever;"
  - d. "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of I srael." Verse 9
3. Idolatry is an abominable sin - **1 Kings 21:25-26**
  - a. "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of I srael."
  - b. Abomination, atrocity, abhor, detest
4. We will discuss:
  - a. What is Idolatry?
  - b. How did it get started?
  - c. What does the Bible say?
  - d. What must we do about it?

## Discussion

### I. WHAT IS IDOLATRY ?

#### A. Definition:

1. Idol = [ cemel ] T.D.N.T. VOL.II P. 375ff
  - a. Means "picture" or "copy" whether artificially made, self-reproduced or simply present.
  - b. It might mean "figure of a man" in the sense of a copy of the man depicted, but not the man himself.
  - c. Can also refer to images of gods, etc.
  - d. It denotes "copy" as distinct from the true reality.
  - e. In its strict sense the idol is not merely an alternative god; it is an unreal god, and therefore false as distinct from true and real.
2. Thayer P. 174 - an image, likeness, i.e. whatever represents the form of an object, either real or imaginary.
3. Websters = "The worship of a physical object as a god."

- #### B. Exodus 20:3-4 1st & 2nd Commandments
- "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:"

#### C. Idolatry does Not Mean:

1. Photography and other arts
2. Sculptures

3. Leviticus 26:1. "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God."
4. God does not condemn pictures or sculptures unless they are used as a form of worship or as an aid to worship
5. Crucifix would be wrong because it would be a token of worship.

## **II. HOW DID IDOLATRY START ?**

- A. Men have always worshiped -- included many different things
  1. Stones - A symbol of something strong and enduring - certain mountains were worshiped - also trees or rivers.
  2. Animals - birds, lions, tigers, cows, crocodiles
  3. Heavenly bodies - SUN, MOON, STARS
  4. Rivers were sometimes the center of men's worship.
  5. Greeks invented gods and goddesses to worship
  6. Romans had gods for all phases of life and built temples in honor of them, -- made images of their rulers and worshiped them.
  7. These things or objects became gods to many people down through the ages.
  
- B. Many idols were invented because of a failure to understand the characteristics of God
  1. Heathens did not think "one" God would be smart enough or powerful enough to manage the entire world.

2. So they invented several gods with each controlling different parts of the universe, earth or phases of earthly life. Some of the gods...
  - a. Ceres = over the fruits of the earth
  - b. Esculapius = God of medicine and healing
  - c. Mercury = merchandise and trade
  - d. Mars - War & battles
  - e. Apollo & Minerva = Learning and ingenious
  
3. People trust in gold and earthly possessions and other gods because they are ignorant of God's power and do not trust Him. They doubt his omniscience or power and feel that they must have something else.
  
- C. Rom. 1:21-23 -- Describes how this process takes place "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."
  1. Birds - Hawk in Egypt, Eagle in rome
  2. Fourfooted beasts - ox adored in Egypt, cow and monkey for Hindu's
  3. Creeping things - crocodile in Egypt
  4. Isa. 40:18, 25 Ezek. 8:10
  
- D. Rom. 1:25 "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

### **III. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IDOLATRY ?**

#### A. O.T.

1. Exodus 20:3-6 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6. And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."
2. 1ST AND 2ND COMMANDMENTS CONDEMN IDOLATRY
3. Deut. 4:23, 17:2,3, 27:15
  - a. Deut. 4:23. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee."
  - b. Deut. 17:2 "If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3. And hath gone and served other gods, and worshiped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;"
  - c. Deut. 27:15. "Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen."

4. 1 Kings 12:28. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."
  - a. Jeroboam made two Golden Calves for the people and placed one at Dan and the other at Bethel
  - b. Condemned many times - 2 Kings 10:29, 13:2
    - (1) 2 Kings 10:29. "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan."
    - (2) 2 Kings 13:2 "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom."

## B. N.T.

1. Gal. 5:20 "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,"
  - a. One of 17 sins which will exclude from heaven
  - b. Basic error of idol worship is that people worship the created things rather than the creator of all things
2. Very much like Eph. 5:5 "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

3. Rev. 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
4. Rev. 22:15 "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."
5. Col. 3:5 "COVETOUSNESS WHICH IS IDOLATRY" "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"
  - a. Excessive desire for things of others.
  - b. That becomes idolatry
  - c. A man worships that on which his heart is most earnestly set and toward which he works in life
  - d. This is the end of lust - lust of money or other objects
6. 1 Cor. 6:9-10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."
  - a. Much of the idol worship involved the sin of adultery and fornication
  - b. Pagan customs or worship of idols were designed to provoke these passions
  - c. The "Canaanites" of the O.T. times were worshippers of idols like "El" or "Baal". These people practiced every sexual perversion imaginable! It is not an exaggeration to say that these pagans elevated sexual sins to the status of a god.

#### **IV. WHAT MUST WE DO ABOUT IDOLATRY ?**

- A. 1 Thes. 1:9 Turn away and serve God "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;"
1. Turned to God from Idols
  2. To serve the living and true God
  3. These idols can neither see nor hear nor walk - Rev. 9:20 "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:"
- B. 1 Jn. 5:21 "Little Children, Keep yourselves from idols".
- C. 1 Cor. 10:7. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." " 1 Cor. 10:14. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."
1. Do not practice it - Because it is condemned
  2. Flee from idolatry - RUN FROM IT
- D. Acts 17:16 ff Paul at Athens "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."
1. City wholly given to idolatry
  2. Gods to everything - more idols than rest of Greece
  3. It was easier to find a god than a man

4. In case they missed any, they made an idol to the unknown god
5. Paul's spirit was stirred up or provoked in him! He knew that they were in ignorance and he was not afraid to preach the Gospel to them.
6. Lesson - We should be stirred up by the idolatry in people today and take the opportunity to preach the truth to them.

E. How can we practice idolatry ?

1. An idol is anything that comes between us and God ! It is a substitute for the true and living God.
2. What shape is your idol?
  - a. Some countries it is an image made in form of a man, animal, or heavenly body.
  - b. In our country and time it might be in the shape of a:
    - (1) Car - We love it more than we do anything or anybody. Heard of a person who refused to bring people to church in their new car because they did not want to get it dirty.
    - (2) House - Spend all of our time and money to get it just the way we want it. Will not use it to bring glory and honor to God.
    - (3) Clothes - Golf clubs - Recreation -
    - (4) \$\$\$\$ -- Some people devote their life to keep up with or ahead of the Jones's. Lk. 12:15

(5) Sexual sins

- (a) Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love & beauty - her son was Eros.
- (b) Today there are many people worshipping this idol of sexual immorality.
- (c) Sex education emphasizes "safe sex" -- there is no safe way to commit sin !!!!
- (d) God's way is the best way and the only way - Heb. 13:4

## (6) Recreation

**CONCLUSION**

1. God condemns idolatry because he is a jealous God
  - a. Exodus 20:5 "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;"
  - b. God does not share his glory with wooden or stone idols = FALSE GODS
  - c. I saiah 42:8 "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."
  - d. John 4:24 There is only 1 God and we must worship Him.
2. Many ways we could commit idolatry today! = Cars, House, Money, job, sports, Sexually immorality. recreation, sin, etc.
3. Matt. 6: 33 - seek God first
4. Jer. 10:5 RSV "Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good."

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Night June 15, 2008  
Evans Church of Christ  
515 Gibbs Road  
Evans, Ga. 30809  
706-855-1249  
evanscoc@bellsouth.net  
[www.evansgachurchofchrist.org](http://www.evansgachurchofchrist.org)