

Introduction

Think of it. A town without a church. One cloudy, rainy day of the Christmas holidays of 1957, Roger Clay a salesman, whose territory takes in the lower Rio Grande Valley, asked the proprietor of a filling station in Olmito, Texas to direct him to the home of the Baptist minister. "We don't have a Baptist preacher here," the filling station operator said. "In fact, we haven't even got a church." Well the story went on to say as was told in the Home Mission magazine in the December issue, that Mr. Roger Clay went back home and talked to his pastor about it, told about these people and then he personally went in and canvassed the community and found 50 Baptist families residing in that churchless town. And the result was that on October 2⁶, a new church was opened and the subject of his text was "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already unto harvest." Now

he said, are you ready to go to work in the spiritual harvest? Are you ready to put everything else aside and go out and win souls? He pointed out that God was ready and God was waiting for them.

How like our picture and situation today. As we think about the beginning of a new church, or the nucleus that will

New month ago - Drawing Board - Maps

or dwelling places such as a temple. And third, they empowered instruments such as charms or objects to be worshipped. And fourth, pictured as symbols of deities revered, though not worshiped. These images may be shapeless blocks or carved figures or objects of nature, such as an animal, sun, moon, stars. The visible objects that may sometime be considered by the uninstructed as deities.

Now an idol is usually considered as either the deity itself or his permanent tenement. A fetish is an object which has been given a magical or divine power either because of its having been the temporary home of the deity or because it has been formed or handled or otherwise spiritually influenced by such deity.

The idol is usually something for the community; the fetish is something that is private. The idol is protective; the fetish is usually not for the common good.

The second commandment was not an attack upon artists and sculptors, but upon idolaters. The decoration by means of graven figures was not aciently condemned. The graven serpent was probably destroyed in Hezzicah's time because it had ceased to be an ancient artistic relic and become an object of worship. So the destruction of the ark and the altar and the temple as well.

When an image becomes the object of worship or a means by

-2-
soon become a new church. And all of this revolves around our worship of God. Thus, I've taken my text from Joshua 24:15.

In his book, The Springs of Life, Dr. James Reed said, "Do you ever think about God? If you do not, there is something wrong with you." Then Dr. Reed went on to say. He put his finger on the root of our modern trouble - the wont of thinking about God. But when we really think about God, we have our hand on a door which will lead us out into a new world.

In the rush and hurry and tension of life today, when the whole world seems to be poured down upon us with the flood of events beyond our control, I wonder if it wouldn't be well if we shouldn't stop and listen in silence and think about God and talk to him. I think the key of this, of trusting and obeying him. Have you ever taken time to remember the compassion of God, the gentleness of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." Lam. 3:22-23.

He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up the wounds. He telleth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names. God is our Lord, and a great power and under-

-3-
standing is infinite. (Psalms 147:3-5)

Oh, God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

Thus Joshua confronts his people with a proposition that we need to clearly note this morning. As first of all we shall think about the Amorites as he was speaking of these people, of the hill country, whether they would serve the Gods of their fathers, the gods on the other side of the flood, the Amorites. They populated the hill country as opposed to the plains and they were noted as mountaineers. I would suppose you would call them. But Joshua here gives the proposition. And I would like for us to note this. As to whether or not they are going to worship the true, living God. Or whether or not they are going to let other gods displace the only God. So let us follow this line of thought. The picture given in the Bible, the production of false gods, the prohibition of false gods, the prevalent gods of today, and last of all, the personal choice.

I. The picture given in the Bible.

From the Bible we discover the images as used here are visible represented of supposedly super-natural or divine beings or power. First, they themselves were objects of worship. Second, they were pictures or the embodiment of

Ezekiel 21:20. They were easily hidden. (Gen 31:34)

Fourth image of jealousy. It is not certain what this

statue was, which was set up by the door or the enter-gate

of the Jerusalem temple. In Ezekiel 8:3. It was no doubt

some idol, perhaps the image of the Asherah, 2 Kings 21:7,

which certainly had previously been set up in the temple and

may have been there again the day of Apostry.

Jealousy is not the name of the idol. But it was probably

called image of jealousy. Because in a peculiar manner, this

particular image seems to have been drawing the people from

the worship of Jehovah and therefore, provoking him to jealousy.

