

# Worshipping False Idols

*"You shall not make for yourself a carved image...*

*you shall not bow down to them nor serve them."*

*Exodus 20:4-6*

—by Peter Hammond



## Money



**P**rofessing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made by corruptible man... who exchanged the Truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Romans 1:24-25

Throughout the Bible commandments and warnings against idolatry are the most repeated of all. There are more denunciations of idolatry than any other sin in the Bible. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image... you shall not bow

### CONDEMNING IDOLATRY

Of course, the Second Commandment prohibits the idolatry of polytheistic religions such as Hinduism. It also forbids the worship of any figure, 'god' or idol that usurps God's Sovereignty in your life. The Apostle Paul taught: "That the things which the gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God" 1 Cor 10:20. Moses wrote: "They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God..." Deut 32:16-20

**There are more denunciations of idolatry than any other sin in the Bible. Modern society has cast idols in the most subtle forms - even Christians are guilty...**

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"Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves moulded gods; I am the Lord your God" Lev 19:4. The Apostle John beseeches us: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

### BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

The Commandment against idol worship was broken before the Words were even burned into the tablets of stone. The Israelites fashioned a graven image of a golden calf, right beneath the mountain of God. How could God's chosen people bow down before a cold, lifeless image of a golden calf when they had just witnessed the ten plagues

## Cars



of the Living God expose the false gods of Egypt? How could they have been so unfaithful to the God who had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt, the One who had led them through the Red Sea with walls of water on each side? How could they have lowered themselves to worshipping an idol when they had been fed with manna in the desert, were satisfied with water from the rock and followed the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night?

**Anything more important than God is an idol. For many people the idol in their life is fame, fortune, fashion, family a fancy car or a certain relationship.**

### DISGUISED DISOBEDIENCE

When Moses confronted his brother, Aaron's attempts to excuse this disgrace seemed embarrassingly like our feeble attempts to justify disobedience to the Word of God. Aaron claimed that they threw all their gold into the fire and out came the golden calf! Earlier Aaron had even claimed that the feast before the golden calf would be held in honour of the Lord! (Exod 32:5). After King Solomon, many of the Israelites

turned to the sin of idolatry. Jeroboam had other golden calves fashioned for worship in Dan and Bethel. All over Israel, on countless hills and amidst clumps of trees, altars were erected to the false gods of the Canaanites - Baal, Ashteroth, Kronos and Molech. The consequence of this idolatry was judgement.

God sent the Assyrians to destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel and lead His people into captivity. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was later conquered

under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It took the furnace of affliction and slavery in Babylon to purge the dregs of idolatry from the hearts of God's people. First under the ministry of great prophets such as Ezekiel and »

## Pets



## Possessions







Pop stars



Gym



False Idols

FEATURE ■

Sport

Anything that takes the 1st place in your life, instead of God is an idol

Daniel, and then after the return from exile, under Ezra and Nehemiah, the people resolved to never again compromise with idolatry.

Christians must not worship before the idolatrous altar of pluralism, multiculturalism and the interfaith movement. Jesus Christ is "the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father" except through Him (John 14:6).

#### ART AS A FORM OF IDOLATRY

We should also note that the Second Commandment does not forbid artistry. The Second Commandment forbids idolatry. On the same day that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He gave Moses detailed instructions for the building of the Tabernacle which included numerous visual arts. Exodus 25 and 26 include details for the Tabernacle, the curtains, the Ark of the Covenant and even for the statues of the angels over the Ark of the Covenant.

There are three functions of art - two are acceptable, the third is forbidden by the Second Commandment. Art may be used for decoration, or as a teaching tool, but not for devotional purposes. Too many people have abused their artistic talent to depict Christ as they see Him - often a weak-willed, meek and mild man who accepts anything.

Or, God as a tyrant, a myth or a figment of imagination. This is a terrible misuse of God-given talent and it is a devious form of idolatry - casting God in our image as we see Him and not as the Bible describes His nature and Character. God intends that we exercise the talents He entrusts us with to beautify His world further.

Art can be used to teach and instruct and it is perfectly acceptable to produce and use pictures of Noah, the ark and the animals, Moses parting the Red Sea, David defeating Goliath, Elijah challenging the Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and so many other great Bible stories. What the Second Commandment forbids is the devotional use of art.

God Himself is greater than His Creation and everything in it. God is infinite, eternal and perfect. This Commandment requires that our worship be simple and spiritual, free of elaborate human gimmicks and ornamentation. God is Spirit and we who worship Him

must worship Him in Spirit and Truth. We must prepare our hearts, humble ourselves, confess our sins, be grateful for His many blessings, and rejoice in the Lord always.

#### A FALSE VISION OF CHRIST

Unfortunately, because of imaginative Renaissance depictions of Jesus having long hair, this image has stuck - although

newspapers in South Africa as declaring: "My God isn't homophobic. I could never worship a God who is against homosexuals." Tutu even declared that if homosexuals don't go to Heaven, then he didn't want to go there!

When people talk like this, they reveal that they have fashioned a god in the factory of their mind. Of course, their god would never be harsh and judgemental,

life is fame, fortune, success, a fancy car or home, a computer, prestige, or a certain relationship. Nothing must be more important in our lives than God.

#### TRUE REPENTANCE

It is noteworthy throughout the Bible that whenever God's Word is proclaimed, the response of repentant people has been to destroy their idols. When the Apostle Paul proclaimed the Gospel in Ephesus, people brought their occultic materials and burned them. "They were all seized with fear, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour...in this way the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" Acts 19:17-20.

We need to repent of idolatry in our hearts, minds and lives. Where there is a physical idol, we should break, burn or bury it. "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James 1:21-22 ■

**"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and receive...the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only." James 1:21-22**

we do know that the Jewish people did not typically have long hair. In fact almost every film on the life of Christ depicts the disciples as having short hair, and the actor playing the role of Jesus stands out by having the longest hair on the set! It is worth noting that Samson stood out for having long hair and this identified him as a Nazarite. If it was typical for Hebrews to have long hair, it would have been of no significance to distinguish Samson.

he would never condemn anyone to hell, because their god does not exist. It is a figment of their imagination.

#### FAMILY, FAME, FORTUNE

What people have done when they speak like this is to invent a god to suit their own purposes. This is the essence of idolatry. The fact is that the God of the Bible is not only a God of love, but a God of light. God is not only gracious and merciful, but He is Holy and just.

#### MODERN IDOLS

There seems to be some understanding of how the Second Commandment applies to us today, in that the popular vocabulary identifies 'sports idols', 'Hollywood idols', 'sex idols', and musicians who are described as 'idols'. There is also no doubt that people make idols of their favourite political party. What comes into our minds when we think of God, is the most important thing about us.

God is not only a Saviour, but He is the Eternal Judge. The God of the Bible, the one true God who made Heaven and earth, gave us His Ten Commandments. He sent plagues upon Egypt. He destroyed the pursuing Egyptian army in the Red Sea. He sent fire and sulphur upon the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Day will come when each one of us will have to stand before His Judgment Seat and give an account of our lives.

All too often, people betray the idolatry within their minds in how they speak of God. Bishop Desmond Tutu was quoted on the front page of daily

What is most important to you? Anything more important than God is an idol. For too many people the idol in their

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DR. PETER HAMMOND is the author of 'The Ten Commandments - God's Perfect Law of Liberty'.  
Tel.: 021-689-4480 [www.frontline.org.za](http://www.frontline.org.za)