

Making God Known

Part 3

Much of this material is taken directly from *The Mission of God* by Christopher J. H. Wright.

Introduction:

“Arguably the most fundamental distinction in all reality is presented to us in the opening verses of the Bible. It is the distinction between the creator God and everything else that exists anywhere. God alone is uncreated, self-existent, noncontingent. God’s being depends on nothing else outside God’s own self.”

Theme: What are other gods and what is the problem with worshipping them?

I. What kinds of things serve as other gods?

A. Things that entice us serve as gods.

Do not be “enticed” warns the writer of Deuteronomy. We are not to be enticed into worshipping the stars of heaven. The language suggests that there are things in creation that are so awe-inspiring, so much beyond our reach, our control or our understanding that they exercise an enticing attraction to us.

Deu 4:19 (NIV) And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars--all the heavenly array--do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.

B. Things we fear serve as gods.

We turn things we fear into gods when we seek to placate them or ward them off.

Psa 96:4 (NASB) For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

Psa 96:5 (NASB) For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens.

C. Things we trust serve as gods.

People tend to idolize the things (or people or systems) that they place their trust in to deliver them from their fears.

Psa 33:16 (NASB) The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength.

Psa 33:17 (NASB) A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.

D. Things we need serve as gods.

1. When we “go after” the things that we need they become our gods.

Mat 6:31 (NIV) So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

Mat 6:32 (NIV) For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

2. We become our own god when we are self-reliant in providing for our needs.

Deu 8:17 (NIV) You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."

Deu 8:18 (NIV) But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Deu 8:19 (NIV) If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.

II. The problems associated with worshipping false gods.

A. False gods deprive God of his proper glory,

When human beings attribute to other gods gifts, powers or functions that belong to the one and living God, then God is deprived of the honor that is due to His name alone.

Exo 32:1 (NASB) Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Exo 32:2 (NASB) And Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

Exo 32:3 (NASB) Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

Exo 32:4 (NASB) And he took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

Exo 32:5 (NASB) Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it;

and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."

Exo 32:6 (NASB) So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Exo 32:7 (NASB) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

Exo 32:8 (NASB) "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'"

- B. False gods distort the image of God. and in turn distort God's image in man.

Since idolatry diminishes the glory of God, and since humans are made in the image of God, it follows that idolatry is also detrimental to the very essence of humanity.

Exo 32:25 (NIV) Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies.

Rather than man seeing himself in God's image God is made in man's image.

Isa 44:12 (NIV) The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint.

Isa 44:13 (NIV) The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline

with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine.

C. False gods disappoint.

Isa 44:14 (NIV) He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.

Isa 44:15 (NIV) It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it.

Isa 44:16 (NIV) Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire."

Isa 44:17 (NIV) From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god."

Isa 44:18 (NIV) They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.

Isa 44:19 (NIV) No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?"

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Isa 44:20 (NIV) He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"

Isa 44:21 (NIV) "Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my

servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you.

Isa 44:22 (NIV) I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

Isa 44:23 (NIV) Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.

Isa 44:24 (NIV) "This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,

Isa 44:25 (NIV) who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense,

Isa 44:26 (NIV) who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,'

Isa 44:27 (NIV) who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,'

Isa 44:28 (NIV) who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid.'"

Isa 45:1 (NIV) "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

Isa 45:2 (NIV) I will go before you and will level the mountains ; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.

Isa 45:3 (NIV) I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.

Isa 45:4 (NIV) For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.

Isa 45:5 (NIV) I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,

Isa 45:6 (NIV) so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

III. Conclusion: