What Modern Day Idolatry Looks Like

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday January 21st, 2018

Text: Rom. 1:18-25; Col. 3:5

### Intro

1. Idolatry is a major theme in the Scriptures – God warned His people not to follow after false gods!
   1. Idolatry is the dethroning of the One True God in our heart & replacing Him with ANYTHING or ANYONE else!
2. Over 30 Pagan/false gods mentioned in the Scriptures by name!
   1. Egyptian false gods (pantheon of gods and mythology, with Ra being the chief god)
   2. Dagon, the chief god of the Philistines *(Judges 16:23; I Sam. 5:2)*
   3. Chemosh, the chief god of Moab *(II Kings 11:7, 33)*
   4. Milcom/Molech, the chief god of the Ammonites *(II Kings 11:7, 33; Jer. 32:35: Human sacrifice)*
   5. Baal, chief god of Tyre & Sidon, and Canaan, storm god *(Num. 25:3; I Kings 16:31-32)*
   6. Ashtoreth/Asherah, fertility goddess of the Sidonians *(I Kings 16:33; II Kings 11:33)*
   7. Bel/Marduk, chief god of the Babylonians *(Jer. 50:2; 51:44)*
   8. Zeus (NAS: Greek)/Jupiter (KJV: Roman), Greek/Roman chief god, storm god *(Acts 14:12-13; 19:35)*
   9. Hermes (NAS: Greek)/Mercurius (KJV: Roman), Greek god of commerce, science, invention, cunning, eloquence, and theft *(Acts 14:12)*
   10. Artemis (NAS: Greek)/ Diana (KJV: Roman) of the Ephesians *(Acts 19:24-35),* goddess of the moon, hunting, wild animals, and fertility
3. Material images are not necessary for one to practice idolatry.
   1. Anything competing in our hearts with God when it comes to our trust, dependence, affection & love – *Mt. 6:19-24: Can’t serve two masters!*
      1. Mammon (KJV): The Aramaic word for riches, personified by Jesus as a false god (NAS: “wealth”).
   2. Col. 3:5: While some may not actually serve idols, there are things in our lives that can “amount to idolatry.”
      1. “Evil desire, and greed” are acts of selfishness – We sin because we want to! *(James 1:14-15)*
4. What Modern Day Idolatry Looks Like:
   1. Money, power, status, physical appearance, pleasure, leisure, social change, religion.
   2. Rom. 1:18-25 (1:29-31): Disobedience, Ignorance, More Disobedience, Ungrateful, Pride, Materialistic – Exchanged the truth for a lie – served the creature rather than the Creator!
   3. False religion is idolatry!
      1. Many people who claim to be Christian may not realize they are practicing a form of false religion, thus idolatry!
      2. Much of what is commonly called “Christianity” in our culture is not only very dissimilar to Biblical Christianity, but is actually a form of idolatry!
5. II Cor. 11:3-4: Paul was afraid the Corinthians would have bought anything different! Anything different is idolatry (a different Jesus preached, different spirit, different gospel!)
6. Though ancient gods’ names may not be invoked, idolatry is still practiced today!

#### When God Is Viewed As a Means to an End

* 1. An idolatrous god is simply a means to an end.
  2. The ancients would:
     1. Worship a fertility goddess in order to be fertile.
     2. Make sacrifices to the god of war in order to have victory on the battlefield.
     3. Try to please the god of the seas in order to ensure a safe voyage.
  3. Many Think of God as the means to their end (God is not a Genie in a bottle!):
     1. Worshiping & serving Him in order to get the things we want - “health & wealth” / “happiness” / “financial stability & security” / “physical well-being” (Col 3:1-5)
     2. Many worship God because they think He will provide the stuff they want, now and for eternity!
     3. Many so-called Christian preachers and authors promise what people want to hear: serve God to gain material blessings!
        1. *Your Blessed Life Now* by Gertjan Goldschmeding
        2. *Your Best Life Now* by Joel Osteen
        3. *8 Steps To Create The Life You Want* by Dr. Creflo A. Dollar
  4. If you are merely seeking things God can give you, & not God Himself, then you don’t understand the God of the Scriptures! (Acts 17:27)
  5. The blessings emphasized for the Christian are spiritual, which all flow from being reconciled with God in Christ (II Cor. 5:1-21; Heb. 11:6, 13-16; Eph. 1:3-16).
  6. We ought to worship and serve God not with an attitude of “what can I get out of it?” but with an attitude of “What can I do to serve God?”!