Fifth, chambers of Imagery. Does Ezekiel mean that in

his heart every man, in his chambers of imagery, was an idol

worshiper? Or does this refer to actual wall decorations in

the Jerusalem temple? (Eze. 8:11-12.) Many take this to be

literal. E'-Phod

Sixth Ephod. There is no doubt that this was the name of

the vestment or ritual loin cloth of linen worn by common

priests and temple servants. Also of the high priest. Now we

read where Gideon made an ephod with 1700 shekles of gold

and set this in Orphrah where it became the object of worship.

(Judges 17:4) Micah provided an ephod as well as an image and

pillar for his sanctuary in 1 Samuel 21:9.

which a false god was worshipped, it became antagonistic to the first and second commandments, respectively.

We know that when the first man was born, that there was

no totem pole in his fist or in his hand; nor did the earliest

historic men possess images. They lacked temples, altars,

idols and so forth. Therefore, it is suggested that some of

these early known deities were symbols that came up and were

found in the moon, the sun, the stars and other great forces

of nature. Which seems to be the first to affect mankind.

In the earliest Egyptian text, the sun appears to be as

divine and the moon also and the stars.

The earliest images were probably natural objects which

because of their peculiar shape or functions were thought of

either as divine or as migrations occurred.

The highest development of image worship has occurred

among the most civilized people. Most deities and idols are

less numerous in the early period than in the latter days of

religion. For example, in India, Assaria, Babylonia, and

Egypt, all of the experts agree that idols are not found among

uncivilized people. Such as the bushman or the eskimos.

Images of the gods presupposed the power of discrimination.

And the earliest idols known among the Semites were rude

stone pillars or unshapen blocks, probably adored not for

themselves but for the spirit. Deities and idols are multiplied easily.

Idolatry, outside of the Hebrew kingdom, was never made a crime against the state. Until the days of Constantine in 392 A.D., not only did they place the sacrifices among the capital crimes but they placed a penalty upon anyone who entered a heathen temple.

Of course, the dignity of the image from the fact that men is said to have been made in God's image and Christ is said to be in the image of the invisible God. The heathen thought of the sun and the stars as being images of the gods, but the Hebrews, though Jehovah's temple was images, thought of normal humanity as in some true sense possessed a sacred resemblance to deity.

The many ordinary terms used by the Hebrews for an idol or an image means copy or a likeness or a representation. But it was a particular form, or a graven image, wood or stone, or molten image, or one cast out of stone.

Many of these idols in the days of Israel's journey through Canaan, were connected with reproduction or mysteries or counter-part of Baal or Astarte.

Perhaps a goddess, but an ordinarily used one in the Old Testament such a sacred tree or a stump of tree planted in

the earth as Deut. 16:21 or a pole made of wood set up near an altar. (Judges 6:26), (1 Kings 16:33, Isaiah 17:8)

The Bible gives us the picture of these idol worship and many different things give us the general idea of it. Let me list five or six of these just not for just information, sake if nothing else:

First, the golden calf. And Jeriboham's calves is a reference given in the Bible.

Two, the brazen serpent. (Numbers 21:4-9, 2 Kings 18:4)

Now the serpent, because of the strange lightening like power of poisonous attack and its power to shed its own skin, its power to paralyze its prey has been the most universally revered of all creatures. In fact, living serpents or live serpents were kept in some of the temples. So the Cobra was the guardian of royalty in Egypt, symbolizing the kingly power of life and death. In mythology the serpent was always considered a bad demon enemy of the creator. Emblem of wisdom or a life-giving God. Now Hezekiah destroyed this idolatry worship in 2 Kings 18:8.

Ter'ä-Phim -

Third, teraphim. This are usually considered household gods. But this does not necessarily include the idea that they were images of ancestors. That they were images we find

appears in 1 Samuel 13:6, Judges 17:5 and Judges 18:14. They were sometimes carried with the travelers of armies. (Gen. 31:30)

of the ear they have to carry, while God carries his own. You see, these religious people were carrying their Gods, their religion was a burden to them. The very word for idol means a thing of naught or a thing of grief. But believers have a God who carries them. And that they can lean upon for help.

The great God in Israel required that these idols be put away. It is not kind dealing to let a man alone when his house has a deadly disease. At the same time, it is a hard experience to one to give up an idol. And he came near ruining his life.

Think about Jehosaphat. He nearly lost his life at Ramath-Gilead because he made an idol of friendship with the house of Ahab. And sorrow followed.

