

CHURCH ENRICHMENT MINISTRIES, INC.

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A SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF

IDOLATRY

“TEACHERS/STUDENTS”

YOU HAVE “HIS WORD” ON IT



Compiled and written by,

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Idolatry condemned by God

The Mosaic law condemned Idolatry as *the most abhorrent of transgressions, and punished such offenses with immediate death by stoning.*

JEHOVAH was the theocratic king of Israel, the head of the civil and religious state, who had delivered his subjects from Egyptian bondage, and received their willing vows of allegiance at Sinai. He had selected them as a people to preserve a knowledge of Himself as the only true God, and to prepare the hearts of men for the coming of the Prince of Peace. His rejection for the worship of senseless wood and stone, and the forsaking of His pure commandments for the iniquitous abomination, of heathen temples, was the grossest rebellion, and most flagrant high-treason. Israel was to be honored in being the living witness and accuser against the idolatries of the world. Isa. 21:9; Jer. 50:2. But the people abused to the utmost these exalted privileges; for while they revered the LORD with their lips, they constantly forsook his solemn services for the adoration of the gods of the nations among whom they chanced to dwell.

All ancient nations who had not the Holy Scriptures to lead them to a knowledge of the true God, because the dupes of superstition. They deified and worshipped animals, the earth, the sea, winds, rivers, fire, stones, plants, the sun, moon, and stars. In process of time, they erected alters to abstract qualities, such as fame, peace, piety, faith; and as corruption of

manners increased, they made images to represent the viler passions of humanity, and worshipped them with licentious practices. When the Israelites sojourned in Egypt, that people worshipped forty-two leading deities, besides fifty local divinities, and deified many animals. **OSIRIS**, the god of the Nile, and the chief divinity of Egypt, personified moral good.

WHAT IS IDOLATRY?

The worship of something created as opposed to the worship of the Creator Himself. Scores of references to **IDOLATRY** appear in the Old Testament. This shows that **IDOLATRY** probably was the greatest temptation our spiritual forefathers faced. While we find bowing down to a statue no temptation, they apparently slipped into **IDOLATRY** constantly. So serious was this sin that the prohibition against the making and worshiping of images was included as the second of the Ten Commandments

Exod 20:4-6

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (KJV)

Israel's ancient neighbors believed there were many gods. They worshipped whatever gods were necessary at a given time. An equally erroneous notion was that these gods either were the **IDOLS** themselves or were represented by **IDOLS**. Some people probably insisted that the idol was only an aid to

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worship and not the object of worship itself. But this distinction must have been hard to keep in mind. That is why the Bible strictly forbids the making of images of any kind-- because they themselves receive the worship-- a worship which God jealously reserves for Himself.

The plagues which the Lord inflicted on Pharaoh and the Egyptians for holding Israel in bondage, were specially designed to show the utter impotency of their idols and idolatrous worship, and to reveal the might of **JEHOVAH**. Num. 33:4 The Nile and its fish were worshipped: "and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood; and the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank." The frog was a sacred animal: "and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt, and they made every thing loathsome. Entire cleanliness of the body was thought to be a religious obligation: "all the dust of the land became lice," so that all were defiled and could not enter their temples. These three plagues came by the delegated hand of Israel's High Priest. Beetles were everywhere sculptured and deified: "the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies," or the great Egyptian beetles. From the cattle of the fields was selected a type of the chief deity: "and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one." The fourth and fifth plagues came directly from the LORD. Ashes was a means of purification: "and Moses sprinkled it up toward-heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast" the means of purification became a source of defilement. Nature's fruitfulness was symbolized by a god, each tree was a deity, and the best fruits were votive-offerings to idols: "and the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both

man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." The wind was one of their deities: "and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts; they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt." The sun and darkness were each worshipped as gods: "and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they saw not one another, neither rose and from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." These four plagues, foreshadowing the ultimate desolation and destruction to befall idolaters, came by the outstretched hand of the Prophet of Israel. The tenth plague was the execution of the final judgment: "and it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle." Justice was tempered with mercy: all the first-born unto Israel were sanctified "therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the first-born of my children I redeem." Ex. 7:12, 13:15

The earliest mention of idols in the hands of Abraham's descendants, is that of the images or **TERAPHIM** which Rachel stole from her father Laban. Gen. 31:19. These were sculptured in the human form, were consulted as oracles, and were thought to be talismans able to avert evil. It was affirmed that they answered questions, and found any things that was lost. This foolish use prevailed for ages. I Sam. 19:13. Ezek.

21:21. All kinds of superstitions are yet prevalent among the Bedouin Arabs. "When a child is born, he is immediately laid in the cradle, and loaded with amulets; and a small bit of soft mud, well steeped in a jar of water, properly prepared by previous charms, is stuck upon its forehead, to obviate the effects of the evil eye; a noxious fascination, proceeding from the aspect of a personified, although **invisible demon**, and consequent upon the admiration of an incautious spectator. The evil eye is feared at all times, and supposed to affect people of all ages, who by their prosperity may be the objects of envy." Prov. 23:6

Despite the severe judgments upon Egypt, the Israelites seem always to have been tainted with the virus of idolatry. Josh. 24:14. Ezek. 20:7 Even when daily fed with manna from heaven and while Moses in the mount was receiving the Commandments from the LORD, they persuaded Aaron to erect a Golden Calf, and worshipped this idol of Egypt. Well might Moses

indignantly break the tablets of the Law upon seeing them perform evil practices. The graven and molten images mentioned in Scripture were not carved or molded in metal, but were figures of wood made by the carpenter, and afterwards overlaid with plates of gold, silver, or inferior metal.

