

# Idolatry

## Deuteronomy 12:29-32

**Introduction:** Throughout the entire Bible there is the oft mentioned problem of idolatry. “*There is ever in the human mind a craving for visible forms to express religious conceptions, and this tendency does not disappear with the acceptance, or even with the constant recognition of pure spiritual truths*” (ISBE, Vol. III, p. 1448). The point is that this long-standing problem is a serious needs dealt with on a continual basis.

### I. What Is Idolatry?

- A. The American Heritage Talking Dictionary offers this definition: “**1. a.** An image used as an object of worship. **b.** A false god. **2.** One that is adored, often blindly or excessively. **3.** Something visible but without substance.”
- B. The Old Testament Hebrew word most commonly used for idol is “*teraphim*.” The word literally meant “*household idols*” because that is what they were originally. This word later was applied to all idols. Some examples:
  - 1. Household idols (*Gen. 31:19*).
  - 2. Groves (*Deut 16:21*).
  - 3. Pillars (*Deut. 16:22; Ex. 23:34*).
  - 4. A substitute for Jehovah (*Ex. 32:4*).
  - 5. Even a good thing (*Num. 21:4-9; 2 Kgs. 18:4*).
- C. Idolatry was a problem in New Testament times (*1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Peter 4:3; 1 Jn. 5:21*).

### II. Idolatry Is Forbidden.

- A. Old Testament.
  - 1. One of the Ten Commandments {2<sup>nd</sup>} (*Ex. 20:4-6; Deut. 5:8-9*).
  - 2. Many verses forbid (*Deut. 4:15-19; 27:15*).
  - 3. Not supposed to even mention it (*Ex. 23:13*).
- B. New Testament.
  - 1. Causes a barrier to inheriting the kingdom (*1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:20*).
  - 2. Idolaters cast into lake of fire and brimstone (*Rev. 21:8*).

### III. Where Is The Problem?

- A. It is an abomination which Strong says is “...*something disgusting...an abhorrence...*” (see *Deut. 12:31*).
- B. Idolatry draws one away from God (*Ex. 20:5*).
  - 1. *Isaiah 66:3* uses a word for idol that means “*an empty thing*” (Unger). “*Hence [it] denotes a vain, false, wicked thing, and expresses at once the essential nature of idols and the consequences of their worship.*”
  - 2. Thus, Baal did not answer the prophets (*1 Kgs. 18*) because he could not answer.
  - 3. This point continues in the New Testament as well (see *1 Cor. 8:4; 12:2*).
  - 4. This does not mean that idols are without the ability to affect others. The many cases of the Bible teaches otherwise. It shows that they are nothing, but they are still problematic.
- C. This drawing away from God is exactly why covetousness is referred to as idolatry in the New Testament (*Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5*).
  - 1. To be covetous is to be consumed with the possession of something.
  - 2. “*Covetousness is idolatry because it involves the setting of one’s affections on earthly things and not on things above, and therefore putting of some other object of desire in the place which God should occupy in his people’s hearts*” (Bruce, p. 144). (see *Col. 3:1-2*).

**Conclusion:** Whatever draws one away from God incurs the wrath of God. That wrath is also visited to one who is drawn away. Don’t do it. It is far better to “***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded***” (*James 4:8*).