But if we could see the difference between these gods and God said, thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image in any light. In these words he forbids us to attempt a representation of him in any visible figure. And briefly enumerates all forms of which superstition had already begun to change his truth into a lie.

For the Persians we know worshipped the sun. And the foolish heathens made for themselves as many gods as they saw stars in the heavens. There was scarcely an animal indeed

II. The production of false gods. Judges 17:5-6, 4

The production of false gods. We think of these images and sculptors which represented an object of worship or the embodiment of deity as Exodus 20:4-5. They were made of silver and of gold, wood or other metal. Some were called molten images. They consisted of plates of metal over a wooden frame or over a molten body. And were termed graven images. When the wood or stone they were made by graven

tools or other instruments and were also called graven images. The process of the manufacture of these is described in Isaiah, in Jeremiah 10:9, Isaiah 40:19-20. Some were small, especially those designed as household gods, (Gen. 21:34) Some of these idols were as large as a human being. (1 Samuel 19:16) Or such idols as erected by Nebuchadnezzar were colossal. (Daniel 2:13)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Laban has images which Racheal was justly accused of stealing. (Gen. 21:30)

The Egyptians made figures of the gods to serve as objects in worship and in the innermost sanctuaries of their temples, laid the symbols of a god and a sacred animal.

The Cannanite nations has idols which they had manufactured and these Israelites in taking the land were ordered to destroy them. (Exodus 23:24)

The second commandment was directed against the idolatry. (Exodus 20:4-5, Deut. 5:8-9) It is forbidden that a man should bow down to an image or a statue or a picture.

Their helplessness was discovered when the ark of the Lord was in the temple of Dagon. (1 Samuel 5:3-5)
When the Israelites borrowed the idolatrous practices from their neighbors, two well-marked stages were traceable in the progress of the era. First, they attempted to worship Jehovah by means of images. "Jeroboam". Second they tirely departed from Jehovah and the idols they made were designed to represent other gods.

The New Testament church members who lived in heathen communities were required to take precaution against compromising themselves with idols. (Acts 15:29)

Well in about 7 A.D. idols or image worship, however, was introduced by Empress Irene in the Eastern church. And the second council of Nice gave them Ecclesiastical sanction and approval.

They manufacture of these gods, the production of them. They took their original ideas, such as a tree out of the forest, (Jeremiah 10:3) and with industrious toil they formed this to make it into an idol. They fastened it with the nails. It was a clumsy workmanship. Not anything beautiful.

So that all that an idol is and does, it owes to man. It could not make itself and it cannot help itself. Thus, the manufacture of these idols is very interesting.

As Judge L. O. Lamar, of the United States Supreme Court, who was travelling in Ohio, many years ago. Before him was a man, an agnostic, who was like perpetual motion. Talking about his infidelity and Judge Lamar reached over and touched the talker, introduced himself and said, I believe you're an agnostic. Yes, said the talker. Well, said the great judge, you talk a great deal not to know anything. The talking ceased.

So you see the fool hath said in his heart, there is no god. As a man once who lived on a Great Prairie when told of a vast ocean of water, thousands of miles in extent, he laughed and scoffed at the idea. But the ocean rolled on majestically, just the same. When people deny God, it does not change the majesty of God in the least. But it does make us sorry for anyone who can be so hemmed in by his horizon or ignorance.

III: The prohibition of false gods.
A man should be forbidden to give way to these gods, these idols. For as Isaiah 46:7 says, they bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him. Our great God is the burden bearer. The solemn truth of Isaiah is the contrast between the idols

I should like to give to you what some of the outstanding scholars have said about the gods of today.

First, Carl Barth - the church is the place in which false gods are established and worshipped. For the church has succumbed to the temptation of belief in the goodness and power of their own traditions, morally and religious activity. Thus she does exactly the same as those believing in money, in sports, in techniques, in sex, or simply in the glory of comfortable living. It is the church's high calling to demonstrate that she believes in that God who has redeemed a man from all false gods.

Second, Andrew Blackwood - in this order, he gives the idols and the false gods of today. Self, money, pleasure, sex, romance, amusements, sports, education - collectively secularism and humanism. He said we need to return to the first commandment.

Momelle Cailliet of Princeton Seminary - the false gods of our times are born of a pride of life.

Edward Carnell of Fuller Seminary - power and pleasure. Each assumes that man can complete his life by his own resources.