Archaeologists have discovered **IDOLS** of most of the pagan gods mentioned in the Bible, in addition to many unidentified ones. Since the Romans began emperor worship late in the New Testament period, some of the elegant statues of

the Caesars discovered by archaeologists must have been **IDOLS** to be worshipped.

IDOLATRY can take many forms, and it has persisted from the earliest times.

Josh 24:2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. (KJV)

states that Abraham's father served **IDOLS**. Perhaps the earliest reference in the Bible to **IDOLS** is the "household **IDOLS**" or **TERAPHIM** (small clay figurines) which Rachel stole from her father Laban

Gen 31: 34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. (KJV)

The next noteworthy instance of **IDOLATRY** was Aaron's making of the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. This happened when the Israelites lost their patience waiting for Moses to return with the revelation of the true and living God

Exod 32:1-4

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

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4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)

Some have tried to defend Aaron's action by saying that the calf was merely the seat which the invisible God occupied. Certainly Moses did not understand **IDOLATRY** that way. The incident at **BAAL** of Peor

Num 25:1-3

1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. (KJV)

also involved the worship of an idol.

The conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews brought new temptations to worship the object created rather than the Creator.

Josh 24:15

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (KJV)

poses the classic question: Whom will you serve? The gods of Egypt where you have lived? The gods of the Amorites where you now dwell? Or Yahweh the God of Israel? As always, some made the wrong choices

CHAPTER 17:1-13

1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears,

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behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.

3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.

10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest. (KJV)

Judg 18:1-31

1 In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

3 When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here?

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4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go.

7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man.

8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye?

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth.

11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-je'arim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjath-je'arim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war.

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a

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priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

22 And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

27 And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

28 And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehab. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.

30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. (KJV)

A man made an idol for his personal use, but the tribe of Dan took it over for their own use. The Bible does not indicate what shape that statue was in or what god it represented.

Others tried the route of compromise: the mixing of **IDOLATRY** with worship of the true God. So Gideon's ephod was made an object of worship

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Judg 8:24-27

24 And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

25 And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. (KJV)

Much later there was another instance of an otherwise good symbol of God's deliverance turned into an idol. In King Hezekiah's time the people worshiped Moses' bronze snake

Num 21:9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (KJV)

II Ki 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. (KJV)

While **IDOLATRY** was held in check during most of the period of the United Kingdom under David and Solomon, it burst forth again after the separation of the Israelites into two nations in 922 B. C. In fact Jeroboam I made two calf **IDOLS** and installed them at the major cities in the north and the south (Dan and Bethel) for the purpose of keeping his people's religious allegiance within the borders of the new kingdom

IKing 12:27-30

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27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. (KJV)

He was afraid if they returned to Jerusalem they might also return to the Lord, and that would spell political disaster for him.

All the successive monarchs in the northern kingdom of Israel were bad. Invariably their sin involved **IDOLATRY**. Starting with Elijah, the prophets called on the people to turn from the worship of false gods back to reverence for the true God. Hosea's entire book is devoted to preaching against **IDOLATRY**. Under the figure of speech of divorcing the Lord and marrying **BAAL**, he tied together the ideas of **IDOLATRY**, spiritual adultery, and literal adultery

Hosea 2:2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

Hosea 4:2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Hosea 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

Hosea 7:4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

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Hosea 8:5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?

Hosea 13:2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and **IDOLS** according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. (KJV)

Although there were some good kings in the southern kingdom of Judah, the bad ones invariably fell to **IDOLATRY**. This prompted the major prophets-- Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel-- and most of the minor prophets as well to ridicule, condemn, and warn against **IDOLATRY**. A sampling of courageous declarations from these courageous preachers would include

Isa 2:8 :8 Their land also is full of **IDOLS**; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: (KJV)

Jer 50:2 Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her **IDOLS** are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. (KJV)

Ezek 6:4-6 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your **IDOLS**.

5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their **IDOLS**; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

6 In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your **IDOLS** may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. (KJV)

Micah 1:7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the **IDOLS** thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot. (KJV)

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Hab 2:18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb **IDOLS**? (KJV)

Zech 13:2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the **IDOLS** out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. (KJV)

The captivity of the people of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians produced a permanent cure for the sin of **IDOLATRY**. Never again, even to the present time, has Judaism succumbed to **IDOLATRY**.

In the gospels there is virtually nothing about **IDOLATRY**, but in the letters of Paul and the other New Testament books Christians are frequently warned against **IDOLATRY**. The Christians lived in a world filled with **IDOLS**. Both the Romans and the Greeks used them. Paul's observation about Athens in

Acts 17:16

tells it well: "He saw that the city was given over to **IDOLS**."

In the New Testament period the term **IDOLATRY** began to be used as an intellectual concept. **IDOLATRY** became not the actual bowing down before a statue but the replacement of God in the mind of the worshiper.

Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is **IDOLATRY**: (KJV)

points in this direction: "Put to death... covetousness, which is **IDOLATRY**."

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Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (KJV)

At this point the modern believer must understand the vicious nature of **IDOLATRY**. While we may not make or bow down to a statue, we must be constantly on guard that we let nothing come between us and God. As soon as anything does, that thing is an idol.

In addition to material objects such as houses, land, and cars, **IDOLS** can be people, popular heroes, or those whom we love. Objects of worship can even include things like fame, reputation, hobbies, pride, and deeds done in the name of the Lord. **IDOLATRY** is a dangerous and deceitful sin. No wonder prophets preached against it so often and so strongly.

