

IDOLATRY

Part 1

What Is Idolatry?

1st Co. 10:1-21

INTRODUCTION

Warnings against idolatry are persistent throughout Scripture.

The first commandment to Israel dealt with the matter of idolatry: “Thou shalt not have other gods before Me.”

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians of idolatry: “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.” (1st Co. 10:7); “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” (1st Co. 10:14)

The apostle John ended his first epistle to the Ephesians with a warning against idolatry: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” (1st John 5:21)

What is it about idolatry that necessitates a persistent warning from God to His people? Paul warned in his letter to the Corinthians that idolatry turned Israel from a focus upon the true and living God. Paul later warns that the impact of demons behind idolatry.

Today, we will begin an examination of idolatry. It is hoped that a thorough examination will lead believers to recognize idolatry and to utilize God’s provisions to have victory over it.

I. IDOLATRY IS THE PRACTICE OF WORSHIPPING ANY PERSON PLACE OR THING IN THE PLACE OF GOD.

A. Idolatry is a work of the sin nature. Gal. 5:20 cf. Mk. 7:22 (it comes out of the heart of man)

B. Some definitions of idolatry:

1. “*The worship of an image or of the god represented by it.*” -- Kenneth Wuest
2. *The perpetual placement of any, person, place or thing in the place of worship that should only be accorded to the true and living God; to which demons receive the worship.* -- K.D.J.
3. A biblical definition of idolatry is that it is “covetousness” (pleonexia -- “*a greedy desire to have more*” -- Joseph Thayer). Col. 3:5

- a) Covetousness is personified in the brother who desired to share his brother's inheritance. Lk. 12:15
 - b) It is a characteristic of the Gentiles ("greediness") Eph. 4:19
 - c) It is a common technique of false teachers. 2 Pet. 2:3,14
- C. An idol itself has no significant value; it is the meaning that is poured into an idol that is problematic. 1st Co. 8:4
- 1. "We know" is from oida -- aor. Act -- we all know at a particular time.
 - 2. "Nothing" is the pronoun oudeis which is used in Scripture to convey **not one thing; nothing at all; of no importance whatsoever**. Cf. 1st Co. 4:4 (of Paul knowing nothing by himself); 1st Co. 13:3 (of what one is without agape love)
 - 3. "In the world" is much better translated "in a world" -- used in a general sense of regarding the organization of fallen mankind and its life and how they view things. ("in a world gone wrought" for example). Cf. Phil. 2:15 (in whom we shine as luminaries); 1st Tim. 3:16 (Christ believed on in)

II. THERE ARE SEVERAL WORDS USED TO EXPLAIN IDOLATRY IN SCRIPTURE.

- A. There are different words for idols translated in Scripture.
- 1. **"Gods"**
 - a) The Hebrew word used is elohim -- those deities worshipped by nations outside of Israel. Cf. 1st Chron. 16:26 (the gods of the Gentiles were idols); Ex. 20:3; 12:12 (the gods of Egypt)
 - b) The Greek word used is "theos". Cf. Gal. 4:8 (believers served before salvation)
 - 2. "Devils" --
 - a) The Hebrew word is "saw-er" -- "shaggy; he goat; faun" Lev. 17:7
 - b) The Greek word is daimonion which is used of a demon. Rev. 9:20
- B. **The thing which is worshipped** is called an idol.
- 1. The primary Hebrew word is el--eel which is used of that which is "**good for nothing; worthless; of false gods**." -- Brown, Driver & Briggs Lev. 19:4 (molten gods); Deut. 29:17 (some are made up of wood, stone, silver and gold); 2 Kings 21:11 (Some of God's people worshipped)
 - 2. The Greek word is eidolon which is "**whatever represents the form of an object, either real or imaginary**." -- Joseph Thayer
- C. **The practice of worshipping an idol** is called *idolatry*.
- 1. The Hebrew word is teraphim which is "**a kind of idol used in a household shrine or worship**." -- Brown, Driver & Briggs

2. The Greek word is *kateidolos*, a combination of the preposition *kata* with *idolos* -- "***to be thoroughly given over to the worshipping of idols.***" -- K.D.J. cf. Acts 17:16

D. ***One characterized as worshipping idols*** is called an *idolater*. (5 uses)

1. Is used of those whom believers are to avoid. 1st Co. 5:10
2. Is used of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 1st Co. 6:9; Rev. 21:8; 22:5
3. The Corinthians were warned not to follow the behavior of some in Israel who were. 1st Co. 10:7

III. IDOLATRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS WHOLLY THE SERVING OF INANIMATE GODS.

A. Worship of idols generally occurred in specific locations.

1. They worshipped idols on "high places" -- "bamah" -- -- ***a place of elevation; is associated commonly with idolatrous worship of other gods by the heathen and Israel.*** Cf.
2. They worshipped idols at "altars"

B. Idol worship directed towards:

1. "Graven/molten images" are
 - a) "***An embodiment or living manifestation of God form, appearance.***" -- Friberg lexicon
 - b) "***Carved animate things made to reflect animals or people with whom the worship is directed.***" -- K.D.J. cf. Dan. 3:5; Rev. 13:14
2. Nature: Deut. 4:19; Jer. 44:19
 - a) Sun --
 - b) Moon
 - c) Stars
 - d) "Host of heaven" -- Acts 7:42 (Israel did); Zeph. 1:5
3. Inanimate things: Rev. 9:20
 - a) Gold
 - b) Silver
 - c) Brass
 - d) Wood

C. Popular Old Testament gods worshipped by the heathen and Israel:

1. Baal -- "***As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being.***" -- I.S.B.E. Jer. 32:35; Nub. 22:41; Hos. 13:1

2. Moloch -- means "king"; it is the worship of a deity by the sacrificing of one's children as a burnt offering. Amos 5:26; ez. 23:39; Acts 7:43
3. Remphan -- "***Probably the planet Saturn is intended by the name. Astrologers represented this planet as baleful in its influences, and hence the Phoenicians offered to it human sacrifices, especially children.***" -- Easton Bible dictionary Amos 5:26; Acts 7:43

IV. ALL IDOLATRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ENCOMPASSES THE SERVING OF INANIMATE OBJECTS AND MORE.

- A. The Gentiles worshipped inanimate objects. Rev. 9:20
 1. Athens was filled with various forms of idols. Acts 17:16,23
 2. The Corinthians had questions about food sacrificed to idols. 1st Co. 8:1,4,7,10
- B. Idolatry is seen as being practiced in some early churches.
 1. Some at Pergamos held to idolatrous practices. Rev. 2:14
 2. "Jezebel" at Thyatira led some to eat things sacrificed to idols. Rev. 2:20

CONCLUSION

IDOLATRY

Part 1b

What Is Idolatry?

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INTRODUCTION

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 - A. Worship of idols generally occurred in specific locations.
 1. They worshipped idols on “high places” -- “bamah” -- -- ***a place of elevation; is associated commonly with idolatrous worship of other gods by the heathen and Israel.*** Cf. Lev. 26:30; 2 Chr. 14:5:34:4
 2. They worshipped idols at “altars”
 - B. Idol worship directed towards:
 1. “Graven/molten images” are
 - a) ***“An embodiment or living manifestation of God form, appearance.”*** -- Friberg lexicon
 - b) ***“Carved inanimate things made to reflect animals or people with whom the worship is directed.*** -- K.D.J. cf. Dan. 3:5; Rev. 13:14
 2. Nature: Deut. 4:19; Jer. 44:19
 - c) Sun -- the word used for sun gods is “Bethshemesh” which is used in the Hebrew of “house of the sun”.
 - (1) The word is found 19 times in the Old Testament.
 - (2) Bethshemesh seen as an Egyptian god. Cf. Jer. 43:14
 - (3) It became the place of a city of Judah. 2 Chr. 25:21; 1st Ki. 14:11
 - d) Moon -- is yareh which is translated ***“wanderer”; it was worshipped by the nations of the far east as a divinity or the representative of one or more deities.*** -- I.S.B.E. Deut. 4:19; 2 Kings 23:5 (Israel worshipped)
 - e) Stars is the Hebrew word “kokab” -- ***“blazing; as round or as shining”***. -- Strong’s lexicon. Deut. 4:19
 - f) “Host of heaven” -- Acts 7:42 (Israel did); Zeph. 1:5
 - (1) The word “host” is a military term in the Greek it is stratia which is a word used of an army or military troops. Cf. Acts 7:42
 - (2) “Of heaven” can be translated belonging to the heaven.
 - (3) The “host of heaven” are equated with angels in Scripture. Cf. 2 Ch. 18:18
 - (4) Israel worshipped. 2 Chron. 33:3, 5; 2 Kings 17:16
 - C. Popular Old Testament gods worshipped by the heathen and Israel:

1. Baal -- **“As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being.”** -- I.S.B.E. Jer. 32:35; Nub. 22:41; Hos. 13:1
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A. The Gentiles worshipped inanimate objects. Rev. 9:20

1. *“Works of their hands”* is a phrase used to note idols formulated by men to worship. Cf. 2 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron. 34:25 (of things made to other gods)
 - a) Seen in images of idols. Cf. Acts 17:16,23
 - b) Seen in sacrifices to idols. 1st Co. 8:1,4,7,10
2. Inanimate things that pertain to the world system: Rev. 9:20
 - a) Gold -- cf. Rev. 18:12, 16 (a trade of the world system); Gen. 13:2; 24:35 (Abram was rich in); Dan. 5:4 (gods formed after); Ez. 16:17 (used to make images for worship by Israel); Ja. 5:3 (worshipped by some in the early church)
 - b) Silver -- Rev. 18:12 (components of the world system)
 - c) Brass -- a fixture of trade in the world system. Matt. 10:9; Rev. 18:12
 - d) Wood -- among the components used in the World System for the purpose of living. Cf. Rev. 18:12

B. Idolatry is seen as being practiced in some early churches.

1. Some at Pergamos held to idolatrous practices. Rev. 2:14
2. “Jezebel” at Thyatira led some to eat things sacrificed to idols. Rev. 2:20
3. The Corinthians were concerned about the practice of eating foods sacrificed to idols. 1st Co. 8:1,4,7

CONCLUSION