Second, God of power draws on science and the God of pleasure thrives on the traditional fruit of material prosperity.

Frank Gabelein - materialism and self-indulgence by advertising the entertainment world, the popular press, moral

which the Egyptians did not consider as an image of God. The Greeks appeared wiser than the rest, because they worshipped the deity under the human form.

But it is prohibited. First in the writings of Moses. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire. Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude. Lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure. (Deut. 4:15-18) This is to show that whatsoever desires were visible representations of him are guilty of departing from him.

We know that Paul taught that we were not to give way in Acts 17:29 to the making of Gods.

Augustine said they dedicated the vilest and meanest materials to represent the sacred, immortal God and give them some a human form, and some a brutal one and some a double - sex and different bodies and they confer the name of God upon images which if animated would be accounted monsters.

The idols of the heathen are silver and gold - the work of man's hands. Now the prophet concludes from the very materials that they are no gods whose images are made of gold or silver. Take it for granted. It is a foolish imagination and he mentions gold and silver rather than clay or stone as the splendor of the value of the material. May procure remembrance

-14-

for the idol. And it was madness on the part of mortal man. Augustine goes on to say that it is unlawful not only to make these images but to worship them and to erect them and to refer to them as God.

It hath been decreed that no pictures be had in the churches and that what is worshipped or adored be no painted on the walls. But most remarkable is what Augustine, elsewhere, sites from Varro and to the truth of which he subscribes. That they who first introduced images of the gods removed fear and added error. He next explained that the fear of God is thereby diminished and even destroyed. Since the foolish, ridiculous and absurd fabrications of idols would easily bring his deity into content. He point out that some of these images and these idols in the temples were most immoral and that they needed to be covered up.

To what purpose then was the erection of so many crosses of wood and stone and silver and gold everywhere in the temples if it had been fully and faithfully believed that Christ died for their sins.

You see the erection of these idols perhaps originated when people wanted to pay respect or honor to the dead. And heathen stole her father's idols and then later on there was the manufacture of these idols. And of course, we read how Abraham's forefathers worshipped idols. (Joshua 19:2) But The

-15-

Israelites for this Moses, they said, we would not what has become of him. Make us God, which shall go before us. Therefore they called for a golden calf to be made in the wilderness.

But our Lord has prohibited, not only the erection of statues but the representation of him. And the consecration of any monuments which might be objects of worship.

1. Thessalonians 1:9 (Ye turn to God from idols.) During the Indian mutiny in the city of Lucknow, an English child was playing with her nurse. The rebels were coming and the danger, a brave soldier dashed out of the city gates and picked up the child and got back to safety at the risk of his life, he saved the little one. But no amount of persuasion moved the child to kiss her deliverer. "You took me away from my flowers," she said. She did not understand that to take her way from the flowers was the only means of saving her life. I think in our prayers we're often ignorant of the condition of our real welfare. Our heavenly father sometimes tries to get us away from our idols and yet we want our flowers.

Thus we come to our next point here.

IV. The prevalent gods of today.

As we look about us in our times, what are the significant idols and gods which we have in this day in which we live.

are our usefulness. We are more anxious for the smooth preaching than we are faithful Bible teaching.

Now this brings us down to

V. the personal choice

As we think about the personal choice we need to get back on to the idea of the oneness of God. (Monotheism) this doctrine is fundamental in both the Old and New Testaments. The conception of God is creator of heaven and of earth. Abraham was called up out of his country to worship the one true and living God even though other idols were worshipped in his country. He is an undivided God and he calls for an undivided worship from an undivided worshiper. This is the key to the saying that God is a jealous God. That does not mean that Jehovah is governed by petty jealousy. It means that in the very nature of the case, he must demand an undivided heart and an undivided worship. If there is only one God, he should be worshipped by all men.

But God was recognized as God of the whole world. (Psalms 24:1) The supremacy of the one, true God then does away with idolatry.

Isaiah describes the one supreme God as over-against the idols which are vane and helpless things (Isaiah 40:12) Jehovah as a living God can do things. Idols cannot see, hear, nor

reflections.

John Gerster of Pittsburgh Seminary - idols, the things or images which pass for idols are what I have made for me. Deny thyself is the first sign of the new man in Christ.

Carl Henry, an editor - the false Gods of our age are science, Communism, political democracy.

Dr. Hunt of Southwestern Seminary - education, centralized the delusion that man can save himself, materialism, the practical atheism, nationalism, obsession, conservatism, the worship of what one already has, the chiefest of the false gods and the self-destroying refusal to accept the venture of Biblical faith.

Harry Jellama of Hartford College - reverence of self.

A. H. Leitch, college professor, - there are many gods - money, status, security, health, even social adjustments. We forget that we are pilgrims and that we have no final abode here.

Calvin Linton - first the cult of automatic human progress, the belief that all environments can inevitably toward perfection. Second the cult of egalitarianism - the belief that not only are all men equal before God but they are equally deserving the reward and honor. Third the cult of scientism - the belief that all human experience is ultimately reducible to instruments of technology.

Charles Malik - professor at American University - Past president United Nations - secularism, nature, man and history that they are self-sufficient. Second, materialism. Then, relativism - no absolute.

Leon Morris - three s's. Success, security and Science. Fear of failure and success is a passion of many. Single-minded pursuits of security. The ideal scientific shrines. No generation ever felt more insecure and much to fear from the results of even scientific research.

Mulleur - perverted human nature never changes. John describes him briefly. Lust to the flesh, lust of the eye, lust of life, atheism, materialism, argoance, rejection of the divine word.

Ronald Niebuhr - Harvard University - the primary one is physical power and comfort.

Kenneth Pike of Michigan - secularism, (Col. 3:5)

Reed McQuinn University - the principal false god of our time is the standard of living. We forget that we are a gift of God. After all man's chief end is to glorify God and to join him forever and not have a house with a swimming pool.

William Robinson - Columbia - are we worshipping visible success instead of holding on with Job? Though he slay me and will I serve him.

Merrill Tenney - prestige, possessions, power, pleasure are the false gods of modern man.

Yagal - Woodstock College - there is only one god; he is always the same. The gods are many - Zeus or atomic power; Venus, Mars or war. They are natural powers; they cannot save, no matter in what area they may be sought.

Warren Young - Northern Baptist Seminary - status quo, our Christian witness is affect because we are not trying to witness.

We know that these prevalent gods are not only present but there are many signs. First, the giving of only one day out of seven to God. In other words, we feel that we can just life this day but selfishness on Saturday is selfishness on Sunday.

We only give to God what costs us nothing. Can I afford it? No. Does the Lord need it? And we usually say well, I've got time that hangs heavy on my hands or I'll give this money because I will not miss it.

We are most interested in our daily business than in the cause of Christ.

We are more anxious for the praise of men than we are the praise of God.

We are more concerned about our own good name than the honor of God. We are more anxious about our happiness than we

decide for you. Someone may inspire you but they cannot control you.

The choice involves sacrifice. You will not make it without cost. You may have to abandon some idol to grasp eternal life. No man can serve two masters. Those who have chosen him with their hearts, their hearts are still in the world and for the world. The Christian must decide this for himself. And if you are thinking about uniting with the church and confessing Christ, what must I give up? Well, you must give your life up. Would God they would come the other way. What can I give up for the sake of Christ who died for me?

Bunyan had a character, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. How many of us are like that? How many of us are like the boatman who faces one direction and rows in another? There are people who want to be headed for heaven but they are rowing in the opposite direction.

Your delay of the right decision will be harder. Your refusal to do it today will make it more difficult to get away from these prevalent gods today.

The time for decision is limited. Joshua knew this. That we have no lease on tomorrow, or the next hour. But this was their day of deciding and we must renounce all sin to take Christ.

Polycart said for 78 years I have served him. He has never

W. M. R. any more...
I have a church in P.A.C.
forsaken me and I will never forsake him.

Which will you have - God or the world? Choose you this day whom you will serve.

In Scotland a man was gathering eggs of the seabirds which nested there. He let down his rope from the top of the cliff and the rope slipped from his hand as he landed on a ledge. And as it swung out toward the sea and then came swining in again toward him, he knew that there was one single change. That the first inward swing of the rope would be his only change because the next one would be beyond his reach. With all the power of his body and his mind, he stood on the edge and waited for the rope to come toward him. And just as it reached the end of its swing, he stretched out his hand and seized it and was saved. Every day, every hour, every moment the swing of the rope of opportunity for choosing the good and getting rid of the false gods gets further away from us. Let us not wait for the next swing of the rope, but let us seek the Lord while he may be found and choose him today.