GODS, PAGAN

The false gods and **IDOLS** worshiped by people during Bible times-- especially the false gods of Egypt,

Mesopotamia (Assyria and Babylon),
Canaan,
Greece, and
Rome.

Religion has always played an important part in civilization; in the ancient world it was a powerful force. The pagan civilizations of Bible times worshipped many gods. They had male and female deities, high and low gods, assemblies of gods, priests and priestesses, and temples and sacrifices.

All the forces of nature that could not be controlled or understood were considered supernatural powers to be worshipped and feared.

Our knowledge of the pagan gods of the ancient world comes from the religious literature, **IDOLS**, and other objects discovered by archaeologists. We have also learned from the meanings of names found in the literature from this period. **People in Bible times were often named with sentences and phrases; sometimes they used the name of their favorite god in the compound name. Thus, names very often reflected popular religion.**

Most of the people of the ancient world were polytheistic; they worshipped more than one god.

The people worshipped these gods in the form of representative IDOLS.

This practice is called IDOLATRY.

The nation of Israel, however, was forbidden to make graven images of the one true and living God whom they worshipped

Ex. 20:3-6; Deut. 5:7-10

The pagan nations made statues or images to represent the powers which they worshipped. Most of these **IDOLS** were in the form of animals or men. But sometimes these **IDOLS** represented celestial powers like the sun, moon, and stars, forces of nature, like the sea and the rain; or life forces, like death and truth.

Belief in these *false gods* was characterized by *superstition and magic*.

The people believed that what happened to their gods would also happen to them.

Puzzled by the workings of nature, they assigned the causes of various natural happenings to their gods. Rain was absolutely essential to life in agricultural societies. If it rained, they believed this was caused by **a rain god**. If it did not rain, they thought this was because that god had not sent the rain. *They prayed and sacrificed to the god to send it.*

In time an elaborate system of **beliefs in such natural forces was developed into mythology**. Each civilization and culture had its own mythological structure, but these structures were

often quite similar. The names of the gods may have been different, but their functions and actions were often the same. The most prominent myth to cross cultural lines was that of the fertility cycle. Many pagan cultures believed that the god of fertility died each year during the winter but was reborn each year in the spring. **The details differed among cultures, but the main idea was the same.**

According to the Old Testament, God was a jealous God who permitted no rivals: "You shall have no other gods before Me"

Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7

God's will is all-powerful and man must submit to it. He reveals Himself when He pleases and to whom He pleases, demanding that man obey His revelation. Nevertheless, the Hebrew people sometimes gave in to temptation and worshiped these pagan gods from the surrounding cultures.

THE STUDY OF IDOLS: 11 TIMOTHY 2:15

DO YOU RECOGNIZE ANY OF THESE IDOLS FROM THE SCRIPTURES?

AMON,		ANAMMELECH	II Kings 17:31
ANAT		APHRODITE	
ADRAMMELECH	II Kings 23:13	ASHERAH	
ASHTORETH	I Kings 11:5, 11:33, II Kings 23	ASHIMA	
ASTARTE		ASHUR	
ASHERIM	II Chron 35:5	BAAL	II Kings 10:19
BAALIM	II Chron 35:5	BALL	
BES		BEL	
CHEMOSH	II Kings 23:13	CASTOR & PULLUX (TWINS)	
DAD (HADAD)		DAGON	
DIANA	Acts 19:27	GAD	
GEB		HERMES	
INANNA		ISHTAR	
ISIS		MAAT	
MARDUK		MIN	
MOLECH	Lev. 18:21, 20:2-5	NEHUSHTAN	II Kings 18:4
NERGAL	II Kings 17:30	NIBHAZ	II Kings 17:31
NISROCH	II Kings 19:37, Isa. 37:38	OSIRIS	
RA		REMPHAN	Acts 7:43
RIMMON	II Kings 5:18	SHU	
SIKKUTH (SUKKUTH, RSV)		SUCCOTH BENOOTH	

TAMMUZ Ezek 8:14
VENUS
ZEUS

TARTAK
ZARPANITUM

II Kings 17:31

The many pagan gods that served as a temptation to the Hebrew people may be conveniently grouped into four distinct types: the false gods of

- (1) Mesopotamia (Assyria and Babylon),
- (2) Egypt,
- (3) Canaan, and
- (4) Greece and Rome.

The Pagan Gods of Mesopotamia. The biblical references to pagan gods begin with the statement that Terah, Abraham, and Nahor, when they dwelt on the other side of the River (that is, in Mesopotamia), "served other gods"

<Josh. 24:2>.

Ancient Mesopotamia covered the region that is **roughly equivalent geographically to present-day Iraq and Iran.**

The prominent gods in Mesopotamia were those over heaven, air, and earth, personified by Anu, Enlil, and Enki (Ea). Another group was made up of those that controlled the heavenly bodies: the sun, the moon, and the planet Venus (the "morning star").

In fact, *Ur*, the city from which Abraham came, was the center for worship of *the moon god Sin.*

As Mesopotamian religion developed, each god had his own star, and the worship of the stars became popular with the development of **ASTROLOGY**.

Many of the astrological texts and charts of the ancient Babylonians read like modern horoscopes.

The **worship of the sun, moon, and stars** eventually spread across the entire ancient world.

**The Egyptians,
Canaanites, and
Phoenicians**

all incorporated features of this form of worship. Place names in pre-Israelite Canaan reflect the practice. Beth Shemesh

Josh. 15:10 means house of the sun [god].

Jericho Num. 22:1 probably means moon city.

