

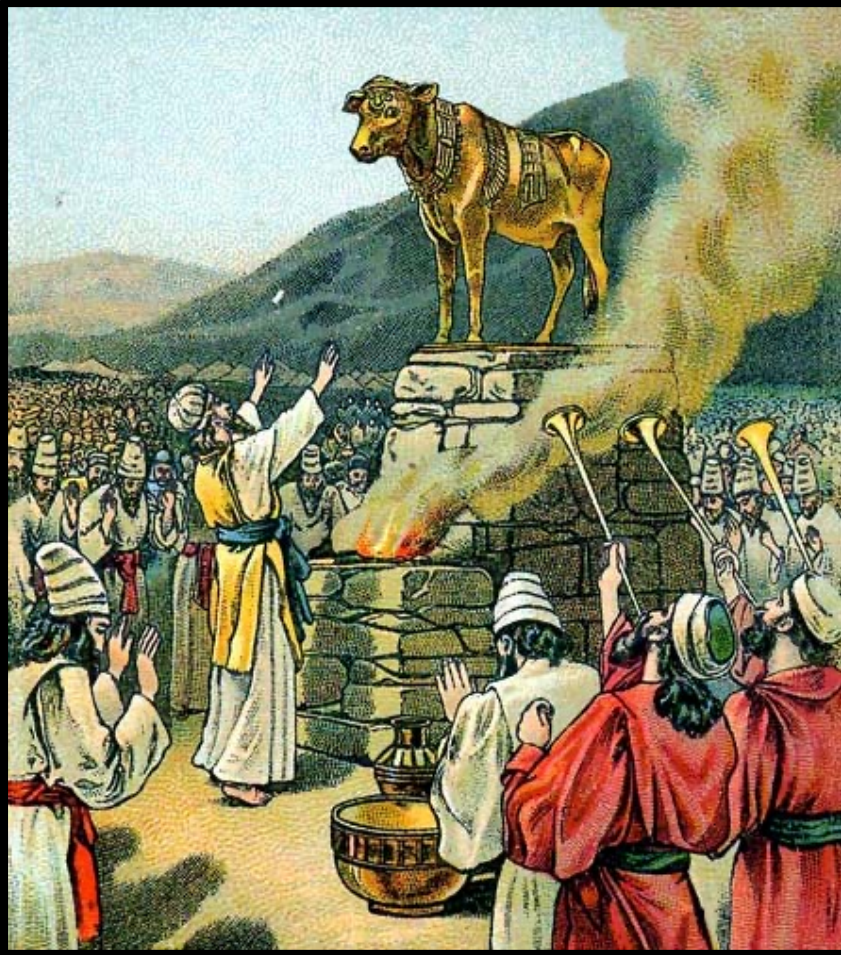
# THE ATTRACTION OF IDOLATRY



# “Idolatry”

- ◎ *“strictly speaking denotes the worship of deity in a visible form, whether the images to which homage is paid are symbolical representations of the true God or of the false divinities which have been made the objects of worship in his stead.”* - Smith's Bible Dictionary
- ◎ Note “strictly speaking”

# What we normally think of ...



# IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

# OT Teaching Against Idol Worship

## ◎ Ex. 20

- 3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.
- 4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

# OT Teaching Against Idol Worshipers

## ◎ Ex. 34

- *11 Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. 12 Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. 13 But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images 14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ...*

# OT Teaching Against Idol Worshipers

## ◎ Ex. 34

- ... 15 lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, 16 and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

# Israel's Chronic Problem with Idolatry

- ◎ Before Mt. Sinai...
- ◎ Gen 31:19
  - *Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.*
- ◎ Gen 35:2
  - *And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments."*





# Israel's Chronic Problem with Idolatry

- In Egypt ...
- Josh. 24:14-15
  - *“Now therefore, fear the LORD, ... and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. ... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, ...*



# Israel's Chronic Problem with Idolatry

⦿ At Mt. Sinai...

⦿ Ex. 32:4

- *And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"*



# Israel's Chronic Problem with Idolatry

◎ And afterwards...

◎ Judges 2:11-13

- *Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.*

# Israel's Chronic Problem with Idolatry

- Even Solomon...

- 1 Kings 11:1-8

- *1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ...*

# Israel's Chronic Problem with Idolatry

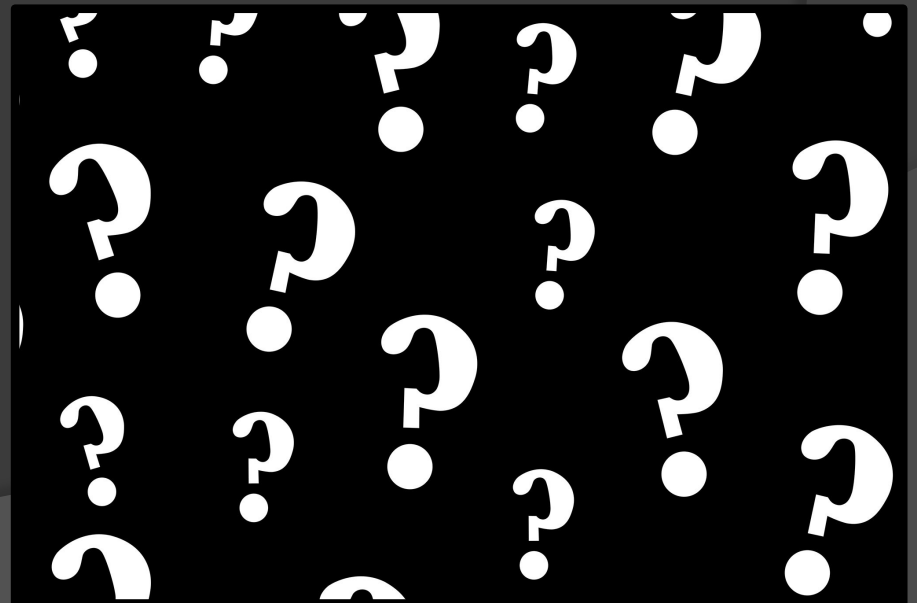
- Even Solomon...

