



The Good News

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“...have no other gods before Me.”

By Michael McCleary

For those of us who have devoted our lives to God’s service, the term “idol” probably brings to mind incidents in the Old and New Testaments in which we find people worshipping graven images. However, for our friends and neighbors in the world, their first thought might be of *American Idol* or some other similar concept that shows a more modern definition of idolatry. Dictionary.com gives one definition for an “idol” as “*a person or thing regarded with blind admiration, adoration, or devotion*”. Of course, most people who have human idols would generally call themselves “fans” or even “avid fans”; there is a reason why the term “fan” comes from the longer version “*fanatic*”. In fact, it might be that if we were to mention the term “idol”, the concept of the Bible and graven images may not ever come to the minds of our friends and neighbors. However, the Bible has much to say on the subject of idols and we want to consider the following points:

I. God commands that no other “gods” are to be worshiped. In **I Jn. 5:21**, John writes simply “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*” The Old Testament goes into a bit more detail regarding the sin, as in **Lev. 26:1** in which God tells the Israelites that they were not to make any image to “*bow down to it*” as the Lord was their God. But we also find in the New Testament that no man is to be worshiped as a “god” either. In **Acts 12:22-23** God struck Herod dead because he accepted praise from a multitude of people for being a “god”. In **Acts 14:11** and **Acts 28:6** Paul had to restrain certain peoples from worshipping him as a “god”. One of the lessons here is that we must be aware that there are those in the world who do worship graven images and even people as if they were “gods”. We must do all we can to help these misguided souls to come to the truth of the Gospel:

Jehovah is the only God and He alone is worthy of worship.

II. Idols are not limited to graven images or people. In fact, an idol could be defined as “*any image, person, item, or concept that takes up such attention and/or devotion as to distract a person from the service of God*”. How can we define it this way? The New Testament is clear that covetousness (the desperate desire for something) is the same as idolatry. In **Col. 3:5** Paul says “*Therefore put to death...covetousness, which is idolatry.*” Vine’s defines “covetousness” as “*a fixed desire or passion*”. We find in **Ex. 18:21** that we should hate this sin, as **Luke 12:15** tells us that life does not consist of the things that we can possess.

III. Sources of idolatry. There may be many different aspects that could fit in this point, but we want to consider only two at this time, one for each kind of idolatry: 1) A lack of focus can cause the idolatry that is covetousness. Focus is a constant requirement as a Christian, and we must be careful not to get too attached to anything in this world, realizing that our reward awaits in the next life. 2) A desire to see and touch “god” can bring about idols that are graven images. Many people want to make God or some other “god” a personal friend by using images to worship or convince themselves that their “gods” are with them. However, there is no power whatsoever in any image, whether it be of Jehovah, Jesus, or any “non-god”.

Let us devote ourselves to the praise of the Lord Jehovah and focus on His service, keeping ourselves free from any idolatrous influence.