Joshua's miracle of the sun and the moon standing still takes on greater significance in light of this fact. It was a demonstration of the sovereign power of the Lord God of Israel over the pagan gods identified as the sun and the moon, worshipped in pagan cities <Josh. 10:12-13>.

Another god of ancient Mesopotamia was

Adad, who represented the storm-- either the beneficial rains for the crops or the destructive storms with hurricanes.

Identical with Adad, or Hadad, was Rimmon or Ramman, the Assyrian god of rain and storm, thunder and lightning. The two names, Hadad and Rimmon, were combined in one name, Hadad Rimmon, in one Old Testament reference

<Zech. 12:11>.

In the Old Testament

Rimmon

was an Aramean (Syrian) god who had a temple at Damascus. **Naaman and his royal master worshipped this pagan god**

2 Kin. 5:18

The ancient Babylonian and Assyrian goddess

Ishtar

symbolized Mother Earth in the natural cycles of fertility on earth.

Many myths grew up around this female deity. **She was the goddess of love, so the practice of ritual prostitution became widespread in the fertility cult dedicated to her name.** Temples to Ishtar had many priestesses, or sacred prostitutes, who symbolically acted out the fertility rites of the cycle of nature.

Ishtar has been identified with the

**Phoenician Astarte, the
Semitic Ashtoreth, and the
Sumerian Inanna.**

Strong similarities also exist between

**Ishtar and the
Egyptian Isis, the
Greek Aphrodite, and the
Roman Venus.**

Associated with **Ishtar** was the young god **Tammuz**,
considered both divine and mortal

Ezek. 8:14

In Babylonian mythology

Tammuz

died annually and was reborn year after year,

representing the yearly cycle of the seasons and the crops.

This **pagan belief later was identified with the pagan gods**

TAMMUZ *was wept for by the women of Israel, when the prophet also saw abominable idols in Jerusalem, and Jews with their backs to the Temple worshipping the sun in the east. Ezek. 8.* This idol is thought to be the classical Adonis, whose fabled death by a wild boar was periodically mourned, and his restoration to life corresponding to the departure and return of the sun at the solstices celebrated with immoral festivities.

BAAL and Anat in Canaan.

Another kind of god in both **Babylonia** and **Assyria** was a national god connected with *politics*. In

Assyria it was Ashur, and in

Babylonia it was Marduk,

who became prominent at the time of **HAMMURABI (about 1800 B. C.)**. The ancient ideas about the ordering and governing of the universe were taken over by these two gods. **Marduk**, for example, achieved his prominence by victory over **Tiamat, goddess of the sea**. This cosmic conflict, described also in ancient Sumerian, **Indian and Canaanite myths**, was believed to have established order. **Marduk established order by destroying the goddess Tiamat.**

In contrast, the Bible makes it clear that the forces of nature are not pagan gods that war with one another annually to bring about an established order of the universe.

They are part of the Lord's creation

Genesis 1

The Babylonian god

Bel

Is. 46:1; Jer. 50:2; 51:44

is **the same as Marduk**, the **chief Babylonian god**. *The Babylonian god Merodach*

<Jer. 50:2>,

Merodack was an **alternate spelling of Marduk**, was *the god of war and the patron deity of the city of Babylon.*

Nebo Is. 46:1

**was the Babylonian god of
Education,
Literature,
Writing,
Wisdom, The
Arts, And
Sciences.**

The special seat of his worship was at **Borsippa, near Babylon.** The **Akkadian form of this name is Nabu.**

Nisroch

2 Kin. 19:37

was an **Assyrian god** with a temple in **Nineveh.**

The idol representing this pagan god

an eagle-headed human figure, prominent on the earliest Assyrian sculptures, was being adored by Sennacherib when he was assassinated by his sons. Isa. 37:38.

Sikkuth <Amos 5:26>; (**Sakkuth, RSV**)

was a name given by the Babylonians to the **planet Saturn.**

Succoth Benoth <2 Kin. 17:30> was a **Babylonian goddess**, identified by some scholars with **Zarpanitum**, the mistress of **Marduk.**

Other scholars believe this god is a designation of **Marduk** himself as **Sakkut Binuti, the supreme judge of the world.**

When SHALMANESER, king of Assyria, **deported** the inhabitants of Samaria to farflung regions of his empire, **he also imported** into Samaria settlers from afar to colonize this area of Palestine. *These people brought their religion and their pagan gods with them.*

Among these gods were:

Adrammelech 2 Kin. 17:31, an idol of the Sepharvites worshiped by child sacrifice; the sun and the moon-gods, were all first worshipped in Samaria during the reign of Shalmaneser. 2 Kings 17:29-33.

Anammelech 2 Kin. 17:31, another god revered by the Sepharvites;

Ashima 2 Kin. 17:30, a "goat with short hair," answering to the Grecian Pan; an idol worshipped by the people of Hamath;

Nergal 2 Kin. 17:30, the war god of the men of Cuth; the "man-lion" of Assyria and Babylonia;

Nibhaz <2 Kin. 17:31>, probably a dog-headed man; an idol of the Avites;

Tartak <2 Kin. 17:31>, a donkey, according to Rabbinical tradition, also an idol also worshipped by the Avites.

The Pagan Gods of Egypt.

The gods of Egypt were a constant threat to the Israelites, both during their years in bondage and afterwards. Their deliverance from Egypt was described by the Bible as a great spiritual victory, with the sovereign Lord of Israel defeating the gods of the Egyptians

Ex. 18:11; 2 Sam. 7:23

Egyptian religion reflected the same pagan ideas that were popular in the ancient world, but with different figures.