- 1 Kings 11:1-8

- ... 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ... 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

# How could this be?

- Direct manifestation of God's power in Egypt and at Mt. Sinai
- Punishments in the wilderness
- Cycles of foreign oppression and salvation by judges
- Miracles by the prophets



# OT Idol Worship

- ◎ Baal 1 Kings 16:31-33, 1 Kings 18:17-40
  - Moleck (Ammonites) Lev 18:21, Lev 20:1-6
- ◎ Ashtoreth/Asherah 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Kings 23:4
  - Queen of Heaven Jer 7:18; 44:17-19,25
- ◎ Chemosh (Moabites), Milcom (Ammonites)
  - Descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot
- ◎ A sampling of <50 gods
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Canaanite\\_religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Canaanite_religion)

# Why attractive to the Israelites?

## ⦿ Convenience

- Don't have to go all the way to Jerusalem – *“under every green tree and every high hill”*

## ⦿ Intermarriage with non-Israelites

- Remember Ex. 34:15-16 & Solomon's example

## ⦿ Peer pressure

- From the surrounding nations (like 1 Sam. 8:4-8)

## ⦿ The lust of the flesh

- *“Baal ... god of fertility .... the Lord of Rain and Dew, ... indispensable for fertile soil in Canaan.”*
- *“Astarte [Ashtoreth] is ... the goddess of sexual love (eros) and fertility”*



**IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES**

# NT Idol Worship

- Zeus/Jupiter (Greek/Roman) – Acts 14:12
- Hermes/Mercury – Acts 14:12
- Artemis/Diana – Acts 19:24
- Apollo – Indirectly mentioned only as the name of a Jewish Christian (Acts 18:24)
- Other Greek and Roman gods & goddesses Acts 17:16-31



# NT Teaching Against Idol Worship

## ◎ Rom 1:18-32

- *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown [it] to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible [attributes] are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify [Him] as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ...*

# NT Teaching Against Idol Worship

## ◎ Rom 1:18-32

- ... *Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions (homosexuality)*

# NT Teaching Against Idol Worship

- Rev. 21: 8 "idolaters...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone..."
- 1 Cor. 6:9-11 "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,"
- 1 Cor. 10:14 "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."
- 1 John 5:21 "... keep yourselves from idols,"

# Why attractive to the Gentiles?

## ⦿ Popular culture

- Food offered in sacrifice to idols was often sold in the local meet market
- Roman gods being somewhat the preferred religion of the empire

## ⦿ “Relatable” gods just like themselves

- Envious, lustful, scheming, capricious, etc.

**IN MODERN TIMES**

# Modern Idol Worship

- Overt worship of false gods
- Per <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polytheism>
  - Hinduism
  - Buddhism
  - Most traditional African religions
  - Taoism
  - Shintoism
  - Wicca





# Modern Idol Worship

- ◎ The worship of angels or humans
  - Angels Rev. 22:8-9
  - Men Acts 10:24-26
  - Catholicism's worship of Jesus' mother, Mary, and between 1000 and 8000 dead Catholics ("saints")



# Modern Idol Worship

- Using any kind of image, picture, or statue to worship the true God
  - Ex. 20:4; Lev. 26:1
  - Catholicism's use of various images of Jesus, the crucifix, and such.



# Modern Idol Worship

- ◎ Worship of false concepts of the true God?
  - Islam
    - Strict monotheists denying deity of Jesus
  - Mormonism
    - Jehovah is one of several deified humans
  - Jehovah's Witnesses
    - Only the "Father" is deity, Jesus is a created angel, and Holy Spirit is an impersonal force
  - Oneness Pentecostalism
    - God is a single deity that appears to man in different forms at different times

# Modern Idol Worship

- When we give anything or anyone greater priority than God
- Col. 3:5
  - *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
- Matt. 6:24
  - *“No one can serve two masters; ... You cannot serve God and mammon.*
- Money, materialism, job, careers



# Modern Idol Worship

## ◎ Pleasure

### • Phil 3:19

- *whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.*

### • 2 Tim. 3:1-4

- *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*

## ◎ Entertainment, professional sports, recreation, hobbies, etc. and how we spend our time, attention, effort, energy, etc.

## ◎ Pornography, fornication, adultery, etc.

# Modern Idol Worship

## ◎ Power & worldly fame

- Acts 12: 21-23

- *21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God.*

## ◎ Entertainers, sports figures, rock stars



# Modern Idol Worship

## ◎ Self

- 2 Cor. 5:15

- *and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

- 2 Tim. 3:1-4

- *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves ...*

◎ “God wants me to be happy. ... I know the Bible says that, but I feel ...”



# Modern Idol Worship





# Conclusion

- ⦿ One does not have to physically worship a graven image to be guilty of idolatry
- ⦿ Then same as now, modern people have the same tendency
  - Although the objects of their “worship”, devotion, and service are more sophisticated
- ⦿ Ezek. 14: 6
  - *"Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols..."*
- ⦿ Who/what do you worship?

