

Biblical Theology Core Seminar
“Idolatry”
Week 10 04.05.2023

Introduction

“Our contemporary society is not fundamentally different from these ancient ones. Each culture is dominated by its own set of idols. Each has its “priesthoods,” its totems and rituals. Each one has its shrines--whether office towers, spas and gyms, studios, or stadiums--where sacrifices must be made in order to procure the blessings of the good life and ward off disaster. What are the gods of beauty, power, money, and achievement but these same things that have assumed mythic proportions in our individual lives and in our society?”

- Tim Keller

What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.

I. Isaiah 6:9-10: The Pattern Becoming What We Worship

Isaiah 6:9-10 (CSB) ⁹And he replied:

Go! Say to these people:

Keep listening, but do not understand;

keep looking, but do not perceive.

¹⁰Make the minds of these people dull;

deafen their ears and blind their eyes;
otherwise they might see with their eyes
and hear with their ears,
understand with their minds,
turn back, and be healed.

cf. Isaiah 42:17-20; Isaiah 43:8, 10; Isaiah 44:8-19

Key Principle: If we worship idols, we will become like the idols, and their likeness will ruin us.

Psalm 115:4-8 (CSB)

⁴Their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.

⁵They have mouths but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.

⁶They have ears but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.

⁷They have hands but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk.

They cannot make a sound with their throats.

⁸Those who make them are just like them,
as are all who trust in them.

II. Exodus 32: The Main Event

A “stiff-necked” people (Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27).

This event would define the people of Israel for generations to

come:

Psalm 106:19-20:

¹⁹ At Horeb they made a calf
and worshiped the cast metal image.
²⁰ **They exchanged their glory
for the image of a grass-eating ox.**

2 Kings 17:14-15:

¹⁴ But they would not listen. Instead **they became obstinate**
like their ancestors who did not believe the Lord their God.
¹⁵ They rejected his statutes and his covenant he had made
with their ancestors and the warnings he had given them.
**They followed worthless idols and became worthless
themselves**, following the surrounding nations the Lord had
commanded them not to imitate.

Hosea 4:7:

⁷ The more they multiplied,
the more they sinned against me.
I will change their honor into disgrace.

Jeremiah 2:5, 11-12:

⁵ This is what the Lord says:

What fault did your ancestors find in me
that they went so far from me,
followed worthless idols,
and became worthless themselves?

¹¹ **Has a nation ever exchanged its gods?**
(But they were not gods!)

Yet my people **have exchanged their Glory
for useless idols.**

¹² Be appalled at this, heavens;
be shocked and utterly desolated!
This is the Lord's declaration.

III. Genesis 1-3: Created to Image and Reflect

To be **truly human** is to worship and revere God; and to be
truly human is to reflect his glory and his image; in other
words – **reflecting and revering are integrally connected.**

Beale: "All humans have been created to be reflecting beings,
and they will reflect whatever they are ultimately committed to,
whether the true God or some other object of the created
order." (Beale, p.22).

As we have moved further back in the story, to the very
beginning, we find rooted there this idea that what you revere
you reflect and it will lead to your ruin or restoration. Adam
was ruined by his worship. Israel is ruined by their worship.

IV. From Old to New: Bridging the Gap

Matthew 13:13-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40

V. Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 10: Gentiles are Idolaters Too!

Romans 1:18-32	Romans 12:1-2
Wrath	Mercy
Refusing to glorify or thank God	Sacrificing to God
Dishonoring the body	Offering the body
Misunderstood, idolatrous service of worship	Reasonable service of worship
Reprobate mind	Renewed mind
Rejecting the righteousness of God	Approving the will of God

1 Corinthians 10:7,9,11-14

⁷Don't become idolaters as some of them were...⁹Let us not test Messiah as some of them did...¹¹***These things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction***, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²So, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall. ¹³No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it. ¹⁴So then, my dear friends, **flee from idolatry**.

VI. Revelation 13: "Earth Dwellers"

See Revelation 13:8-9 (Cf. Rev. 8:13; 13:8, 14; 14:6-9; 17:2, 8)

According to Beale, these "earth dwellers" in Revelation "cannot look beyond this earth for their security, which means that they trust in some part of the creation instead of the Creator for their ultimate welfare. Thus people are called 'earth dwellers' because this expresses the object of their trust and perhaps of their very being, in that they have become part of the earthly system in which they find security—they have become like it. Because they commit themselves to some aspect of the earth, they become earthy and come to be known as 'earth dwellers.'"

But where do they go from there?

VII. Idolaters Transformed

Isaiah 29:9-16, 18; Isaiah 32:1, 3-4; Isaiah 52:15

Matthew 13:16-17:

¹⁶"Blessed are your eyes because they do see, and your ears because they do hear. ¹⁷For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see the things you see but didn't see them, to hear the things you hear but didn't hear them.

It is in Messiah that people, formerly conformed to the world's image (Rom. 1:18-32), begin to be transformed into God's image (Rom 8:28-30; 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4)

2 Cor. 3:18; 4:4

¹⁸We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

⁴In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Reflect on this, and consider what it means as you help people grow one step closer to Jesus:

- We need to preach the Good News to idolaters.
- Consider your life, and who or what you revere, and are thus reflecting: What are your idols?
- Helping people grow one step closer to Jesus in **likeness** and **proximity** means imitating one another as we imitate Jesus.

VII. So What?

Beale: "All of us are imitators...We are either being conformed to an idol of the world or to God. Some might think it is possible to exist in a mode of spiritual neutrality in their Christian lives. Some Christians might think that they can go for extended periods of time not reading their Bibles or praying or attending church and having fellowship with other believers. When God's people think this way and act accordingly, in reality, they become subtly conformed to the world instead of to God."