Horus was the god of Egypt's western delta; he was a human figure with a falcon's head.

Hathor, the corresponding goddess, had a cow's body and a woman's head.

The god **Set** had a man's body and an animal's head.

Anubis had a man's body and the head of an ibis.

Besides gods that were composite with animal forms and human forms, some Egyptian gods were portrayed as completely human.

For instance,

Min,

symbolized fertility.

Amon,

the famous god of Thebes, was the chief Egyptian god.

In ancient Egyptian religion

Osiris

was the *god of the lower world and judge of the dead.*

He was the brother and husband of **Isis** and father (or brother) of **Horus**.

Osiris was killed by **Set**, who was *jealous of his power*.
Isis, the ancient *Egyptian goddess of fertility*, **persuaded the gods** to bring back **Osiris**, her **dead** husband.

The myth is therefore an ancient vegetation cycle.

The Egyptians portrayed many of their gods with animal images.

But they also had their cosmic deities.

The *Egyptians envisioned* the earth as in the shape of a dish with their fertile region (Egypt) in the center. The Nile River flowed from under the earth, bringing fertility to the land. These elements of nature were personified as gods.

Geb, earth, was portrayed as a god lying down.

Nut, heaven, was a goddess who arched her body across from mountain to mountain.

Shu, the air, stood erect, holding up the sky.

The Egyptians also worshiped the sun, moon, and stars.

Ra (also Re),

the sun god,

was the supreme deity of the ancient Egyptians.

He was represented as a man with the head of a hawk or a falcon, crowned with a solar disk and the figure of the sacred asp or cobra. **Ra** appears in the Old Testament in the name of **Joseph's father-in-law, PotiPherah** <Gen. 41:45,50; 46:20>, *priest of On, a city called Heliopolis ("city of the sun")* by the Greeks-**the principal seat of the worship of the sun.** When **Ra** is absent, **Thoth**, the moon, is prominent. *But the moon is definitely inferior to the sun.*

The Egyptians had many other pagan gods. Notable among them was

Maat,

representing the abstract idea of truth, and

Bes,

a grotesque god who watched over childbirth.

The worship of all the gods also involved magic and superstition.

The purpose of these gods apparently was to explain the cycle and forces of life and to insure stability and fertility.

The great PLAGUES OF EGYPT before the EXODUS

Ex. 7:14--12:30

struck at the heart of Egypt's religion. Their fertile land was struck with plagues; their sacred river was turned to blood; their glorious sun was darkened; and even the son of the "divine" Pharaoh was killed.

The wonders that God brought against Egypt clearly demonstrated that their gods were powerless before the true and living God of Israel.

The Pagan Gods of Canaan.

The pagan peoples who inhabited the land of Canaan before the Israelites arrived also worshiped many gods and goddesses. The **Canaanite literature** discovered at **RAS SHAMRA (on the site of the ancient city of Ugarit)** on the Syrian coast provides

abundant information about **several gods mentioned in the Bible.**

The Canaanite god most often referred to is

BAAL,

which means "lord" or "master."

The word could be used as a title for any person who owned something, or any god considered to be a lord or master.

But the word **BAAL** soon became identified with various regional gods that were thought to provide fertility for crops and livestock. As a god who symbolized the productive forces of nature,

BAAL was worshipped with much sensuality Num. 22:41; Judg. 2:13; 1 Kin. 16:31-32.

BAAL appeared in many forms and under many different names. The Bible often makes reference to the **BAALIM** (the plural of Baal; KJV) or to the Baals (NKJV; Judg. 2:11; 1 Kin. 18:18; Jer. 2:23).

The word **BAAL** was often used in forming names, such as **BAAL of Peor** Deut. 4:3; (**Baal-peor**, KJV). **Peor** was the name of a mountain in Moab. **BAAL of Peor** was an idol of Moab (probably to be identified with Chemosh) which Israel was enticed to worship with immoral practices. In several passages the idol is simply called **Peor** Nu. 25:18; Josh. 22:17.

BAAL-Berith, which means "lord of the covenant," is a name under which **Baal** was worshiped in the time of the

judges at Shechem, where he had a temple. In Judges 9:46 he is called simply the god Berith.

BAAL-Zebub, which means "lord of the fly," was "the god of Ekron" <2 Kin. 1:2-3,6, 16>-- the name under which Baal was worshiped at the Philistine city of Ekron. This god was worshiped as the producer of flies, and consequently as the god that was able to defend against this pest. In the New Testament, reference is made to Beelzebub, a heathen god considered the chief evil spirit by the Jewish people Matt. 10:25; 12:27; Luke 11:18-19. The Pharisees called him "the ruler of the demons" Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, and Jesus identified him with Satan.

This word **BAAL** was also used in personal names, but when the worship of **Baal** became a problem in Israel, **BAAL** was replaced by Bosheth, which means "shame" (probably because it was shameful to have the name of a pagan god as part of one's name and because **BAAL** was a shameful god). For instance, Merib-**BAAL** 1 Chr. 8:34; 9:40, the name of the son of Jonathan, became Mephibosheth 2 Sam. 9:6-13, and Esh-**BAAL** 1 Chr. 9:39 became Ishbosheth 2 Sam. 2:8.

The Canaanite god **BAAL** was known as Zebel **BAAL** ("prince **BAAL**") or Aliyan **BAAL** ("**BAAL** the strong"), as well as by a number of other titles. **BAAL** was considered the god who brought rain and fertility (especially good harvests and animal reproduction). In a number of passages in Canaanite literature he is identified as Hadad, another god believed to bring the rains, storms, and fertility. This god Hadad is the god Adad of Assyria.

Archaeologists have discovered rock carvings that show **BAAL** holding a club in his right hand and a lightning flash

with a spearhead in his left. These symbols identify him as the god of rain and storm. **BAAL** is also known as the "rider of the clouds," a term showing his power over the heavens. <Psalm 68:4>, "Extol Him who rides on the clouds," gives this title to the God of Israel-- a declaration that the Lord, and not the false god **BAAL**, is ruler over the heavens.

BAAL and related deities are also portrayed as a mating bull, symbolizing fertility. It is no surprise that while Moses was on Mount Sinai, receiving the Ten Commandments from the Lord, the disobedient Israelites fashioned a golden calf to worship <Exodus 32>. Jeroboam I, king of Israel, acted in accordance with this pagan idea by making two calves of gold, setting up one at Bethel and the other at Dan <1 Kin. 12:26-30>.

During the history of the Israelites, a rivalry developed between **BAALISM** and the true worship of the Lord <Jer. 23:27>. Perhaps the best example of this rivalry was the conflict between Elijah and the prophets of **BAAL** on Mount Carmel <1 Kings 18>. Elijah's challenge to them to bring down fire from heaven was appropriate, because the Canaanites believed that **BAAL** could shoot lightning flashes from the sky. Elijah's mocking of **BAAL** struck at the heart of their claims; he knew that **BAAL** was powerless, that the prophets of **BAAL** had misled the people, and that only the Lord God of Israel was alive and able to answer. In the struggle to the death between true religion and false religion, Elijah knew that **BAALISM** and its prophets had to be destroyed.

BAAL and ASHTORETH, supposed to be the sun and the moon-gods, were the chief male and female deities of the Phoenicians. With the former is identified **Merodach** or **Bel** of the **Babylonians** (Jer. 50:2); and with the latter

the "QUEEN OF HEAVEN" (Jer. 7:18; 44:17,18), and the classical Venus.

Baal also represented the principle of physical life, the generative power of nature; and **Ashtoreth** the productive power.

Human victims were sacrificed to Baal, and the most impure rites were paid to Ashtoreth.

In Canaanite mythological texts **BAAL** is sometimes called the son of **DAGON**.

DAGON Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:2-7; 1 Chr. 10:10

DAGON, "the fish-god" of the Philistines, had temples at Gaza and Ashdod **Samson** destroyed the first temple, and in the other the idol broke to pieces before the ark of God.

1 Sam. 5:1-9.

And was the chief god of the ancient Philistines, A grain and fertility god whose most famous temples were at Gaza and Ashdod. With the recent discovery of documents at ancient EBLA in Syria, it is clear that **DAGON**, or **Dagan**, was a much more ancient and prominent god. These texts show that **DAGON** was being worshipped before Abraham entered Canaan about 2000 B. C. **DAGON** continued to be worshipped by the Canaanites up to the time of Christ. In the APOCRYPHA mention is made of a temple of **DAGON** at Azotus in 147 B. C. 1 Macc. 10:83-84.

Azotus was a later name for Ashdod,

one of the five chief Philistine cities.

Like the myths of so many pagan religions, **Canaanite stories** claim that **BAAL** came to prominence **by defeating other gods.**

One of BAAL's enemies was the sea monster known as Lotan.

The Old Testament's reference to **Leviathan** <Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps. 104:26; Is. 27:1>

corresponds to this word. **But in the Bible Leviathan is simply a powerful creature in the sea that man cannot control, and not like Lotan-- a pagan god in the form of a twisting serpent.**

BAAL's mistress or lover was Anat (or Anath), the goddess of war, love, and fertility. She was the virgin goddess who conceives and was also the victor over **BAAL's** enemies. With the help of **Shapash, the sun or luminary, Anat** rescued **BAAL** from **Mot (the god of death).** *Her victories in battle were vicious; she is described as up to her hips in gore with heads and hands from the enemies stacked high.* Thus, **Anat** was the **driving force in the annual fertility cycle of BAAL.**

Anat is sometimes identified with the queen of heaven, to whom the Jews offered incense in Jeremiah's day

Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19,25.

But some scholars identify the "queen of heaven" with the Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

Anat was the **patroness of sex and passion, lewd figurines of this nude goddess** *have been discovered at various archaeological sites in Palestine.*

The goddess Asherah <1 Kin. 15:13; 2 Chr. 15:16>;

(Asherahs,

Judg. 3:7

was portrayed as the wife of

El (or sometimes **BAAL**)

in **Canaanite mythology.**

Asherah

was a favorite deity of women.

Some of the wives of David and Solomon worshiped her 1 Kin.

15:13,

as Ahab's wife, Jezebel, also probably did 1 Kin. 16:31-33.

King Asa suppressed the worship of **Asherah** <1 Kin. 15:13>, and

King Josiah destroyed "the articles that were made for **BAAL**, for **Asherah**, and for all the host of heaven" <2 Kin. 23:4>.

The word **asherah** also refers to a **wooden pole, or cult pillar,** that stood at Canaanite places of worship-- **perhaps the trunk of a tree with the branches chopped off-- and associated with the worship of the goddess Asherah.**

Other pagan gods in addition to **BAAL** and his companions were worshipped by the **Canaanites.**

Molech

was the **national deity of the Ammonites** <Lev. 18:21; Jer. 32:35>,

MOLECH, MOLOCH, or MILCOM, MALCHAM, the kingly deity of the Ammonites, appears to have been first worshipped by the Jews when Solomon, in his old age, was beguiled by his many wives into idolatry. This image was made of brass, hollow within, and had the head of a calf. Their worship was accompanied by parents sacrificing their children to it, being cast alive into its red-hot hands.