#### When The Personal God Becomes a Personalized God

* 1. An idol is a personalized god – personalized to whatever the idol-worshiper wants it to be (Man making God into a god after their own image):
     1. Many have made for themselves a god that accepts them in their sin – it thinks like they do; it does what they want (Rom. 1:23-25: Idolatrous people serve “the creature rather than the Creator;” Is. 55:6-9: God’s ways are higher than man’s) – Many teach God will never condemn people to Hell (Mt. 25:41, 46).
     2. It is common, after teaching someone about the true & living God, for them to say … “Well, I just don’t believe in a God like that.”
  2. We are not God! – Rom. 1:20-21; Acts 17:30; Prov. 1:7; 15:33; I Cor. 2:16; Job 40:2; Rom. 11:34
  3. We MUST be conformed to His image – there is NO OTHER WAY! (Rom. 1:18, 24, 25; 12:1-2; Eph. 5:1; Rom. 6:16-18)
  4. We must serve God, not according to what makes us happy or what we think God wants, but according to God’s way as He has prescribed!

#### Demand Our Teachers Be Our “Soothsayer”

* 1. A prophet or soothsayer of an idolatrous god told people whatever they wanted to hear:
     1. He would: throw bones on the ground, pull the insides out of an animal, read a palm, or gaze into a crystal ball and say, “The gods are pleased with you and they say you will have a bountiful harvest this season,” etc. (I Kings 22:12, 18)
  2. False teachers were warned of and what they would do:
     1. Rom. 1:18 - - - who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
     2. Rom. 1:25 - - - who exchanged the truth of God for the lie
     3. Rom. 1:28 - - - they did not like to retain God in their knowledge
     4. II Tim. 4:3-4: Saints would turn “away from the truth” to hear what they want to hear and would find teachers who would tell them such things!
  3. There were many false prophets in O.T. times & the apostles warned us there would be false teachers wearing the name of Christ (II Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:3-4; II Cor. 11:13-15).
  4. We can be our own “soothsayer!” (I Cor. 15:33; Gal. 6:7-9; I Jn. 1:8; 2:3-6; 3:7)
  5. We can even use the Bible in a way that supports our self-deception (II Tim. 2:15; Gal. 1:6-9; II Pet. 3:16-17)
  6. We must “endure sound doctrine,” and not seek out the things we wish to hear, to strengthen our faith and save our souls and those who hear us! (I Tim. 4:6, 16)
  7. We ought to seek after the only One, by which we can be saved! *(Acts 4:12)*

## Conclusion

1. Rom. 1:25: Modern day idolatry involves exchanging the truth for a lie!
   1. Looking to God as a means to get what we want!
   2. Exchanging the personal God into a personalized god!
   3. Demanding our teachers be our “soothsayers”!
2. Is there anything competing in your heart with God when it comes to your trust, affections & love? *(Mt. 6:19-24; Col. 3:5)*
   1. If not to God, our love, service, manner of life, what we seek after and worship will be to other things, and we will stand condemned *(Jer. 8:2; Rom. 6:16; Phil. 3:18-19).*
3. The good news is: Man can change, can repent and serve the only living God!
   1. I Thess. 1:9: The Thessalonians turned from idolatry to serve God.
   2. Rom. 6:4: After baptism the new convert begins to “walk in newness of life.”
4. Let us devote to God that which belongs to Him alone (Mark 12:30):
   1. Our love, heart, soul, mind and strength!
5. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized into His name!
6. If a Christian in error, don’t wait till it’s eternally too late. Repent and be renewed!
7. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!

**Sources:**

* Table of gods called Pagan Gods Mentioned in the Bible (*Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, or NNIBD)
* *Your Blessed Life Now* by Gertjan Goldschmeding (http://www.amazon.com/Your-Blessed-Life-Tim-Verdouw-ebook/dp/B00I51XY5E/ref=sr\_1\_fkmr0\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1452656587&sr=8-1-fkmr0&keywords=Your+Blessed+Life+Now+by+Gertjan+Goldschmeding) – Amazon.com = 0 Reviews. Also: http://www.goldschmeding.org/
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