These murderous rites were celebrated in the Valley of **Hinnom** (I Kings 11:17), also called **Tophet**, probably "because they used to make a noise with drums that the father might not hear the cries of his child and have pity upon him." Subsequently refuse offal was cast into this valley, and fires were kept constantly burning to purify the air. So abhorrent because its memory, that later generations of the Hebrews gave the name **Ge Hinnom or Gehenna** to the **place of eternal torments we call HELL**.

The god **Molech** *also appears in the Old Testament as Milcom* 2 Kin. 23:13; Zeph. 1:5; (**Malcham, KJV**) and in the **New Testament as Moloch Acts 7:43**.

Chemosh

<Judg. 11:24; 2 King. 23:13>

was the **national god of the Moabites and Ammonites**.

CHEMOSH was the deity of the first two nations, and **essentially identical with Molech**. Num. 21:29; I Kings 11:7.

This deity was apparently compounded with **Athtar, the Venus star**, and **so is thought to be a pagan god associated with the heavenly bodies**.

Chemosh *has been identified with*
BAAL of *Peor*,
BAAL-Zebub, Mars, and Saturn,
as the star of ill-omen.

Dibon <Num. 21:30>, a town in Moab north of the River Arnon, was the chief seat of its worship.

Like **Molech**, **Chemosh** was **worshiped by the sacrifice of children as burnt offerings**, but *scholars believe it is incorrect to identify Chemosh directly with Molech*. **Solomon sanctified Chemosh** as a **part of his tolerance of pagan gods** <1 Kin. 11:7>, but **Josiah abolished its worship** <2 Kin. 23:13>.

Human sacrifice was made to Chemosh, according to <2 Kings 3:27>, which reports that **Mesha, king of Moab**, offered his eldest son as a burnt offering on the wall of **Kir Hareseth**, the **ancient capital of Moab**.

MARS was the god of carnage and bloodshed. It was upon **MARS' HILL** the famous **Areopagus** where sat the chief and most ancient Athenian court that Paul

discoursed so vehemently against the idolatry of the city, and declared unto the people "**THE UNKNOWN GOD**" to whom one of their numerous altars had been erected.

Ashtoreth

1 Kin 11:5,33; 2 Kin. 23:13 was the ancient Syrian and Phoenician **goddess of the moon, sexuality, sensual love, and fertility.**

In the Old Testament **Ashtoreth** is often associated with the worship of **BAAL**. The **KJV** word **Ashtaroth** is the plural form of **Ashtoreth**; the **NKJV** has **Ashtoreths** <Judg. 2:13; 1 Sam. 12:10>; (also see Ishtar above).

Remphan

Acts 7:43; (**Rephan**, RSV, NIV, NEB; **Rompha**, NASB) was an idol worshipped by Israel in the wilderness.

CHIUM or **REMPHAN** is supposed to have been an Egyptian idol revered by some of the Israelite, who carried with them his small tabernacles, while traveling through the deserts of Arabia.

This may be the same pagan god as **Chiun** Amos 5:26; (**Kiyyun**, NASB; **Kaiwan** your star-god, RSV), or **Saturn**.

Nehushtan,

literally, "bronze serpent-idol,"
was the *contemptuous* name given by
King Hezekiah

to the bronze serpent made by Moses in the wilderness <Num. 21:8-9>,
when people began to worship it <2 Kin. 18:4>.

Gad <Is. 65:11>;

(**Fortune, RSV, NIV, NASB; Fate, NEB**)
was a heathen deity worshipped along with
Meni <Is. 65:11>; (Destiny, RSV, NIV, NASB; Fortune, NEB).
Scholars are uncertain about the exact identity of these
pagan gods.

The Pagan Gods of Greece and Rome.

Only a few of the ancient Greek and Roman gods are
mentioned in the New Testament.

Zeus <Acts 14:12-13; 19:35>;

(**Jupiter, Mars, Mercurius, and Diana, KJV**)
was the supreme gods of the Romans, corresponding to similar
ones of the
ancient Greeks.

According to Greek mythology,

Zeus was the ruler of heaven and father of other gods and
mortal heroes.

He was identified by the ROMANS as Jupiter.

JUPITER, or **Zeus** (Ammon of the Egyptians), **was
the supreme god, all-powerful.** A temple
dedicated to his worship stood without the walls of

Lystra, in Asia Minor, when **several of the apostles preached at that town.**

Hermes <Acts 14:12>; (Mercurius, KJV; Mercury, NEB)

was the Greek god of
commerce,
science,
Invention, and
cunning.

He also served as messenger and herald for the other gods. **Hermes was identified by the Romans with Mercury**, who was **generally pictured with winged shoes and hat, carrying a winged staff.**

He was the protector of roads and boundaries
and he guided departed souls to
Hades (*Greek word for Hell*)

MERCURY was the messenger of **Jove**, also the patron of learning and eloquence. The credulous people of **Lystra**, upon the miraculous healing of a cripple, sought to pay divine honors to **Paul and Barnabas**, exclaiming: "**The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.**" Acts 14:8-18. As **Barnabas** was **identified with Jupiter**, he was probably a large man of noble bearing, while **Paul as Mercury** was slighter in figure, younger, and gifted with persuasive eloquence.

Diana <Acts 19:24,27-28,34-35>,

in Roman mythology, was the goddess of the moon, hunting, wild animals, and virginity.

Diana is the same as the Greek goddess Artemis (RSV, NIV, NASB),

virgin goddess of the hunt and the moon.

When Paul preached in Ephesus, the Ephesians were in an uproar because the gospel threatened to destroy the profit of the artisans who crafted silver shrines of Diana.

DIANA, the goddess of the chase and of chastity among the Romans, was in Ephesus differently represented as a many-breasted mummy, was invested with the immoral attributes of Ashtarte or Ashtoreth, and was adored with great pomp:

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Acts 19:24-41.

The Twin Brothers <Acts 28:11>;

(Castor and Pollux, KJV, NIV, NEB)

is a translation of a Greek word which means "boys of Zeus."
In Greek mythology, Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Zeus.

After Castor and Pollux died, they were transformed by Zeus into the constellation Gemini.

They were regarded as the special protectors of distressed sailors.

The Alexandrian ship in which Paul sailed from Malta to Puteoli had a **carving** of the Twin Brothers as its **figurehead**.

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament the people of God were surrounded by pagan gods.

The apostle Paul declared to the philosophers of Athens, "I perceive that in all things you are very religious" Acts 17:22

In the city of **Athens**, **IDOLS** of pagan gods stood on every street corner. **The Athenians**, perhaps **fearing that they had slighted some deity**, had even **erected an altar "to the unknown god"** Acts 17:23.

"The One whom you worship without knowing," said Paul, **"Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands"** Acts 17:23-24.

Every pagan nation of antiquity appears to have recognized the necessity of paying homage to supreme, supernatural beings, and of offering sacrifices to propitiate the divine favor, and to atone for transgressions. The universality of sacrifices is shown

by the records of all former people, and by existing customs in all parts of the world.

The Hebrews offered oxen, sheep and goats, only, among domestic quadrupeds, thus excluding wild beasts and all animals not used for food.

This practice differed widely from the rites of idolaters.

Horses were sacrificed to the sun,

Hogs to Ceres,

Dogs to Hecate,

Wolves to Mars, The Arabians offered up **camels**.

These sacrifices were always made by slaughter or fire. Altars were originally built of earth, or of unwrought stone. They were especially erected on eminences, hill-tops, and occasionally under remarkable trees. With all, an Altar was a sanctuary, a place of safety for such as fled to it for refuge. Idolaters raised Altars upon every memorable occasion, such as a victory, or an earthquake.

Probably a roof supported on columns originally protected idol images from inclement weather. Afterwards walls were erected, till in time magnificent edifices were build of the rarest materials. These first temples were called groves, in remembrance of the Altar services previously held within groves of stately trees. Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor abound with remains of these temples. That at Miletus was notable when Paul visited that city. Acts 20.

All the nations of antiquity were addicted to serpent worship, having received it from the Egyptians. The latter consecrated the horned serpent to Ammon, and interred it afterwards in his temple. Dr. Kalisch states: "Almost throughout the east the serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle, of the spirit of disobedience and contumacy. A few exceptions only can be discovered. The Phoenicians adored that animals as a beneficent genius, and the Chinese consider it as a symbol of superior wisdom and power, and ascribe to the kings of heaven bodies of serpents. The Egyptians represented the eternal spirit of Kneph, the author of all good, under the

mythic form of that reptile, but they applied the same symbol for the god of revenge and punishment (Tithrambo)."

The singular and fantastic conceptions held by heathen nations on many religious and other subjects that were partially revealed to the Hebrews by Holy Scriptures, are well illustrated by the mode in which the Hindoo people thought the world to be upheld. Even the Jews, destitute of all scientific knowledge of the earth's creation save what was furnished in Genesis, imagined its body to be an immense disc, supported like the flat roof of an ancient house by pillars (Job 9:6), which rested on solid foundations (Job 38:4,6); but where these foundations were on which the "sockets" of the pillars rested, none could tell.

God is a jealous God, who will not give His glory to another. His commandment is that we should have no other before Him, and Him only should we serve.

WHAT IS IDOLATRY? *IS IT STILL SIN TODAY?* 9/26/97

Notes:

"Whatever passes as a cloud between
The mental eye of Faith, and things unseen,
Causing that brighter world to disappear,
Or seem less lovely, or its hopes less dear,
This is our world, our Idol, though it wear
Affection's impress, or Devotion's air."

Only the sovereign
Lord God
has the power to rule the world;
only the **LORD JESUS CHRIST** has the
power to rise from the dead as the conqueror,
establishing once and for all our everlasting life with
Him.

AMEN!

Thou shalt have no other god's before me!

**Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only
shalt thou serve.**

**Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess
that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father**

Glossary of Scriptures relating to Idolatry

Exod 20:4-6

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (KJV)

Josh 24:2

2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. (KJV)

Gen 31:34

34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. (KJV)

Exod 32:1-4

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)

Judg 8:24-27

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Notes:

24 And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

25 And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. (KJV)

Num 21:9

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (KJV)

II Ki 18:4

4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. (KJV)

IKing 12:27-30

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. (KJV)

Hosea 2:2

2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; (KJV)

Hosea 4:2

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Notes:

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. (KJV)

Hosea 4:13

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. (KJV)

Hosea 7:4

4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened. (KJV)

Hosea 8:5

5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? (KJV)

Hosea 13:2

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. (KJV)

Isa 2:8

8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: (KJV)

Jer 50:2

2 Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. (KJV)

Ezek 6:4-6

4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

6 In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. (KJV)

Micah 1:7

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Notes:

7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot. (KJV)

Hab 2:18

18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? (KJV)

Zech 13:2

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. (KJV)

Col 3:5

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (KJV)

Eph 5:5

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (KJV)
